“Since she's really good, then the boys let her play”

An intersectional perspective on how middle school students at an international school in Denmark (re)do gender through their participation in physical activity at breaktime

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Reading guide

This article manuscript has been written to fulfil the requirements of my master's thesis in Sports Science at Aalborg University. Therefore, I have written supplementary material in the document titled 'Arbejdsblade 10105' to fulfil the learning outcomes and requirements for a master's thesis. It is consequently important to read both the supplementary material where I have elaborated on subjects mentioned in the article manuscript, as well as the article manuscript, to get a full understanding of the work conducted as part of this master's thesis. In the article manuscript, I use the term 'breaktime' which are the parts of the school day where students get a break from lessons, also referred to as recess. I also refer to football in the article manuscript, by which I mean association football, also called soccer.

Table of Contents

Abstract

The aim of this article is to provide insights into the role that physical activity plays in how middle school students at an international school (re)do gender, using an intersectional framework. This article uniquely includes the perspectives of gender diverse students, a group that have not been focused on in previous literature. Drawing on West and Zimmerman's (1987, 2009) concepts of doing and redoing gender, Connells' (1987) hegemonic masculinity and Schippers' (2002) alternative femininities and masculinities, I explored how gender intersected with sporting ability, age and sex to influence how students '(re)did' gender and how these identities influenced whether students were included, excluded or oppressed in the schoolyard. Hegemonic masculine and emphasized feminine ideals were prevalent in the schoolyard and were not challenged often. Students described their schoolyard as an inclusive environment; however, students of different genders did not always have equal opportunities to be physically active in the schoolyard due to gender dynamics and intersecting identities.

Keywords: Schoolyard, adolescents, physical activity, gender, intersectional

Introduction

Despite countries, like Denmark, making significant progress towards gender equity, a common assumption that certain types of physical activity are more gender-appropriate than others still exists in school physical education (PE) and sports (Azzarito, 2011; Cárcamo et al., 2021). These perceptions influence the types of physical activity that students of different gender identities choose to engage in and therefore, participation in sports and physical activity is an important way that adolescents (re)do gender at school. Studies on boys' and girls' physical activity levels in the schoolyard show that girls are less physically active than boys (Nielsen et al., 2011; Pulido Sánchez & Iglesias Gallego, 2021; Viciana et al., 2016) and that boys and girls typically engage in different types of activities in different areas of the schoolyard (Aminpour, 2016; Khandalavala, 2024). Boys are often observed socialising through competitive sports like football, while girls often use school breaktimes as a chance to talk to their friends (Aminpour, 2016; S. Clark & Paechter, 2007; Khandalavala, 2024; Kostas, 2022; Martínez-Andrés et al., 2017). Moreover, many studies have shown that boys

dominate their schoolyards, often by occupying a large proportion of the schoolyard with football games (Aminpour, 2016; Knowles et al., 2013; Kostas, 2022; Martínez-Andrés et al., 2017; Pawlowski et al., 2015, 2018). Girls are often not included in or discouraged from participating in these games (Pawlowski et al., 2015, 2018), because they are made to feel like they are not good enough (Pawlowski et al., 2018). These circumstances may play a role in girls' and gender diverse students' low participation or nonparticipation in physical activity in the schoolyard.

The schoolyard is not only a site of exclusion, but also of gender negotiation (S. Clark & Paechter, 2007; Kostas, 2022), making it an important context to study in order to understand the role that physical activity plays in how students (re)do gender. Consequently, the aim of this study was to investigate the role of physical activity in how middle school students at an international school in Denmark (re)do gender at breaktime, from an intersectional perspective. Research of this kind can not only provide insights into students' diverse and complex gender negotiations in the schoolyard but can also be used to develop recommendations that can help schools foster more inclusive environments that encourage students of all genders to be physically active in the schoolyard.

Gender and intersecting social categories in sports and physical activity

Historically, sports institutions and sporting culture have been arranged around binary categories of gender: male and female (Storr et al., 2020). Moreover, sport is traditionally a male institution, where male and female athletes' abilities are not valued equally (Lorber, 1994, cited in Larneby, 2016). If girls are encouraged to participate in sports, they are typically encouraged to participate in sports considered feminine, such as tennis, netball and dance (Yungblut et al., 2012, cited in O'Reilly et al., 2023). However, when adolescent girls do choose to participate in sports considered masculine, such as rugby, they are often referred to as masculine or experience misogynistic or homophobic abuse (O'Reilly et al., 2023). Boys are also expected to conform to societal expectations regarding masculinity and femininity. Boys whose interests or behaviours are not considered masculine, such as dancing or being too emotional, are often targeted with homophobic slurs (Mayeza, 2017; Pascoe, 2011). Research has also shown that sports and exercise culture is typically unwelcoming and discriminatory for gender diverse individuals. These individuals frequently experience

exclusion from certain sports based on their gender identity (Storr et al., 2020). Not only do gender diverse students experience different forms of discrimination in sports contexts outside of school, but studies show that these students experience discrimination in PE lessons and school sports (Clark et al., 2021; Müller & Böhlke, 2023; Robinson et al., 2014; Storr et al., 2020; Symons et al., 2014). Sports and physical activity contexts can therefore be exclusive spaces that do not provide equal opportunities for individuals of all genders.

There are two default positions that most children adopt unless they have strong arguments to act differently. The position that boys typically adopt can be termed "macho masculinity" and the position that girls typically adopt can be termed "girly-girliness" (Paechter, 2010, p. 227). These positions also influence students' behaviours and opportunities in the schoolyard, as they influence how and whether students are physically active, due to the connotations and stereotypes attached to these positions. Research shows that students of different genders often segregate themselves in the schoolyard and conform to different gendered expectations regarding their physical activity participation (Aminpour et al., 2020; Khandalavala, 2024; Kostas, 2022). However, there are some examples of resistance to these expectations in the current literature. The children that do adopt alternative positions to macho masculinity and girly-girliness are often referred to as fags or sissies (male students) and tomboys (female students) (Kostas, 2022; Mayeza, 2017; Pascoe, 2011). School or schoolyard-based studies have found that boys who choose to spend time with girls (Mayeza, 2017) or fail at exhibiting competence, strength or 'masculine' behaviours are referred to as fags by other boys (Pascoe, 2011). Moreover, girls that do "boy things" (Paechter, 2010, p. 226), are athletic, sporty and competitive or wear clothes marketed for boys, have been considered tomboys by their peers (Mayeza, 2017; Paechter, 2010; Pawlowski et al., 2015). Girls are more likely to transgress gender stereotypes and expectations in the schoolyard, as compared to boys (Pawlowski et al., 2015; Swain, 2005). A reason for this may be that boys are more likely to be criticized or ridiculed for exhibiting feminine traits or engaging in activities considered feminine (Mayeza, 2017; Pascoe, 2011; Pawlowski et al., 2015), while girls may even increase their social status by engaging in so-called masculine behaviours (Mayeza, 2017; McGuffey & Rich, 1999; Pascoe, 2011). However, Paechter (2010) found that even girls who considered themselves tomboys saw moving towards more 'girly' activities, such as sitting and talking instead of being physically active, as a "natural and inevitable part of growing up" (p. 231). This indicates the pressure girls are under to exhibit heterosexualized femininity (Paechter, 2010).

Teachers also contribute to students' attitudes on how they should do gender. At Danish schools, Pawlowski et al. (2015) found that the teachers who supervised the schoolyard also performed according to traditional gender roles and emphasized gender stereotypes. S. Clark and Paechter (2007) found that those monitoring the schoolyard had a bias towards boys' participation in breaktime football games and actively discouraged girls who wanted to play football from playing, by sending them away from the pitch.

However, research highlights that students with the same gender identity are not homogenous groups. Other social categories such as age, ethnicity, physical ability, race, religion, nationality and socioeconomic status (Azzarito & Solomon, 2005) can intersect with the category of gender identity and influence students' physical activity behaviour. For example, With-Nielsen & Pfister (2011) studied how the categories gender, ethnicity and religion intersected in Danish high school students' construction of identity in PE classes. With-Nielsen & Pfister (2011) found that a Muslim girl's sports competencies went unnoticed by her classmates due to her clothing which stemmed from ideas of femininity in her own culture and religion. Despite being sporty and participating in sports in her leisure time, her position as a Muslim girl meant that she was not regarded as a competent PE student (With-Nielsen & Pfister, 2011). Pontes et al. (2021) quantitatively examined how the intersection between race or ethnicity and gender influences how physically active American high school students are. They found that minority female students were more likely than White females to report doing no physical activity each week. Moreover, White females were found to be more likely to report no physical activity each week as compared to White males (Pontes et al., 2021). The intersection of race or ethnicity and gender can also influence whether an activity is considered sufficiently masculine or feminine among students. For example, Pascoe (2011) found that White teenage boys who danced were considered unmasculine and 'fags', while Black teenage boys were admired for their dancing skills at an American high school.

It is important to consider the intersection of gender and sporting ability when studying the role that physical activity plays in how students (re)do gender in the schoolyard. Studies have found that sporting ability and the demonstration of athleticism are important qualities for students 'doing boy', with boys less skilled or interested in sports excluded and ridiculed (Mayeza, 2017; Pawlowski et al., 2015). Girls with sporting ability have been seen to be more respected by boys in the schoolyard, resulting in these girls gaining access to participate

in boy-dominated breaktime activities, often football (Mayeza, 2017; Pawlowski et al., 2015). However, S. Clark and Paechter (2007) observed that non-football playing girls questioned girl football players' femininities and accused them of "being a boy" (p. 270), seeking attention from the boys or being lesbians when they played football in the schoolyard.

Several quantitative studies have studied how the intersection of gender and age influences physical activity behaviour. Younger girls are typically more active than older girls, but with younger boys being the most active (Frago-Calvo et al., 2017; Greca & Silva, 2017; Silva et al., 2018; Viciana et al., 2016).

Although attitudes towards gender in sport are changing and sports are generally becoming more inclusive to people of different genders, gender stereotypes and societal expectations around masculinity and femininity still play a large role in how students behave in the schoolyard. However, the schoolyard is a site of gender negotiation (S. Clark & Paechter, 2007; Kostas, 2022) and students use physical activity in the schoolyard to go against gender norms and expectations to redo gender as well. The literature on gender dynamics in the schoolyard has mainly focused on primary school children (S. Clark & Paechter, 2007; Mayeza, 2017; Pawlowski et al., 2015). Moreover, these studies had a focus on the gender binary, distinguishing only between boys and girls (S. Clark & Paechter, 2007; Mayeza, 2017; Pawlowski et al., 2015) and did not consider other relevant social categories, such as non-binary or transgender identities, age, sporting ability, ethnicity or (dis)ability. Using an intersectional approach, this study will provide insights into how middle school students (re)do gender in the schoolyard and how physical activity plays a role in this process.

Theoretical Foundation

This study takes a social constructionist approach, which involves the assumption that our understanding of the world, including how we understand gender, is constructed through people's everyday language and interactions (Burr, 1995). In the following sections, I describe the theoretical foundation of this study, where I outline West and Zimmerman's (1987, 2009) theory of doing and redoing gender, Connell's (1987) concepts of hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity, as well as Schippers' (2002) concept of alternative femininities and masculinities. I have chosen to include the abovementioned theoretical models on masculinities and femininities in my analysis, as they can be used to extend the

ideas of (re)doing gender (Morris, 2011) and give deeper insights into how and why students (re)do gender in a particular way in the schoolyard. Finally, I describe the concept of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) which I use to understand how other social categories intersect with students' gender identities and in that way, affect how students (re)do gender in the schoolyard.

Doing and redoing gender

This study is grounded in West and Zimmerman's (1987, 2009) theory on doing and redoing gender. West and Zimmerman (1987, 2009) distinguish between the terms sex, sex categorization, and gender. The term sex refers to the category a medical professional assigns a newborn child at birth (male or female). Sex is typically assigned based on the child's genitalia, but chromosomal or hormonal characteristics may also be taken into consideration. The term sex categorization refers to a person's display and recognition of social signs and symbols associated with their sex, such as through clothing, behaviour and body language (West & Zimmerman, 2009). West and Zimmerman (1987, 2009) argue that gender is a process that occurs through social interaction and that gender is also the product of social situations. (Re)doing gender is "an ongoing activity embedded in everyday interaction" (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 130) and can therefore be considered an essential part of students' everyday lives at school.

According to West and Zimmerman (1987, 2009), an important component of (re)doing gender is accountability to sex category membership. While (re)doing gender through actions and behaviours like language, choice of clothing, hairstyle and (non)participation in physical activity, members of society consider how their actions may look and be characterized by others. People tend to be held accountable for their actions and behaviour in relation to their sex category, with people acting outside of societal norms, for example men wearing make-up, usually being viewed negatively (Morris, 2011). In these situations, people will often experience 'gender-policing' where people are told to act in a certain way because of their sex. Examples of this are children assigned female at birth, being told to 'act like a lady' or children assigned male at birth, being told to 'man up' when they cry. However, it is important to note that people are held accountable to gendered norms in society by other people, institutions and even themselves (Darwin, 2022). In summary, there are three levels to gender accountability. Firstly, people hold themselves accountable to gender ideals that

they have internalized from their experiences in society. Secondly, people hold each other accountable to gender norms. Thirdly, institutions hold people accountable to the gender status quo by choosing to recognize certain categories as legitimate and others as illegitimate (Darwin, 2022). For example, in many countries, governments only recognize two official gender categories for legal matters. Accountability also covers actions that are carried out with the aim to be considered unremarkable, as when people do gender, they will often try to meet cultural standards that govern how people in their sex category are expected to act and, in that way, keep them from standing out from societal and cultural norms. However, this does not always mean that people will strive to meet or succeed in meeting societal expectations regarding masculinity or femininity, but that they engage in certain behaviours at the risk of gender assessment (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Accountability to sex category membership also occurs in sports and physical activity contexts. When deciding on whether to participate in a form of physical activity or sport, people consider the expectations for their gender, in relation to the specific activity, which influences how they engage in the activity. For example, girls who wish to play football with boys may consider whether they will be "accepted as teammates, viewed as intruders or treated as inferior" (Hills et al., 2021, p. 664).

'Redoing gender' refers to a shift in gender accountability (West & Zimmerman, 2009), where people "redefin[e] and extend the meanings and practices associated with gender and accountability" (Hills et al., 2021, p. 664). Redoing gender occurs when people do not 'do' their gender in the way that society expects them to. In these instances, gender is redone in relation to an adapted collection of societal rules and criteria (Darwin, 2022). Even as society progresses and changes, there are still systems of accountability in place, which people encounter when they redo gender. However, when people redo their gender by expressing their gender in a way that goes against societal norms and expectations, without experiencing harassment or discrimination, they become part of a shift in gender accountability. A shift in accountability would involve a behaviour or practice becoming more societally accepted for a person of a particular gender than it previously was. It is important to note that it can be very difficult for gender diverse students to (re)do gender at school, if those in positions of power at their school are not accepting and inclusive of gender diversity. Some examples of redoing gender could be a non-binary person styling their hair in gender non-normative ways, changing how they maintain their body hair to challenge gender norms and doing hormone therapy to feel and look less like the gender they were assigned at birth (Darwin, 2022). More specific to redoing gender through physical activity at breaktime, girls that play football in

the schoolyard have the potential to change the existing gender accountability systems in the schoolyard (Kassman & Kneck, 2022).

Masculinities and femininities

Hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1987) is a term that has been used to extend the ideas of 'doing gender' (West & Zimmerman, 1987, 2009) to explore the complexities of gender power (Morris, 2011). Hegemonic masculinity has been used to describe an "ideal pattern of manhood that represents and legitimates masculine power, including characteristics such as physical strength, rationality, stoicism, and toughness" (Morris, 2011, p. 98). According to Connell (1987), hegemonic masculinity is the most powerful and respected form of masculinity. The behaviours associated with hegemonic masculinity are traditionally used by men to demonstrate superiority over women and other men (Morris, 2011). While many men and boys strive to achieve hegemonic masculinity, not many enact hegemonic masculinity. It is however important to note that various types of masculinities exist and hegemonic masculinity is culturally specific (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) emphasize that gender is relational and hegemonic masculinity exists alongside what is termed emphasized femininity (Connell, 1987), which is one form of femininity (Schippers, 2007). Emphasized femininity is based on the idea that society is structured in ways that make women subordinate to men. Emphasized femininity describes behaviour that complies with this subordination and accommodates the interests and desires of men (Connell, 1987). The terms alternative femininity or masculinity refer to practices that "intentionally confront and reject hegemonic relations" (Finley, 2010, p. 362). When practicing alternative femininity or masculinity, people disrupt patterns of male dominance and female subordination (Finley, 2010), which can be considered part of an attempt to redo gender (McClean, 2014).

Children engage with and resist hegemonic patterns of masculinity as they grow up (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005) and schools have been considered key sites in the formation of masculinities and femininities (Swain, 2005). At many schools, a gender order exists, which results in boys suppressing behaviours they perceive as feminine (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Smith, 2007; Swain, 2005 as cited in Pawlowski et al., 2015). These masculinities are formed within the context of other intersecting parts of students' identities, such as social class, race and ethnicity. This means that in every school, there will be a dominant form of

masculinity, which is often referred to as hegemonic masculinity (Swain, 2005). Patterns of hegemonic masculinity have been observed in the schoolyard, with boys often dominating the schoolyard, typically through games of football, which has been considered a key signifier for constructing hegemonic masculinity in schools (Smith, 2007). Therefore, for those who identify as boys, demonstrating sporting ability, especially through football (Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998; Swain, 2005), is an important aspect of 'doing boy' in the schoolyard.

Intersectionality

The concept of intersectionality originated when Black women activists in the 1960s and 1970s felt that the specific issues that they faced were not addressed by the various anti-racist movements, feminist movements, and worker's unions that existed at the time. Because these women were Black and female and workers, they felt that their specific challenges were not prioritized by the abovementioned groups, because none of those social movements could target the whole picture of the discrimination they experienced (Collins & Bilge, 2016).

Intersectionality can be used as an analytic tool to help researchers better understand the complexity of the world and human experiences. Intersectionality is grounded in the idea that social situations and social inequality can rarely be understood as the result of one factor. Issues, like physical inactivity, are often shaped by many intersecting factors that combine and influence each other. For example, the categories "race, class, gender, sexuality, dis/ability, and age" (p. 14) are not completely separate parts of a person's identity, but build upon each other and operate together to influence a person's experience in the world (Collins & Bilge, 2016). When investigating how students (re)do gender during school breaktimes and the role of physical activity in this process, it is important to consider that gender is only one of many intersecting categories, as authors such as Acker (1999), Scraton (2001), Nash (2008) and With-Nielsen & Pfister (2011) have highlighted. Moreover, people's social identities have a large influence on their beliefs about and experience of gender (Shields, 2008). Gender also always needs to be understood in the context of the power relations that are embedded in social identities. It is important to note that intersections in a person's identity can create both oppression and opportunities (Shields, 2008). An intersectional perspective is also important when studying the process of (re)doing gender, because aspects of social structure and social identity play a notable role in how people (re)do gender and

what gender can mean (Shields, 2008). Moreover, intersectionality is not only a matter of identity, but also includes how structures help to oppress or privilege individuals or groups (Losleben & Musubika, 2023). Taking an intersectional approach can allow researchers to pay attention to often hidden mechanisms of exclusion and inequality (Lenneis, 2023), which made it a relevant approach for this case study, as I wished to gain insights into how students' processes of (re)doing gender at breaktime related to inclusion or exclusion in physical activity in the schoolyard. Moreover, intersectionality is a useful tool to study physical activity contexts, because it helps researchers study how individuals have different opportunities and challenges to being physically active (Lenneis, 2023).

Methods

The case study school

This case study was conducted at an international school in a large Danish city, with students and teachers of over 30 different nationalities, including Danish students. The school educates children from grade 1 – 10 (ages 6 – 16)[1]. Middle school students aged 11 – 16, have two breaktimes each day, a 30-minute morning break and an afternoon lunch break, lasting one hour, where students are required to spend the first half of the break eating and can choose other activities for their second break. Middle school students have the option to spend their morning break in their classroom, on the football field close to the school, or in the school library. The field is the largest space in the schoolyard and is also the largest outdoor space that students have access to at breaktime. In the classrooms, students have access to board and card games and the option to use the interactive whiteboard to play Just Dance videos[2] and in some cases, play music videos. Sixth grade students also have the option to spend their breaktime in a courtyard garden that can be accessed from their classroom, where there is a table tennis table and picnic tables. During lunch break, middle school students can also spend time in the school gymnasium (gym), however this is only once a week, as students of different grades are allocated a day each where they can use the gym, due to spatial constraints. In this article, all the abovementioned spaces are referred to

[1] Information taken from the case study school's website
[2] Videos of the Just Dance active video game, where players can follow along to characters doing dance moves to popular songs

as part of the schoolyard. Students are not allowed to use their mobile phones during the school day.

This study was an intrinsic case study, as the case study school presents an “unusual” and “unique situation” (Creswell, 2007, p. 74). The case study school can be considered unique due to its culturally diverse student and teacher population, the international curriculum the school follows, and the variety of physical spaces students can choose to spend their breaktime in. Another important unique characteristic of the case study school is that the school educates students that openly identify themselves as gender fluid or non-binary, transgender and lesbian.

Empirical data collection

This study is based on observations and semi-structured interviews that I conducted with middle school students at the case study school. From February 2024 to April 2024, I conducted 24 observations of school breaktimes (appendix C) and 14 semi-structured interviews (appendix E – Q) with 15 students from sixth to ninth grade. I also had many informal discussions with students and the teachers on duty at breaktime. Notes from these discussions were recorded with the rest of my field notes from the observations. The observations were conducted in the different parts of the schoolyard, including the classrooms, the field, the gym, the school library and the courtyard garden. The interviews took place during the students’ breaktimes and happened at the school. The duration of the interviews ranged from 11 to 47 minutes and they were an average of 18 minutes long.

While conducting observations, I usually moved through a continuum of observation and participation roles, as suggested by Gold (1958). This meant that I varied between having the roles of: complete observer, observer as participant, participant as observer and complete participant (Sparkes & Smith, 2013). This often meant that I started an observation session in an ‘observer as participant’ role, being only “marginally involved in the situation” (Sparkes & Smith, 2013, p. 101). However, as a breaktime went on, I often had the opportunity to observe from a ‘participant as observer’ or ‘complete participant’ role, for example joining students for a Just Dance dance or being the teacher on duty at breaktime.

The semi-structured interviews were based on an interview guide (appendix B) that involved questions about the students' backgrounds, such as how they would describe their gender, their nationalit(ies) and their previous experience with physical activity. There were also questions about their breaktime experiences and behaviour, including their interactions with teachers and questions based on observations I had made, for example "*I've noticed that quite a few boys play football at breaktime. Why do you think that it is mainly boys that play football at breaktime?*" (appendix B). The interviews also involved a photo elicitation component near the end of the interview, where I showed students photos of 1) a woman playing cricket for the Indian national team 2) a group of girls playing rugby, with the girl in focus wearing a hijab 3) a group of boys posing in matching hoodies with pink, shiny pom poms. I decided to incorporate photo prompts into the interviews because photos can "sharpen participants' memories and uncover emotional reactions", leading to more extensive narratives about the interviewees' personal experiences (Zhang & Hennebry-Leung, 2023, p. 5). Photo prompts can also help reduce the pressure an interviewee may feel during an interview, as the photo becomes the centre of attention, rather than the interviewee (Tinkler, 2013). I selected interview participants based on Patton's (2015) concept of heterogeneity sampling. I tried to include students from sixth to ninth grade, that had different nationalities or ethnicities and different gender identities. I also sought to include students that participated in different types of activities at breaktime. Overall, I interviewed eight students that identified as girls, six students that identified as boys (one of whom was a transgender boy) and one student that identified as gender fluid. I used a mainly naturalized transcription style when transcribing the interviews, which meant that I chose not to include utterances, mistakes, repetitions and most grammatical errors (McMullin, 2023) in the interview transcripts.

It is important to note my position as both a researcher and a substitute teacher at the case study school. At the time of empirical data collection, I had worked as a substitute and support teacher at the school for two and a half years, and all the students I interviewed had interacted with me before, with many of them knowing me for over two years. In this way, I had both an "insider" and "outsider" role (Thorpe & Olive, 2016, p. 130), with my insider role as a substitute teacher giving me access to the research context, but my part-time position and researcher role meant that I was not quite an "insider" the way the full-time teachers and students were. This partial "insider" role allowed me the chance to conduct observations as a participant on occasion, as on days where I was working as a teacher and had the job of

supervising students at breaktime, I was “part of the setting” and was able to conduct observations while “participating fully in [my] life” (Sparkes & Smith, 2013, p. 101).

I used Braun and Clarke's (2019) reflexive thematic analysis to analyse the empirical data I collected and used Nvivo 14, released 2023, to aide this process. In phases one and two, I reread my field notes and interview transcripts and began to create a mixture of theory and data-driven codes, some of which were semantic codes (e.g. Boys go outside more than girls) and others that were latent codes (e.g. Symbols of masculinity). In phases three to six, I created candidate themes and the three final themes that I then used to structure my findings and discussion section.

I judged the quality of my study using a relativist approach (Burke, 2016) to research evaluation, so I chose certain study-specific criteria to judge my study. I used some of Tracy’s (2010) ‘big tent’ criteria: worthy topic, rich rigor, sincerity, credibility, significant contribution and ethics.

Findings and discussion

Many students had progressive and inclusive attitudes towards people of different genders participating in all kinds of sports and most students believed that all sports could be successfully played by anyone. An example of these inclusive attitudes towards physical activity and sports was a ninth grade boy’s reaction to a photo I showed him of young women playing rugby, where he said:

> *some people might say [a girls’ game of rugby] might be more timid because it's female, but I would disagree with that… I mean, it just seems like a normal game of rugby. It doesn't really matter that they're girls.* (Manuel)

Despite these inclusive attitudes, the behaviours I observed in the schoolyard often followed gender norms and stereotypes, with few students going against these societal expectations. Moreover, almost all the students I interviewed described the school as inclusive for students of different gender identities, however I observed and heard about various instances of gender-related exclusion in the schoolyard. In the section below, I analyse and discuss the

three themes I created through my reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019) process.

Girls are expected to be calm and quiet, while boys are active and loud

There were clear differences in how students of different genders were expected to behave at breaktime and these expectations, held by students and teachers, governed most students' behaviour. Girls were expected to be calm and quiet, while boys were expected to be physically active and loud. Capucine, a ninth grade girl, outlined what she felt the gendered expectations were at breaktime:

> *Guys like to get some air and move, otherwise in the class they cannot focus. Girls are more like calm and they like reading, enjoy reading and having quiet time with their friends, where they can talk really quietly and just relax.*

Breaktime was therefore positioned as having two contrasting purposes, depending on a students' gender. Physical activity was positioned as a necessity for boys, while girls were expected to stay composed indoors. Although societal attitudes on girls' and women's sports participation are changing and girls' participation in a variety of sports is becoming increasingly common (Larneby, 2016), through their experiences in society, girls learn that sports are a masculine activity (Krane et al., 2014). Moreover, gender norms imply restrictions on what girls should do when it comes to sports and physical activity (Krane et al., 2014). While doing girl, girls in the case study school schoolyard are accountable to the gender ideals they have internalized from society and the girls hold each other accountable to gender norms (Darwin, 2022). The girls that chose to sit and talk with their friends at breaktime, rather than be physically active through sports or games therefore held themselves accountable to their ideas of what girls should do.

Bobby, a seventh grade boy, explained why he thought many boys played football at breaktime, but not girls:

> *it's mostly the boys because the girls normally do like less active things during breaktime, is what I have seen. But also, because there's this gender role slash*

> *stereotype, like boys need to be active and play football and sports, while girls just talk and like play with dolls or something.*

While several students, like Bobby, acknowledged that the gendered expectations at breaktime were based on gender stereotypes from the past and did not reflect anything inherently different between boys and girls, most students still followed these expectations and acted according to gender stereotypes. For example, in the classrooms, I often observed girls sitting at desks and talking to each other, while the field note below illustrates a common occurrence from the boys at breaktime. *Two boys are running from one end of the room to the other while screaming* (28/02/24). Outside, many older boys played football and the youngest middle school boys usually played made-up games that involved running, chasing and shrieking. If I observed girls outside, they were often ambling or sitting around the side of the field, sometimes looking at their mobile phones. By being accountable to the expectations to be calm and quiet, girls tended to engage in sedentary behaviours. In contrast, holding themselves accountable to the expectations for boys to be active and loud, meant that boys were typically physically active in the schoolyard, both when in the classroom, in the gym or outside. Students also gender 'policed' (Darwin, 2022) each other at breaktime. Giulia said:

> *if we [Giulia and the girls in her class] want to play in the gym or something, the boys are going to be like 'oh, why are you in here? You guys can just go talk or something.' And it is really annoying.*

When students did not act according to the expectations and tried to redo gender, other students were surprised and tried to get them to follow the expectations, rather than include them in their activity or share the schoolyard space with them.

Researchers have found that teachers supervising the schoolyard reinforce gender stereotypes and act according to traditional gender roles (S. Clark & Paechter, 2007; Pawlowski et al., 2015). In this study, teachers also played a role in creating and reinforcing the abovementioned gendered expectations. Most students claimed that their teachers did not care about what they did at breaktime if they were following the school rules. For example, Bobby felt that his experience in the schoolyard was:

> *already very inclusive. Like it's not like the teachers just say 'oh, you're a girl, you can play this' or 'you're a boy and you can't do this', like you just go do what you like and like everything's open for everyone.*

However, my observations and interviews indicated that certain teachers nudged and interfered in students' behaviour in different ways depending on their gender. Elise, a sixth grade girl, explained *"the boys, normally, when they talk too loud or stuff, they [the teachers] ask them to move and play outside instead of inside, because they know that they are going to scream out too loud or they're going to play."* The gendered expectations were so significant that some teachers assumed how the boys would act and therefore interfered with their behaviour to try and regulate the schoolyard environment. It is possible that because of this, these boys leaned into the expectations and 'did' gender by being loud and active, as that was what boys were expected to do. Moreover, Riley explained how a male teacher regularly emphasized gender stereotypes and treated students differently based on these stereotypes:

> *if a boy has a soccer ball in the room, then he starts playing with that boy, or he starts talking about the soccer with them. He never asks into the girls. And he's always like implying about different gender stuff, or like making fun of people, like boys who like makeup… it almost fits us into a box automatically.*

This quote suggests that certain teachers played a part in 'gender-policing' (Darwin, 2022) students at breaktime. When interacting with this teacher, students were held accountable to gender norms and were likely to be mocked by him, if they did not act according to these norms. The teacher reinforced gender stereotypes and gendered activities, which made it difficult for students to redo gender without fear of ridicule.

Giulia expressed how the intersection of age and gender played a role in how students behaved at breaktime. She outlined the gendered expectations in the schoolyard and how she did not follow them when she said:

> *girls [are expected to] be more calm. Boys just be wild and yeah, but I'm not that type of person though. Like I like to have fun and be wild and play outside. But some of the girls in my class, they're more like calm and that's probably because I'm the youngest girl in my class.*

Giulia indicated how enjoying yourself freely and spending time outdoors were considered ways of doing boy, whereas staying composed and not causing disturbances were typical ways of doing girl in the schoolyard. These patterns illustrate hegemonic masculine and emphasized feminine ideals in the schoolyard. As emphasized femininity involves accommodating the interests and desires of boys (Connell, 1987), the girls being "*more calm*" while the boys had fun outside demonstrates how the boys benefitted from the expectations at breaktime, while the girls were constrained by these expectations and consequently avoided physical activity. Because Giulia did not do gender in the way she was expected to, she was redoing gender (West & Zimmerman, 2009) and practicing alternative femininity (Finley, 2010). Giulia emphasized how she felt being some months younger than her classmates was the reason she did not follow the gendered expectations. In this way, Giulia implied that as she ages, she will likely participate in calmer and more sedentary activities, as she sees that as part of getting older. Similarly, Paechter (2010) also found that nine to eleven-year-old girls considered engaging in activities labelled 'girly', like sitting and talking rather than being physically active, as part of the natural process of growing up. This is also in line with studies that have found that younger girls are often more active than older girls (Frago-Calvo et al., 2017; Greca & Silva, 2017; Silva et al., 2018; Viciana et al., 2016).

One way that the youngest middle school girls (the sixth grade girls) resisted the expectations for girls to be calm and quiet was by dancing along to Just Dance videos. When dancing along to these videos, the girls often *loudly and enthusiastically [sang] along to the song[s]* (28/02/24) and *yell[ed] words of encouragement to the girl dancing in the front of the group"* (22/02/24). These girls were very active while dancing, with them *panting* and *out of breath* (28/02/24). While they resisted the expectations to be calm and quiet, these girls still adhered to gender norms and stereotypes by choosing dancing as their physical activity of choice. In this way, they were able to be active, while still displaying their femininity. These findings indicate that the girls were under pressure to display heterosexualised femininity when doing girl and that dance allowed girls to achieve that aim, while still being active. Similarly, Pawlowski et al. (2015) found that girls who did not engage in other types of physical activity at breaktime danced along to Just Dance.

However, the sixth grade girls were not the only students that defied the gendered expectations at breaktime. Some boys in seventh, eighth and ninth grade spent parts of their

breaktime playing board games or using their computers or mobile phones. These boys usually embodied a different form of masculinity than the hegemonic form (Connell, 1987) that the loud and physically active boys exhibited, with some of these boys playing games with or talking to students of other genders in their class. This could be considered an alternative masculinity, as these boys did not prioritize displaying physical strength, toughness or superiority over other students.

Though a few groups of students went against the gendered expectations in the schoolyard, most students acted according to gendered expectations to be calm and quiet or active and loud at breaktime. These expectations were based on gender norms and stereotypes and some teachers reinforced these stereotypes through their gender-policing behaviours. The intersection of gender and age influenced whether girls felt pressure to follow these expectations.

Boys dominate the schoolyard with aggressive play

Groups of boys dominated the schoolyard with aggressive behaviour, both while indoors and outside. However, the intersection of age and gender influenced this behaviour, as younger and older boys had different forms of aggressive play at breaktime. Younger boys' play was overtly aggressive, while older boys' aggression was less obvious. As the default position that boys adopt is "macho masculinity" (Paechter, 2010, p. 227), it could be argued that the boys' aggressive behaviour was their way of adopting that position.

Many of the younger middle school boys, especially the sixth grade boys, engaged in play that involved fighting or violence. An example from my observations in the classrooms is: *some of the boys pretend their snack boxes or bananas are guns and pretend to fight each other* (22/02/24). Even when the boys were eating and there was limited space in the classroom, many boys still played games that could be considered violent. Another example from when the boys were playing outside is:

> *All of the sixth grade A boys (8) go outside to the courtyard garden and start playing some kind of war-like shooting game, where they are standing on the picnic tables and chasing each other, while mimicking shooting a gun. One of the boys picks up a stick*

as some sort of weapon for the game. The boys also jump from table to table. (22/03/24).

The older boys were usually not as physically aggressive as the younger boys, but instead the sporty older boys created an aggressive atmosphere through their football matches that involved aggressive language use. The sporty boys' aggressive behaviour was an important reason why many girls did not interact with boys at breaktime and avoided doing sports with them. Girls from sixth to ninth grade emphasized how boys were violent when they played football and how this was a barrier to playing football in the schoolyard. Capucine described her experience when she tried playing football with the boys in her class: "*I was getting screamed at a lot…it's really violent and I don't really want to be part of it."* Most people assume that boys will be aggressive, while they believe girls should be non-violent (Krane et al., 2014). It could be argued that the students in the schoolyard had internalized these gender stereotypes from society and held themselves accountable to these assumptions. Then when the sporty boys were in the schoolyard together, they held each other accountable to these gender norms. Being aggressive was therefore a way that the sporty boys 'did' boy and tried to prove their masculinity in line with hegemonic masculine ideals. It is also possible that the boys used aggressive behaviour as an exclusionary mechanism so the girls would not be interested in playing with them and they therefore could keep the games to only boy players. Manuel alluded to this when he spoke about how the ninth grade girls were treated when they had tried to join a ninth grade boys' football game and explained that the boys *"just probably didn't want them to play."*

There were a few instances where I saw girls engage in aggressive behaviour with the boys, however this was rare. One instance that I observed was:

> *One of the eighth grade girls is annoyed at one of the eighth grade boys for taking the Uno cards she was playing with and she mimics going up to try and fight him for them and another eighth grade boy says "Aditya, she's stronger than you" and Aditya gives the cards back to the girl.* (28/02/24)

In this extract, the eighth grade girl was redoing gender, as she did not do gender in the way society would expect her to (Darwin, 2022), as she went against gender norms and expectations for girls to be non-violent (Krane et al., 2014). In this way, she was creating an

alternative femininity where she was willing to fight for what she wanted, in contrast to emphasized femininity, where girls and women accommodate the interests and desires of men (Connell, 1987). Moreover, in contrast to gender norms, she was positioned as stronger than her male counterpart and this position plus the girl's willingness to be aggressive meant that she was successful in getting her cards back.

Groups of boys dominated the spaces in the schoolyard. Access to occupy space is grounded in "political, racialized, and gendered intersections of power, privilege, and oppression" (Griffin et al., 2022, p. 6). Most girls and gender diverse students' access to the schoolyard spaces, especially the field, was limited due to the intersections of gender (girl or gender fluid), sex (female), insufficient sporting ability and in some cases younger age. The ninth grade boys, who were the oldest students that used the field, benefitted from the intersection of gender (boy), sex (male), ample sporting ability and older age, giving them unrestrained access to the field. Riley described how the ninth grade sporty boys dominated the space on the field. Riley said *"if there are more pitches, more people would play games because there would be more space for people to play games. Right now, some of the girls want to use the pitch, but the boys won't let them."* This example illustrates the older sporty boys' hegemonic masculine behaviour and the girls' emphasized feminine behaviour in the schoolyard, as these boys took over the pitches on the field and claimed them as theirs, while the girls just accepted this and accommodated the boys' wishes. Football has been considered a domain of hegemonic masculinity in schoolyards (Martínez-García & Rodríguez-Menéndez, 2020; Mayeza, 2017; Smith, 2007) and is a way in which boys that are skilled at football can demonstrate their athleticism, physical strength and toughness (Morris, 2011). It could be argued that the sporty boys felt that the space on the football field was theirs, because they considered football a boys' activity and football was an important way for them to do gender, as football allowed them to display hegemonic masculine ideals (Morris, 2011). On a more macro level, structures in society may also have led these boys to feel entitled to the school field. At Danish football clubs, boys' football teams are typically prioritized over girls' teams, for example with the boys getting the more attractive fields to play on (Elkjær, 2017; Lethin & Schelde, 2016).

The physical structure of the field also contributed to the boys' domination of the schoolyard, as the field was designed and structured for football. Because only the boys played football and the field was covered in *18 football goals of various sizes* (06/03/24) and the school did

not provide middle school students with other equipment for the field, the boys felt that they were using the field the way it was designed to be used, which meant that they challenged other students that wanted to use the space for a different purpose. In this way, the design of the schoolyard spaces influenced the opportunities that students of different genders had to be physically active at breaktime. Similarly, several other studies have also shown that boys dominate their schoolyards, with boys typically taking up a large section of the schoolyard with football games (Knowles et al., 2013; Kostas, 2022; Martínez-Andrés et al., 2017; Pawlowski et al., 2015, 2018).

Overall, the aggressive behaviour that certain boys dominated the schoolyard with discouraged students of other genders from being physically active at breaktime, while the majority of boys' different forms of aggressive play often meant that they were physically active wherever they were in the schoolyard. The aggressive behaviour also resulted in the girls and the gender fluid student distancing themselves from the boys at breaktime and consequently, the schoolyard was usually segregated by gender.

Defeated: girls and a gender fluid student that want(ed) to play football

"Like a few years ago, when we asked to play, they were just like 'oh no, you guys are really bad at football, so just don't play with us.' And then after that, we just didn't play with them." (Giulia)

The extract above is representative of the narratives of many of the girls and the gender fluid student I spoke to, when we discussed why they did not play football at breaktime. Although I only observed boys playing football in the schoolyard, many girls and a gender fluid student expressed that there was a time where they were interested in playing football at breaktime but had given up on the idea after their experiences with the sporty boys who dominated the football games. Most girls and the gender fluid student accepted the fact that they would not be included in schoolyard football and expressed a sense of defeat when referring to football at breaktime.

In the quote above, Giulia illustrated how lacking football abilities compared to the boys was one reason why the girls were excluded from football games. Pawlowski et al. (2018) also found that boys in Danish schoolyards claimed that girls were not good enough to play

football with them and used that as an excuse to exclude them from their games. However, Giulia explained how being highly skilled at football provided certain girls with access to participate in the schoolyard football games:

> *Ida, she's one that has proved to them that we can go play with them because she's much better than all the boys… She's really good. She's really, really good. And so, since she's really good, then the boys let her play. Right? So, they're like 'oh yeah, Ida can be on my team', but they just don't admit she's better…Her family, like all of her siblings play football. So, like because of her, then she was playing, so I was like 'oh, can I play?' And then Elise joined and then it went like that.*

This extract illustrates how the intersection of gender and sporting ability (Crenshaw, 1989) had an important influence on whether girls or gender diverse students were included in football games at breaktime. By being a girl and also good at football, Ida was in a privileged position (Collins, 1990) where she had opportunities to participate in football in the schoolyard, that other girls did not get. However, Ida's welcomed presence in football games opened possibilities for other girls to be included. It could be argued that Ida was redoing gender by successfully participating in schoolyard football games, without experiencing harassment or discrimination. In this way, she was creating a shift in gender accountability (Darwin, 2022), by going against the gender norms in the schoolyard and being a girl who plays football there. However, this was not a long-lasting shift in gender accountability, as when Ida left the case study school for an extended period, girls did not continue to be included in football games at breaktime. Similarly, Mayeza (2017) and Pawlowski et al. (2015) found that girls with football skills were more respected by boys and this allowed them to participate in boy-dominated football games in the schoolyard. Nevertheless, Giulia mentioned how the boys *"just don't admit she's better"* when referring to the boys' willingness to play with Ida. This suggests that the boys were still reluctant to admit that girls could be highly skilled at football and perhaps even more skilled than boys. In this way, the boys were trying to maintain their hegemonic masculine position and hold Ida accountable to gender stereotypes they had internalized about girls and women that play football. In addition to her sporting ability, it is important to highlight that Ida's race, nationality and family background also put Ida in a privileged position (Collins, 1990) regarding participation in football. Ida is a White, Danish girl with "*siblings [that] play football"*, all of which can be

considered intersecting factors that made participation in football more accessible for her than some of her classmates.

Giulia also described how Ida had to *"prove"* to the boys that she was skilled at football, to be included in the boys' football games. This indicates the exclusivity of the football games in the schoolyard and implies that boys were included automatically because of their gender, but that students of other genders needed to demonstrate a certain level of skill to have a chance at playing. Riley, who had played football for nine years, elaborated on this issue:

> *Every time I go out on the field, it's just kind of like I don't know what to do, because I don't want to join the soccer because I feel like I'm not quite good enough… It just gets kind of uncomfortable. You never really know what to do… I don't know if I can like get into the team properly. Like I've tried a couple of times, but it just ends up being really awkward in a way. Because I'm friends with the boys, but not really like completely friends with them. I've always hung a little bit more around the girls.*

Because Riley was born female and many of their classmates knew Riley when they identified as a girl before identifying as gender fluid, one reason why Riley was not actively included in the football games could be because of their sex. Although Riley had a lot of experience with football, they considered themself not skilled enough to play in the boys' football games. It is possible that Riley had internalized societal messages that females cannot be as skilled at football as boys, so the intersection of sex and gender identity may have played a role in whether Riley felt capable of meeting the football boys' skill level. Gender and sex were not the only categories relevant for exclusion, as the ninth grade boys also excluded based on age. John, an eighth grade boy and a skilled football player, explained *"I used to play with them, but now they don't want me to play…they want it to be more their year group…Even if I'm as good as them".* Due to the intersection of his gender and age, John was excluded from schoolyard football games.

Capucine, who played football in a football club in her free time, described her experiences of joining the case study school and taking the initiative to play football with the boys in her grade at breaktime:

> *there were some other girls that actually like participated with me, which was really nice, because we were many. But they also stopped because the guys were being mean to them if they like missed the ball, which happens to everyone, even guys… They would get screamed at more than when the guys [missed the ball]. And that really affected them and me. So, we stopped playing after that.*

Capucine described how the boys treated other boys who played football with them differently than the girls who also participated. There was a double standard that meant that if girls made a mistake, they were verbally attacked by the boys, but if boys made those mistakes, they were not acknowledged in the same way. It is possible that the boys engaged in these hostile behaviours towards the girls in order to maintain their hegemonic masculine position in the schoolyard and prevent the girls from having a chance at performing well or even more, better than them. As the boys' put so much emphasis on the girls' mistakes, this drove them away from football temporarily.

However, Capucine and her female friends fought to be included in football games and sought to challenge the gendered status quo in the schoolyard, where girls were being excluded and harassed by the football-playing boys. As alternative femininity involves confronting or rejecting hegemonic relations and therefore disrupting patterns of male dominance and female subordination (Finley, 2010), the girls' efforts could be considered attempts to redo gender and make space for football-playing alternative femininities in an environment dominated by hegemonic masculine football games. These girls felt they were being mistreated by the boys when they tried to participate in the breaktime football games. Capucine explained *"there were problems and we had to tell the teachers."* However, talking to her parents and the teachers did not improve the situation and resulted in her being teased and excluded even more. After the girls' disheartening experiences when they attempted to play football with the boys at breaktime, the girls tried to set up their own football games, so that they could still have a chance to play. Capucine explained how the skilled football boys made that unattractive too:

> *We started playing football again, but it was more in small groups with guys that were not as good … But then sometimes, the guys would just crash and not pass it to us anymore, even though we started the game and we didn't always tell them they could*

actually play with us. Sometimes, we didn't want to play with any guys, I wanted just to keep it in between girls.

Capucine indicated how the intersection of gender and football ability influenced the dynamics on the football field. The boys that were not as skilled at football were not considered a threat to the girls' enjoyment or inclusion in the game, the way the skilled football boys were. This indicates that the skilled football boys tried to express superiority over the girls in line with hegemonic masculine ideals, while the boys that were less skilled at football engaged in other forms of masculinity where subordinating the girls was not valued. In the end, despite Capucine's attempts to create an inclusive football space in the schoolyard, the girls that were interested in playing football gave up on playing football at breaktime and ended up doing more sedentary activities like talking in the classroom or going to school musical rehearsal. Similarly, in Danish schoolyards, Pawlowski et al. (2015) also found that girls were not actively included in and discouraged from playing in football games.

Like many other girls, Stella, a ninth grade girl, just accepted that playing football was not a real option for students that were not boys. When she explained the ways in which the boys excluded girls from their football games, she ended by saying *"let them have that [football]…They just don't really want you there."* By not resisting this idea and complying with the way the boys wanted to play football, Stella believed that other students should just allow the boys to continue with their football games without interference. This could be considered an example of emphasized femininity in the schoolyard, as Stella believed that students should accommodate the boys' wishes and comply with the standard the boys had set.

Although students of different genders were interested in playing football at breaktime, I only observed boys playing football. Several girls and a gender fluid student told stories about their attempts at playing football at breaktime and expressed a sense of defeat, having accepted that they could not realistically participate in football in the schoolyard. Other girls did not even try to play football in the schoolyard, having internalized the idea that they would not be included or that football was a boys' game. Gender, sporting ability, sex and age were intersecting factors that influenced whether students had access to participate in the schoolyard football games, with the skilled, male, ninth grade boys in powerful positions regarding football participation.

Conclusion

In this article, I explored how physical activity plays a role in how middle school students (re)do gender in the schoolyard at breaktime, from an intersectional perspective. Students and teachers had gendered expectations for students' behaviour at breaktime, with most students adhering to these expectations. The sixth grade girls were a group that resisted these expectations, but still 'did' girl according to heterosexualized feminine ideals. Some boys also went against the gendered expectations and exhibited an alternative masculinity to the hegemonic masculine patterns that were present in the schoolyard. Groups of boys dominated the schoolyard with their aggressive behaviour, which excluded or oppressed students of other genders and led these students to distance themselves from the boys at breaktime. Although many girls and a gender fluid student were interested in playing football at breaktime, the sporty, older boys created an exclusive atmosphere that made it difficult for most of these students to participate. However, Ida, a sixth grade girl, gained access to football games in the schoolyard, through her intersecting identity as a girl and skilled football player. While the case study school schoolyard was described as an inclusive environment, especially when compared to students' previous schools, students of different genders did not always have equal opportunities to be physically active, due to the gender dynamics and intersecting identities in the schoolyard. Furthermore, despite the predominantly progressive attitudes towards gender and sport at the case study school, hegemonic masculine and emphasized feminine ideals were prevalent in the schoolyard and were not challenged often. The social factors sporting ability, age and sex intersected with gender to influence whether students were included, excluded or oppressed in the schoolyard. The intersection of gender and sporting ability played an important part in determining whether students were included in their desired form of physical activity at breaktime. The intersection of gender and age influenced what students considered acceptable ways to do gender and affected whether they were included in schoolyard activities. The intersection of gender, age, sporting ability and sex helped put the sporty ninth grade boys in a powerful position and meant that they excluded and oppressed students of other genders and younger students in the schoolyard.

In order to try and include students of all genders in physical activity at breaktime, schools could consider organizing activities in the schoolyard, with a teacher or a student leader supervising these activities. To make sports skills, previous experience, gender or sex less of

a barrier to participation, the activities could be less common sports that students may not have tried before, such as roundnet, Ultimate or Kin-Ball. However, ultimately, based on the findings in this study, I believe a culture shift is necessary in order for students of all genders and social identities to feel included in and have equal access to space in their schoolyards. Schools, especially PE classes, and sports clubs have a large role to play in setting a precedent for inclusion. For example, football clubs could work towards a culture shift by making mixed gender football teams the norm for young children, so that boys do not claim football and football fields as solely a boys' space. Moreover, many of the students I interviewed had a binary view on gender and did not consider gender identities apart from boy or girl, even when they had a gender diverse student in their class. This indicates a need for schools to promote awareness and understanding of the various forms of gender identity that exist.

Further research is needed on how the design and structure of schoolyards, as well as school policies such as equipment provision, influence processes of gender negotiation and physical activity participation in the schoolyard. It could also be relevant to explore how students do and redo gender in all-boys' and all-girls' schools and how gender diverse students at these schools (re)do gender in the schoolyard.

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