Negative peer-relations in Female Physical Education: a sociological analysis of teachers' experiences, views and interpretations

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is their own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Abstract

Physical education and sport are widely regarded as a site for social cohesion, fair play and the development of positive character traits and values. However, young people's engagement and satisfaction in PE is low, with gendered attitudes creating and perpetuating detrimental effects on young people's experiences of PE and physical activity. Social dynamics and peer relations are shown to be significant in young people's experiences and perceptions of PE; however, existing research shows PE to be rife with bullying behaviours. This has been researched amongst boys and their use of banter in these interactions but there is very little known about these interactions and social dynamics between girls in female PE. PE Teachers are central figures in the moderation of these interactions. Therefore, the aim of this study was to determine and sociologically analyse FPE teachers' experiences, views and interpretations of negative peer relations in FPE. This study focused on exploring and understanding girls' behaviours and interactions such as banter and bullying, through the views and experiences of FPE teachers. 12 semi-structured interviews with female PE teachers were conducted and key concepts of figurational sociology were used to critically frame and analyse the data, such as power, figurations, habitus and 'I'-'We'-'They' identities. Key findings of this study highlighted the environment of PE to be unique in providing opportunities for informal social interaction, between both girls and FPE teachers, though this provided equal opportunity for negative peer interactions. Girls regarded peer-perception of to be of high importance, and experienced feelings of judgement, exposure, fear and self-consciousness, strongly linked to "I" and "we" identities. PE provides opportunities for power struggles, as these are often asymmetrically weighted in PE, and with the added competitive element of PE, existing relational issues between girls are often exacerbated. Banter was engaged with by both FPE teachers and pupils, and viewed as generally positive, with FPE teachers describing banter as used to typically foster social bonds and disperse tension. Primarily, banter was used more between teachers, older pupils, and 'sporty' girls. Bullying and negative peer interactions were rife within changing rooms, often unmonitored and unvetted, as girls rely on fewer external constraints to regulate social interaction. This included the use of physical violence, challenging some existing knowledge on the ways girls engage in bullying behaviours. These findings were related critically to FPE teacher responses with regard to roles and responsibilities.

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Chapter One

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to determine and sociologically analyse female Physical Education (FPE) teachers' experiences, views and interpretations of negative peer-relations in FPE. Through a figurational sociological lens, particular focus is given to behaviour which could be constructed as banter/teasing and bullying. In focusing on FPE teacher perspectives and experiences, this study gains insight into girl's negative peer relations without the ethical issues of children as participants, especially due to the sensitive nature of the topic area. Equally, considering the roles and responsibilities of a teacher, approaching an issue such as bullying from teacher perspective may perhaps challenge existing problematic views and practices and incite positive change. Additionally, using a figurational sociological approach offers a less common theoretical perspective, utilising long-term social processes to understand how things came to be, with a view of key concepts as fluid and dynamic, a useful perspective for power and its involvement in young people's relations. This chapter provides an academic rationale for the contemporary need to study this topic and outlines the prevalence and extent of bullying experienced by young people whilst at school in the United Kingdom (UK). Subsequently, the research questions central to this thesis are stated and the chapter concludes by detailing an outline of the structure of this thesis.

1.1. Academic Rationale

The UK government regards Physical Education (PE) as an academic subject that improves young people's physical health through movement competency and inspiring a healthy active lifestyle. The NCPE (National Curriculum for Physical Education) also states that *"opportunities to compete in sport and other activities build character and help to embed values such as fairness and respect"* (DoE, 2013, 1). To fund these perceived physical, moral and social benefits successive governments have invested upward of £4billion in PE and School Sport (PESS) over the last two decades (Foster and Roberts, 2019). The UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines (2019) recommends children and adolescents (ages 5-18) to aim for an average of minimum 60 minutes of physical activity per day across the week. With this aim in mind, children spend a significant proportion of their time in the school environment, and break times and PE lessons provide opportunities which encourage children to be physically active throughout the school day (Ridgers, Stratton and Fairclough, 2006). Despite such perceptions and financial support, 30% of children and young people aged 2-15 years in England are considered overweight or obese, with 32% undertaking less

than 30 minutes of physical activity per day (Health Survey for England, 2019; Sport England, 2021). Additionally, by the ages of 14-16, only 16% of boys and 10% of girls meet the daily recommendations for physical activity (Association for Young People's Health, 2019).

Key advocates of the transformative power and educational value of PE use such figures to suggest that more time and monetary investments are needed into PE, due to the eclectic and significant values and traits PE can instil in young people (Bailey, 2018; Harris, 2018). However, Green (2014) has critiqued this proclaimed 'PE effect', whilst other social scientists have highlighted counterproductive practices such as student demonstrations and 'one line, one ball, one chance' (Williams, 1996), as well as gendered attitudes and negative peer relations as key factors detrimental to young people's experiences of PE (Nixon, 2008; Humberstone, 1991; Kew, 1997). PE teachers are vital to this, having significant influence over the ways in which young people perceive and experience PE (Lewis, 2014; Zalech, 2021).

Sociologists, in particular, highlight gendered aspects of PE and their possible detrimental effects on young people's engagement and experiences. Despite the NCPE being gender-neutral, PE is the most sex-differentiated and gender-stereotyped subject in the school curriculum (Flintoff and Scraton, 2005; Green, Smith, Thurston and Lamb, 2007). Sport England's (2015) *This Girl Can Campaign* seeks to combat these gender differences, aiming to confront negative gender stereotypes and positively promote fitness and physical activity for girls and women. A recent 'Active Lives' survey shows no gendered gap between the participation rates of young people between the ages of 11-16 (Secondary school years). The survey shows 45% of both boys and girls are considered to be physically active for an average of 60 minutes a day (Sport England, 2021). Despite this, there are gendered differences in young people's experiences of sport; Girls Active (2017) found 71% of boys aged 11-16 are happy with their amount of physical activity and feel a sense of enjoyment, as opposed to the 56% of girls of the same age group. Differentials in perceived opportunities and enjoyment impact levels of engagement, which can detrimentally effect participation. Given the previously stated aims and benefits of PE, it is necessary to sociologically examine key factors in gender disparities in participation and experience.

When examining young people's engagement in PE, social dynamics and peer relations have been found to be significant (Smith and Parr, 2007). Whilst structurally part of the national curriculum, how PE is experienced is socially constructed by those involved, namely young people and teachers. Therefore, the differing gender identities and gendered performances of those involved inform power imbalances. Power imbalances may be reinforced or challenged

through what Bain (1975) referred to as the hidden curriculum in PE. Central to the hidden curriculum in PE are traditional gender stereotypes, competitive team sports and divisive changing room cultures (Atkinson and Keller, 2012; Hargreaves, 2000). Collectively, these social processes can result in positive or negative experiences and can permeate into behaviour construed as bullying. There is emerging evidence that bullying is prevalent in PE and can take physical and verbal forms (Atkinson and Kehler, 2012; Roman & Taylor, 2013; Tischler and McCaughtry, 2011). Such negative incidents detrimentally effect young females' perception of and engagement in PE (Slater and Tiggemann, 2011; Mitchell, Gray and Inchley, 2015). Therefore, warranting a sociological focus on negative peer-relations in FPE. Specifically, this research presents a figurational sociological perspective with regards to the theoretical application, offering a long-term perspective on sociological process and the notion of power as fluid and dynamic.

Academics have sought to conceptualise bullying, with definitions tending to identify bullying as "prolonged behaviour of verbal insults, social rejection, psychological intimidation and/or physical aggression by some students towards others, where the victim is repeatedly exposed to negative actions carried out by one or more aggressor students in a situation of defencelessness" (Jiménez-Barbero, Jiménez-Loaisa, González-Cutre, Beltrán-Carrillo, Llor-Zaragoza and Ruiz-Hernández, 2020, p 82). Whilst identifying that 'there is no legal definition of bullying', the Department for Education (2022) classifies key characteristics as repetition, intention to physically or emotionally hurt and the targeting of specific groups for reasons such as race, religion, gender or sexual orientation. Negative peer-relations can include more sinister behaviours such as bullying. Bullying is common within schools and, in Britain, has become regarded as a social, moral and political issue (Mierzwinski, Cock and Velija, 2019). Despite mandating schools to have anti-bullying policies since 2008, national surveys have found around 45%-51% of young people experienced bullying whilst at school, with a most recent survey highlighting how bullying as a whole has increased by 25% year-on-year (DitchTheLabel, 2020; Stonewall, 2020). An increasing understanding of the deleterious effects of bullying (Brown, 2018) and increasingly levels of moral repugnance towards bullying are evident in media reports, parent petitions for greater anti-bullying measures and government policies (Mierzwinski, Cock and Velija, 2019).

Central figures in implementing school anti-bullying policies are teachers. With recent studies showing a high prevalence of verbal bullying amongst young people (Nazir, 2018; Thompson, 2019), one issue PE teachers may face is determining the difference between verbal bullying and banter (Tischler and McCaughtry, 2011). Acknowledging this, Thompson (2019) emphasises the difficulty in detecting and distinguishing the thin line between teasing and

bullying, light-hearted versus malicious interactions, and the diverse reactions recipients may have during this social process. Closely affiliated with teasing is banter. Banter is rife in sport (Grey-Thompson, 2017), and it is a type of humour involving back and forth interaction (Haugh and Bousfield, 2012), containing competitive and jocular characteristics often synonymous with 'taking the piss' (Alexander, MacLaren, O'Gorman and Taheri, 2012; Plester and Sayers, 2007) and 'crossing the line'. Recent studies have also illustrated that PE teachers may also frequently take part in banter when interacting with pupils (Mierzwinski and Velja, 2020). In viewing PE as a social construct, the environment of PE is defined by the individuals and groups pertaining to it, PE teachers views, experiences and behaviours are equally as important to the construction of the PE environment as those of the pupils. Therefore, knowing the extent to which bullying behaviours take place in PE, and as primary interveners and moderators of determining banter from bullying, FPE teachers offer a key sample from which to understand negative peer-relations in FPE, as well as core instigators to implement change.

1.2. Research Questions

What are FPE teachers' views and experiences of negative peer-relations within FPE?
What are FPE teachers' experiences of dealing with bullying issues in FPE?
How do FPE teachers differentiate between bullying and banter in FPE?
To what extent are negative peer-relations, bullying and banter in FPE perceived as being gendered?

1.3. Structure of Thesis

In Chapter Two, this thesis offers a concise literary review of key research and data relating to female PE, gendered socialisation, peer dynamics and peer-group influence in PE, bullying in PE and, finally, banter in sport. The fundamentals of figurational sociology are outlined as a theoretical framework within Chapter Three. These fundamentals are applied to frame the gendered history of PE and addressing the long-term changes in attitudes towards bullying and contemporary negative peer relations, and how these may help partly explain contemporary experiences and engagement levels in PE. Chapter Four details the methodological approach of the study, offering rationales as to the processes involved in the research. Chapters Five, Six and Seven illustrate the results and discussions of the data from interviews. Chapter Five depicts female PE teacher experiences, views and interpretations of PE as a unique gendered figuration; finding PE affords for social interactions due to the constant social mixing, often less controlled than other school spaces. Chapter Five also addresses girls' awareness of peer perceptions, attributing to feelings of exposure, failure, judgement, and fear in PE lessons. Addressed in Chapter 6 are some age-related differences

in girls' behaviour and negative peer dynamics as well as PE's unique ability to exacerbate existing relational issues due to the separation of ability/skills and competitive environment which can lead to feelings of frustration and embarrassment in girls. Within Chapter 7, FPE teacher views and experiences of banter and bullying are explored; FPE teachers viewed banter as mostly positive and something 10 out of 12 participants engaged with in their own teaching, this was dependent on the teacher-pupil relational bonds such as older pupils and those involved in extra-curricular physical activity. Girls were identified to use banter, particularly older or 'sporty' girls, and generally engaged with and received well. Changing rooms were identified to be rife with bullying behaviours, due to the lack of sufficient monitoring, and teachers highlighted several instances of physical violence, though acknowledged negative verbal encounters were more common. Within the discussions, FPE teacher experiences, views and interpretations from the data are linked to key figurational concepts and social processes, particularly power, long-term civilising processes, identity and self-restraint. The theoretical application of figurational sociology within these chapters, offers a critical examination and possible explanations for how and why negative peer relations are manifested and enabled in female PE. Within this, a critical analysis is embedded of FPE teacher responses to contextualise their responses in relation their roles, responsibilities and influence on social processes. Lastly, the thesis concludes with a summary of the preceding workings, direct answers to the research questions, and proposals for further research.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Through the lens of academic literature, this chapter reviews gendered stereotyping and disengagement in PE before examining how bullying manifests and is dealt with in PE. The final section explores the emerging research on banter in sport, and the extent that this is gendered. To provide greater cultural specificity, where possible UK-based sources have been referenced. Literature was sourced from Google Scholar, YSJ's University library and Sport Discus through searching several key words/phrases: 'female PE', 'female sport', 'gender socialisation', 'banter', 'bullying', 'PE teacher perceptions', 'gender stereotypes', 'peer-relations' and 'experiences of girls'. Despite this search, much of the results garnered articles concerning male PE which is synthesised below, further validating the need to explore this topic area from a female PE perspective.

2.1. Gendered socialisation, gendered stereotypes and disengagement in FPE

Gender is a societal construct which can be subject to change, unlike the fixed biological features of sex. Traditional gender binaries refer to 'masculinity', which became associated with science, rationality, objectivity and culture, whilst 'femininity' became associated with emotionality, subjectivity, irrationality and nature (Stets and Burke, 2000). Given such binaries, gender is described as a set of power relations, socially and historically constructed, which contribute to contrasting privilege and exclusion between males and females (Hargreaves, 1990). Research has both discovered and recognised sport and PE as significant sites for the exhibition and social construction of gender differences (Brown, 1999; Scraton, 1992; Talbot, 2002 and Wright, 1996). The characteristics of sport and PE are largely synonymous with one another, especially as many of the physical activities within the National Curriculum are team-based sports and games such as football, rugby and netball; sports traditionally deemed as gender-appropriate (Green, 2006). Therefore, much of the literature around socialisation in sport can be applicable to that of PE. For instance, Messner (1990) depicted sport as a 'gendered institution' as well as a 'gendering institution'. The concept of a 'gendered institution' refers to sport as being constructed and shaped by gender relations, whereby the current structure and values of organised sport mirror dominant ideologies and conceptualisations of traditional forms of 'masculinity' and 'femininity'. The concept of a 'gendering institution', on the other hand, refers to sport as a means of actively aiding in the construction of gendered concepts, exampled by the celebrated ideal of hyper-masculinity in sport, a process which involves further encouraging the physical and psychological

masculinisation of males (Messner, 1990). Therein lies a vicious cycle of sport having been socialised to socialise, often reinforcing unhelpful, traditional gendered stereotypes and perceived behavioural norms. Whilst much of this is male-centric, the same can be said for young girls; girls entering this PE environment are subject to gendered socialisation processes and so their PE experiences are often gendered.

Outlining the context of gender socialisation in and through FPE is important as it contributes to gendered stereotypes prominent within sport. Sport is a site that perpetuates gender stereotypes where boys and girls are taught early on about the gender hierarchy of society. Sport has historically been used as a vehicle to socialise males and females to accept the notion of sport as a male preserve, male privilege in sport, and how females may need to compromise femininity in order to partake in sports (Nixon, 2008). Ideal masculinity is systematically constructed and promoted through competitive sport (Connell, 1987), as sport provides an image of severe stereotypical masculine traits. Social norms mean men are expected to possess and portray 'typical' characteristics of masculinity (Schmalz and Kerstetter, 2006), to show traits of independence, competitiveness and aggressiveness alongside power, strength and toughness (Beal, 1996; Wellard, 2002). Conversely, women are expected to possess and portray 'typical' characteristics of femininity, such as graceful, caring, non-aggressive, aesthetically beautiful, which largely oppose central tenets within many competitive and mainstream sports (Schmalz and Kerstetter, 2006). Unlike their male counterparts, females are met with contradictory societal expectations within the sporting world. This illustrates how sport also has both an enabling and constraining potential in terms of gender socialisation based on binary social norms and accompanying gender stereotypes. However, it is necessary to note that sport as a social construct is not a fixed structure, but one created and sustained by the conscious actions of other people, though its historical social structure and fundamental power relations also constrain a person's options and actions (Craig, 2016). Therefore, whilst sport may perpetuate negative gender stereotypes and expected gendered behaviours, they also have the potential to challenge and reconstruct them. With this in mind, it is important to note the significance of a teacher's role and responsibilities within this social construct. As role models, teacher's use of language and behaviour can influence the learning environment, potentially reinforcing stereotypes (Brown, 2005).

Being aware of central gendered stereotypes evident in PE is important as these can impact on young females' engagement levels, as well as feature in their social interactions. Unlike other subjects, in most UK secondary schools, PE is uniquely sex-segregated, which gives way to a unique and specific gendered environment. Indeed, Kew (1997) argues that PE may

channel girls out of sport entirely, or into ones which do not challenge dominant notions of 'femininity'. This is because female athletes are met with the dilemma that to be successful in their field, they must develop traits associated with masculinity (Krane, 2001), since sport was and is still perceived as a male dominated setting. Female athletes therefore often have to negotiate the wider social expectations and desired traits of 'femininity' in addition to the 'masculine' traits valued so highly in the sphere of sport and success, an all-encompassing example of this being female athlete 'muscularity' and body image (Steinfeldt, Zakrajsek, Carter and Steinfeldt, 2011). This association can instigate and manifest homophobic attitudes, as femininity in the sporting world perceivably 'encroaches' on dominant masculine spaces (Therberge, 2012). As the stereotypes of a female athlete and the stereotypes of a lesbian exhibit socially perceived 'masculine' traits, women's sport and lesbianism is therefore regularly associated, albeit often wrongly. For instance, Hively and El-Alayli (2014) conducted a study researching the effects of gender stereotypes on female athletes, their findings concluded female athletes performed worse in comparison to their male counterparts when told that gender affected task performance; for those who were told of no gender difference in performance, both male and female performances were equal. This study illustrates the significance that other people's views and opinions have on sporting performance, and the possible detrimental effect of gender stereotypes within peer group dynamics.

2.2. Social Dynamics in PE and Peer Influence on Engagement

A young person's peer group is a key socialising agent, these peer-relations may develop a young person in such a way that their family has not. In school, values, ideas, attitudes, behavioural patterns and skills can be introduced, reinforced or challenged by peer groups (McPherson, Curtis and Loy, 1989). Furthering the significance of the social element of PE, additional research has highlighted peer acceptance in playing a pivotal role in student enjoyment of PE and physical activity (Smith and St. Pierre, 2009), for example positive or negative peer-feedback was found to enhance or decrease an individual's level of enjoyment respectively. The perceived relevance of peer-relations on young girls' participation and enjoyment of PE is far greater than that of PE as an academic subject or means of physical activity. Smith (1999) conducted a study with 418 students in a PE setting and found that not only are peers' important contributors in the motivational processes of individuals, but that perceptions of friendship and perceptions of peer acceptance are independent variables in motivation. This supported previous research and suggested *'that an understanding of both friendships and dynamics of the larger peer group can explain motivational outcomes'* (Smith, 1999, p344). Gender has also been found to have an effect

on types of peer relations within the physical domain, as girls are found to value intimate self-disclosure and dyadic interactions in activities of expression, in contrast to boys who favour sports and games in instrumental type activities (Belle, 1989; Furman and Buhrmester, 1985). This would offer one possible explanation for some findings suggesting that girls do not value physical competency to the extent that boys do (Chase & Dummer, 1992).

Further illustrating the significance of social dynamics and social interactions within PE experience, young people have highlighted the value they place on the non-educational aspects of PE (Smith and Parr, 2007). The benefits perceived from PE by pupils were mostly and significantly social as opposed to physical, as PE was seen as an enabling space to primarily have fun and be with friends (Smith and Parr, 2007). Smith and Parr (2007) describe this as 'learning in the physical' rather than 'learning through the physical'. These positive peer relations were a primary factor in the enjoyment and participation of PE. Furthering this, pupils in numerous studies have been unable to explicitly outline the physical health and well-being benefits that PE provides and unable still to highlight why this might lead to a sustainable physically active lifestyle (Smith and Parr, 2007). Findings such as these illustrate that young people enter PE expecting to be social and have fun with their peers, both of which is deemed to significantly contribute to how much they enjoy PE. Given the significance young people place on peer relations, exploring the negative peer relations such as bullying and banter may help us to understand to what extent these play a role in the dissatisfaction and disengagement of girls in sport and PE. Another relational factor to consider regarding the social dynamics in PE is that of PE teachers, the roles and responsibilities they maintain, and how this influences the social construct of PE. Teachers have a responsibility to provide appropriate lesson planning and content delivery to develop positive peer relations, build confidence and encourage less competent students' engagement in lessons (Borowiec, Król-Zielińska, Osiński and Kantanista, 2021). PE teachers must recognise peer relationships within lessons and effectuate suitable interventions and content to improve pupils peer support (Ross and Horner, 2014); in promoting a non-threatening environment between students, teachers can positively influence students' enjoyment of PE (Lewis, 2014). Zalech (2021) reinforces this in his study, stating teachers have a responsibility to be role models as core representatives of the PE environment, stating the "complexity of a teacher's influence goes far beyond sharing their knowledge and skills" (Zalech, 2021, p.1107). He additionally highlights how PE teachers have influence to create appropriate settings in education, and teachers should develop their communication skills and encourage an atmosphere of involvement in order to be positively perceived by pupils. The study also highlighted gendered nuances, with a teacher's skill set and traits being of greater importance to female pupils.

2.3. Bullying in PE

As central tenets of PE, sports and games are thought by many to inherently characterise and represent ideals of courage, loyalty, bravery, discipline and honour (Craig, 2016), with these ideals stemming back to the English public-school system wherein athleticism became one of the defining factors of 'the proper Christian Gentleman' (Horne, Tomlinson, Whannel and Woodward, 2012). Some educators support the notion that sport has a utilitarian role teaching self-control and self-discipline, and therefore a vehicle for social control (McPherson, Curtis and Loy, 1989). Among these attributes, sport is believed to edify fair play, sportsmanship, achievement orientation and co-operation, encourage physical wellbeing and improve academic achievement and aspirations (McPherson, Curtis and Loy, 1989). In addition to this list of cultivated characteristics, McPherson, Curtis and Loy (1989) identify two of particular notice to this study: the building of morale and cohesion with a student body and the encouragement of 'appropriate' gender behaviour. In more recent years, the NCPE and extracurricular sports have had an expanded focus on the development of social goals such as social integration, acceptance of cultural diversity, reduction in educational drop out, promotion of academic aspirations and increasing educational access for poor and minority groups (Craig, 2016).

However, it is important to offer a critical perspective on such functionalist assumptions. Sport and PE are also often a place of social exclusion and discrimination, cultivating a culture of bullying, which can partly emanate from socialised gender differences and expected gender roles. For decades, much research shows declining rates in young girls' participation in PE and physical activity, or lower rates than their male counterparts. These increasingly high dropout rates are shown to stem from lack of encouragement and lack of awards for participation in comparison with boys, the feeling of being less skilled than others, experiences of teasing and perceptions of body image, to name but a few (Slater and Tiggemann, 2011; Eime, Harvey, Sawyer, Craike, Symons, Polman and Payne, 2013; Adler and Adler, 1998; Mitchell, Gray and Inchley, 2015). Much of these emanate from peer relationships and may have undertones of gender socialisation and expectations, be it a lack of support from peers, judgemental glances, remarks from fellow students or comparison with others.

Emerging research focusing primarily on the prevalence, types, motivations, and effects of bullying evidences that much school bullying takes place within PE lessons (Bejerot, Edgar and Humble, 2011; Hurley and Mandingo, 2010; Roman and Taylor, 2013). The possible effects of bullying can have severe psychological and emotional repercussions, affecting the self-esteem, confidence and physical and mental health of victims

(Young, Ne'eman and Gelser, 2011). Those who are victims of these bullying behaviours in PE show increased dissatisfaction and disengagement in sport and physical activity (Jachyra, 2016). As pupil well-being is severely at risk due to bullying, this can negatively affect students' enjoyment of PE in addition to immediate and long-term detriments to their physical and mental health (Jiménez-Barbero et al., 2020). One primary responsibility of a teacher is to construct appropriate and positive learning environments within lessons, therefore with the evidence around bullying and the link to PE, teachers must reflect upon the factors relating to negative peer behaviours in pupils and the role in which teachers themselves may play. Further research has identified three key social processes contributing to bullying in PE: changing room environments, a 'culture of silence' and social constructions of bullying by pupils and teachers (Mierzwinski and Velija, 2020). Though the focus of this research was on male PE, further research is needed to analyse and determine the key social processes involved in bullying in female PE.

As it stands, there are few research articles that focus on bullying in PE in relation to girls or femininity (Besag, 2006). However, concepts applied to studies in relation to male PE may be drawn upon when considering female PE. Research has found direct bullying, or physical aggression, is most commonly displayed by males (Harris and Petrie, 2003), though more recent studies have found an increase in physical bullying by females (Shariff, 2008). This form of bullying is the most overt and detectable, as opposed to direct verbal aggression (sometimes referred to relational victimisation) which is more covert, regularly unnoticed by others, and a tool of aggression more commonly used by females (Hurley and Mandingo, 2010). Indirect bullying utilises manipulation and social exclusion or isolation from a group (Pepler, Craig, Yuile and Connolly, 2004), it is similarly hard to detect as it often occurs subtly behind the victims back (Carney and Merrell, 2001). Supporting these possible gender nuances, girls are more likely to use indirect, verbal bullying such as teasing or gossip about peers (Iossi Silva, Pereira, Mendonça, Nunes and Oliveira, 2013).

More specifically, in regard to games and play, Besag (2006) states, "most boys will be able to name the best footballer among them, but fewer girls regard it as important to know who is the most accomplished at skipping" (Besag, 2006, p.31). Whilst this illustrates stereotypes concerning 'gender appropriate' activities, it does point to the possible gendered values placed upon competitiveness and dominance. Furthering this, girls can consider competitive attitudes to be detrimental to relationships and could even spoil friendships (Ahlgren, 1983). In the often-competitive environment of PE, this is perhaps yet another constraint and barrier for female participation, if physical competence and competitive attitudes are perceived to risk compromising female relationships. One possible counterpoint here is Noret, Smith, Birbeck,

Velija and Mierzwinski's (2015) findings that young males and young females equally reported experiencing bullying for being good at sport. This finding contrasts to that of Hills (2007) which found that girls in single-sex PE included and excluded other female peers to retain social status and ostracise other girls, and this was most commonly seen in more physically competent, socially valued girls, demonstrating skilfulness and inclusion/exclusion strategies to exercise power and maintain their social standing (Hills, 2007).

Closely linked to and often associated with verbal bullying is teasing, a primary fear of most school students (Kowalski, 2000). To be clear, this is not to suggest that all teasing is a form of bullying. Keltner, Young, Heery, Oemig and Monarch (1998) depict teasing as a tool to both humiliate yet show affection, a combination of aggressive yet playful behaviour, paradoxical in nature, and in this sense, closely ties into banter and jocular interactions. In this way, teasing provides an indirect way to highlight other people's deviations from social expectations and norms and is therefore a core element in the socialisation practices between friends (Keltner et al. 1998). Whilst similar there are distinguishable differences between banter, teasing and bullying. Bullying involves an array of behaviours such as hitting, kicking and vandalism, bullying is also inclusive of hostile forms of teasing (Keltner, Young, Heerey, Oemig and Monarch, 1998). Banter can also be a form of indirect and verbal bullying (Mierzwinski et al., 2019) but unlike bullying banter can serve as a vehicle for social cohesion and bonding, as identified by literature within this chapter. Females generally experience more negative emotions in response to being teased as opposed to men who engage in teasing more frequently, and therefore may have become more accustomed to this behaviour (Keltner et al., 1998).

Girls have reported sport-related experiences of teasing around body image, academic performance and competence, all contributing to the reduction of girl's confidence to participate (Casey, Eime, Payne and Harvey, 2009). In particular, boys were identified as instigators in peer-teasing, directed towards both physically active and inactive girls (Casey et al., 2009). Significantly, Casey et al. (2009) found that girls were caught between the pressure to conform to gendered stereotypes and the display of physical proficiency, or more simply put, being labelled a 'tomboy' for being too good and/or belittled for not being good enough. Slater and Tiggemann's (2011) study also concluded that teasing and body image concerns could contribute to the reduced participation rates of young girls in sport and physical activity, further adding to the barriers for participation females face in sport and PE. In agreement with Casey et al (2009), Slater and Tiggemann (2011) also found that adolescent girls partook at a lesser rate in organised sports than their male counterparts yet still experienced higher levels of teasing, highlighting the importance for further knowledge around the area of negative

female peer-interactions in the context of PE and sport. These studies illustrate how gender stereotyping and teasing are primary negative factors for girls and can result in the lower preference for physical activity, both short-term and long-term, again contributing to female disengagement and dissatisfaction in PE.

What is sometimes lacking from such literature is the spatiality involved in PE, notably where teasing is more likely to take place. One key element in the 'hidden' gendered curriculum is changing room cultures. In PE, the changing room environment remains single-sex regardless of a mixed-sex cohort and is known to be a space prone for bullying (Atkinson and Keller, 2012). Much of the research around this has been primarily male orientated (White and Hobson, 2017; Davison, 2000; Mooney and Hickey, 2018), where studies have shown this as a space for ritualistic bullying and humiliation in addition to the reinforcement of hypermasculine ideals. The changing room culture has been found to be a significant factor and reinforcer of hypermasculine traits whereby physical prowess is promoted and celebrated (Humberstone, 2003). In these spaces, males were found to take part in inferiorising non-conformities such as women and gay men (Humberstone, 2003). Considering the pragmatic elements involved within changing rooms, Flintoff and Scraton (2001) identify the negative influence that changing clothes in PE has on pupils' experiences in PE. Additional research supports this, arguing that the lack of privacy in changing room settings and the noticeably cramped, small spaces had a negative impact on girls and their PE experience (Niven, Henretty and Fawkner, 2014). Whilst we currently know much less about female changing room cultures in PE, it is feasible to suggest that this space could be prone to negative social interactions, something explored within this thesis.

The perceptions and influence of PE teachers have also been found to play a major role in bullying in PE. Jiménez-Barbero et al. (2020) found PE teachers are central to the prevention or encouragement of bullying in physical education. At times there is often discrepancy between perceptions of what is considered bullying, banter or light-jest, leaving pupils feeling unsupported and even further victimised by teachers. Green, Shriberg and Farber's (2008) research found female teachers perceived the severity of pupil situations more severe than male colleagues, but pupil gender made no difference in teacher decisions. One possible interpretation of this data was that female teachers may be more sensitive to challenges pupils face. Female teachers are also not socialised to downplay problematic behaviour unlike males tend to be. Whilst insightful, it should be noted that this study did not focus on PE and PE teachers. However, research on PE teachers' attitudes and reactions towards overweight students in bullying situations highlighted how female PE teachers were more likely to take action in bullying situations than their male colleagues, as well as teachers as a whole more

likely to intervene when the victims were girls (Peterson, Puhl and Luedicke, 2012). Whilst this research illustrates gendered nuances in terms of intervention, O'Connor and Graber (2014) found that many teachers do not know how to deal with a bully in instances of indirect and verbal bullying, a preferred method of bullying by girls. This is despite of the legal requirement that all state schools in England have and implement a behaviour policy (DoE, 2016).

2.4. Banter in Sport

Banter is a type of humour involving back and forth interaction (Haugh and Bousfield, 2012), containing competitive and jocular characteristics often synonymous with 'taking the piss' (Alexander, MacLaren, O'Gorman and Taheri, 2012; Plester and Sayers, 2007). In more recent years the concept of banter has become increasingly prominent in youth culture, and particularly in sporting environments (Clarke, 2018; Nichols, 2020). Indeed, the dualistic, jocular interaction of banter is particularly synonymous with young males and sports environments and is often regarded by many as predominantly a male pursuit (Mierzwinski, Cock and Velija, 2019). Though banter is more synonymous with boys and 'lad culture' it is not exclusive to male interaction (Phipps and Young, 2015). However, to date, most of the research has centred on its prevalence within single-sex male sporting spaces. Equally, little research on banter has focused on PE, therefore the following discussion pertains to what is known of banter within sport more broadly.

Nichols (2020) research concerning banter within a male rugby club offers theoretical complexities and nuances beyond simply 'rugby lad culture' by consider banter as "mischievous masculinities". She describes how banter frames social interactions and can be used to understand these encounters whilst establishing social rules (McCann, Plummer and Minichiello, 2010), and though the latter has been notably documented, less is known on the ways banter may challenge or interrupt these social norms (Lynch, 2010; Magrath, 2017). Nichols (2020) notes the use of banter as a guise to convey harsh truths or hurtful opinions in the form of jokes and jest. On analysis of the male participant's views of banter between teammates, there seemed a shared agreement that banter was core in the male relationships of the club, and the rugby space was 'safe' and permitting of potentially problematic behaviours which would otherwise be poorly received elsewhere. Banter was used by rugby lads as a valued social practice to convey hegemonic and laddish identities as well as inclusivity, a tool for social bonding. Another important element of Nichols (2020) study is the notion of banter to combat banter in order to challenge the conversation and narrative. This nuanced nature of banter is shown when rugby lads challenged their peer's narrow and hegemonic views on masculinity through the same jocular manner. This widens the

parameters of banter's 'dual edged' traits, whilst banter can be seen as socially bonding and socially exclusionary, it can also be socially challenging.

Further developing the nuanced nature of banter is the work of Lawless and Magrath (2021) in their study of male social interactions in a cricket club. Banter is identified as a double-edged tool and can be both socially inclusive and exclusive in addition to its ability to be socially reinforcing and challenging. Similar to Nichols (2020) study, banter was identified as central to male friendships, both in and out of sports environments (Lawless and Magrath, 2021). This raises several interesting points when considering female participation in sport and physical activity- girls use of banter, if any, the nature of female banterous interaction, the use of banter as a tool for cohesion and/or exclusion in female peer relations, and the use of banter to challenge peers.

Offering a non-cisgender male approach to banter in sport, Fletcher's (2020) study shows the positive impact of the inclusion of trans men into a men's roller derby team. Within this study Fletcher (2020) states the presence of trans men has meant the typical topics of banter have moved away from homophobic and sexualised, becoming more inclusive of broader masculinities. In Fletcher's (2020) case study of a trans-male roller derby athlete, the athlete describes the social interactions of their new club, Fletcher (2020, p. 180) writes "Members of [the club] exchanged insults and banter in a different way; however, there were no homophobic slurs and although the banter could be sexual, *women* were not overtly sexualized, and women were often the instigators." Complementary to Nichols (2020) and Lawless and Magrath's (2021) literature, Fletcher's (2020) work highlights how banter served to establish belonging and unity, yet contrastingly was rarely malicious. This alternative narrative to that of cisgender male banter and hegemonic masculinity may shed some light on the jocular interaction of girls and women. A study on coaching female combat athletes (Phipps, Khomutova and Channon, 2020) approaches a female perspective on typically masculine banter. This literature addresses banter and appropriateness of language, acknowledging how gendered banter may reinforce the ideology of female athletes' inferiority to men. This draws attention to topics typically addressed towards women in combat sport, often under the guise of banter, such as "Are you a lesbian?", being "the slut of the gym" and "she won't last". Though this study focusses on women in combat sport as opposed to girls in PE, there may be parallels which can be drawn from these topics displayed in the FPE environment. From these literary sources, we know banter is considered a male pursuit and is often hegemonic in nature with masculinised topics which tend to be sexualised, homophobic and derogatory. This opens questions around female jocular interactions, is banter inherently male in its characteristics or is it specific to female femininities?

In the context of banter in PE research by Mierzwinski et al. (2019) offer insight into banter between young people and the roles PE teachers can play in Male PE. With banter's ambiguous 'double-edged' nature, there can often be discrepancies in interpretations between pupils and students. Highlighted in the study is the ways in which PE teachers handle teasing and banterous situations, as pupils reported teacher responses as ignoring, brushing off or even laughing at inappropriate or unkind comments made by pupils. This study also explored teachers' usage of banter in male PE, and showed teachers often engaged in banterous interactions. Some pupils raised issues with the use of banter by teacher's, viewing it as unequal treatment due to the exclusivity of these interactions with particular or "sporty" pupils, which was perceived as favouritism (Mierzwinski et al., 2019). This, as stated by Mierzwinski et al. (2019), significantly contribute to the normalisation and perceptions of negative interactions in PE of bullying, banter and teasing. From the academic evidence to date, banter is seemed to be less commonly used within female groups in comparison to males. However, other literature has highlighted a female affinity for verbal and indirect forms of bullying behaviours as opposed to males, which banter can fall into. With much still to understand about the role banter plays in female peer relations, if any at all, the perspective of FPE teachers in girls jocular and banterous interactions may shed some light and give some insight into the extent FPE teachers engage in such interactions themselves and how this negatively or positively influences social dynamics and relations in PE. This is important to consider particularly when reflecting on the roles and responsibilities of FPE teachers, and the influence they have over girls' engagement and satisfaction in PE.

2.4. Conclusion

This chapter illustrated how socialisation within PE has led to gendered stereotyping and how this can inform gendered peer group dynamics in PE, which are highly valued by girls. Negative social interactions enabled within PE were found to foster avenues for bullying, which detrimentally effects young girls' experience and engagement within PE. Consistent with broader trends, girls are more likely to engage in indirect or verbal bullying, particularly pertaining to body image, lack of competence or being too good. Therefore, as females regularly partake in teasing, banter seems like a viable topic to explore within negative social interactions. Whilst banter can aid social bonding, it has been found to be detrimental to peer group dynamics within sport. The topics of banter, indirect and verbal bullying also proved central to PE teachers' ability to intervene in cases of bullying within PE, making them worthy topics from which to focus attention concerning negative peer relations. This chapter proved

useful to ascertain an empirical grounding for this thesis, it is now necessary to outline a viable theoretical framework.

Chapter Three

A Figurational Sociological Theoretical Framework

This study is underpinned by a figurational sociological approach which draws upon Elias's sociological concepts of civilising processes, figurations, power relations, habitus and I-We-They identities. These concepts will be used as a theoretical framework to illustrate, understand and explain key themes from data collected. Therefore, this chapter starts by introducing each concept and ends by illustrating how they apply to the focus of this study.

3.1. A Figurational Sociological Processual Approach and Key Concepts

Figurational sociology emanates from the seminal works of Norbert Elias, who believed that the central aim of sociology was to widen our understanding of human processes in addition to social processes in order to grow more reliable social funds of knowledge (Elias, 1978). Elias's focus on processes sought to combat sociological tendencies of 'process reduction', whereby dynamic and interdependent social experiences and observations are often misrepresented as static and independent (Murphy, Sheard and Waddington, 2000). One of the most explicit ways that Elias championed his approach to sociological investigations was through his magnum opus *On the Processes of Civilization* (Elias, 2012). Alongside Dunning, a key theorist in sport sociology, Elias applied his theorising concerning civilizing processes to sport, which led to the concepts such as the quest for excitement (Elias and Dunning, 1986). These seminal works have offered scholars within the sociology of sport a framework from which to provide a long-term detached perspective of social phenomena that can offer an understanding and appreciation of how and why they came to be through examining long-term central social processes.

Other studies on gender in PE have utilised symbolic interactionism or feminist theoretical applications; whilst offering differing strengths, these theories have been arguably critiqued for an exclusive focus on present day and for providing an insufficient conception of power in relationships. Elias' Figurational sociology, however, is able to conceptualise these relations and the power between them as dynamic and fluid, and considers long term social processes to provide a more accurate depiction of social constructs (Elias, 2012). To aid his process-orientated approach and overcome what he considered problematic dualisms and dichotomies within conventional sociological terms, concepts and theories, Elias developed and coined various concepts (Murphy et al., 2000). It is necessary to note that these concepts are

interlinked, processual and malleable, much like the psycho-social notions that they are intended to depict. For example, Goudsblom (1977) explains how figurations can be historically significant but can gradually change over time, due to figurations being nothing other than a social construction of interdependent people.

Figuration, interdependencies and power

Elias (1978) describes a figuration as a structure of people, both mutually oriented and interdependent, which can involve a collection or network of individuals within groups such as family, school, work, or part of the nation state (Quilley and Loyal, 2005). A figuration is formed by and can come to represent an amalgamation of mutual practices, values, representations and orientations of socially incorporated persons (Conde, 2011). Figurations are malleable and can change over time as they are merely a socially constructed group of interdependent peoples. At the heart of this concept is the deliberate shift away from common tendencies to view the individual and society as isolated objects, separating one from the other as if these concepts could exist solely and independently (Quintaneiro, 2006). This conception highlights the inevitable interdependencies between people through 'reciprocal dependence' (Olofsson, 2000), having bio-social roots that develop socially from birth i.e. family, community and school networks of interdependence (Scheff, 2001). It is important to note that these chains of interdependencies are dynamic and fluctuating, as they are often portrayed as being static or fixed.

With interdependence comes power balances, constantly fluctuating and mostly asymmetrical; dependent on the function each person(s) provides and their needs (Dunning and Hughes, 2013; Mennell, 1998). This point is significant when taking into account Elias's (1978) depiction of power as a characteristic 'of all human relationships'. In this sense, power is always present and multifaceted, not something owned or possessed, but ebbs and flows within dynamic figurations. Power should not be reductively conceptualised in to a 'thing' that one can possess more or less of (van Krieken, 2005). As such, human actions and behaviour are enabled and constrained by the figurations they pertain, as opposed to an approach centred around possession and value (Mennell, 1998). Therefore, at a conceptual level, Elias (1978) argues that the term interdependence offers a more appropriate depiction of the role of power in relationships, which should be central to any understanding of figurations and their operational abilities.

Habitus and 'I-We-They' identities

Elias' notion of habitus refers to a socially constructed 'second nature' or internal familiarity (Paulle and Heenkhuizen, 2012). Therefore, the shared practises, values, representations and orientations of individuals - or a group - become deeply embedded within people's psyche and are embodied in their actions. Individual habitus refers to the specific emotional and behavioural dispositions a person acquires (Mennel, 1998). Shared habitus relates to when a person's feelings, views and behavioural norms are reciprocated by others in a group (Mennel, 1998). Finally, social habitus denotes mutual values, attitudes and behaviours that take place across multiple figurations. In this sense, Elias (1991) suggests that social habitus provides a script from which a person's individual habitus is developed. Whilst habitus is deeply embedded within people's psyche and embodied through habitual behaviours, Elias (2001) believed people's identities change throughout their lives where identity formation and expression represent more conscious decision making. Such decisions can be attributable to the figurations people are part of or new ones they enter. As such, people's identity is constantly fluctuating, and socially informed by the world around them (Mierzwinski, 2020). To describe this process, Elias drew upon the personal pronoun model to reference 'I-We-They' identities. Elias (1978) states that any individual in one situation at any one time can be characterised by one of the 'I-We-They' pronouns, and so they have a relational and functional purpose. People's sense of 'I' is developed from the social awareness of the other identities of 'We' and 'They'. This relational conception means that people's 'I' identities should not be comprehended without consideration of the prevailing 'We' and 'They' identities. There are often tensions and balances at play between 'I-We-They' identities, which people navigate and negotiate. This process is influenced by enabling and constraining social processes within figurations (Mierzwinski, 2020).

3.2. A Long-Term Perspective of Gender-Relations in PE

A central tenet within Elias's (1978) sociological approach was to understand how things have come to be. He stressed the need to consider contemporary social relations as emerging, continuing and transforming from previous social relations. His approach in this respect is perhaps best epitomised by his expression, in order to understand the present, we need to understand the past (Elias, 1978). As such, Elias (1978) examined long-term social processes, usually permeating over at least three generations and one-hundred years. Because this study is centred on two key aspects, namely single-sex female secondary PE and negative social relations, in the next two sub-sections long-term perspectives of how PE became and has

continued to be gendered, and long-term changes in attitudes towards bullying and aggression are presented.

In England, at a surface level, it could be argued that the advent of the NCPE in 1992 informed and coincided with significant changes in the value, purpose and content of PE. However, gendered socialisation remains constant in the delivery and experience of secondary school PE (Green et al., 2007). Though perhaps far more inclusive of a female audience today, PE remains gendered, and many sports are deemed 'inappropriate', effecting gender stereotypes and possibly contributing to negative peer relations such as stigma, shaming and sexism/homophobia. Present-day gendered social constructions are largely illustrative of modern PE's deep-rooted gendered history. To understand this and the sociological phenomena in female PE, exploring how they came to be and the role of PE within this process is crucial.

In the UK, the mid-to-late 19th century saw the emergence of modern PE in British public schools (Kirk,1992). PE was primarily a vehicle for the social controlling of boys' indocility, only for those from ruling class families (Dunning and Sheard, 1979). Boys would learn social control, gentlemanly conduct and other socially desirable traits through game play, an example of a process which Elias calls 'civilising process'. A primary purpose of this civilising process was to counteract the perceived feminisation of society in Britain (Mangan, 1983). Though middle-upper class girls were able to partake in physical activity at public schools, participation was prohibited from public view and strict behavioural codes embodying traditional femininity were enforced (Hargreaves, 2002). Modern PE was thus formed upon vast gender disparities in terms of access, performance and perception in favour of a male population. Such gendered disparities remained in PE until the early decades of the 20th century, World War II saw a shift in perceptions of women's capability to work, and the 1944 Education Act sought to ensure all children in England were provided with secondary education. PE became predominantly taught by women, their practices reflecting much female tradition, with gymnastics as a focus (Flintoff and Scraton, 2005). Gendered activities still remained, a key example of this being boys were required to show strength and power on the pommel whilst girls were expected to be supple and dainty on beam (Kirk, 1998). However, the gradual influence of male teachers within PE saw a shift in favour of gendered sports and game-based 'gender appropriate' activities (Kirk, 1998), such a gendered socialisation process meant boys participated in football, cricket and rugby, whilst girls engaged in hockey, netball and rounders (Whitehead and Hendry, 1976).

PE's belated inclusion in the national curriculum in 1992 aimed to enrich individuals PE experiences and not restricting their access, opportunity or learning (Penney, 2002). Coinciding with this, The Interim Report (1991) highlighted the need to carefully consider and review common practices and perceptions in PE in terms of the biological and sociological effects of being male and female and what behaviour is deemed appropriate for girls and boys (Penney, 2002). As such, the NCPE promised equal opportunity for both genders to access a broad and balanced curriculum (Green, 2008), evident in the gender neutral NCPE. The NCPE aimed to create an opportunity for a curriculum best suited to both boys and girls. However, though boys and girls may be presented with the opportunity to participate, perform or compete in the same sport, deep-rooted gendered prejudices mean this 'same' opportunity is rarely equal. These gendered perceptions can be witnessed in and furthered by unwavering PE teacher's views rooted in pedagogic gendered traditionalism, in which the NCPE is modified and adapted to fit their personal gendered values and beliefs (Evans, Davies and Penney, 1996; Smith and Parr, 2007). Battling gender stereotyping and promoting broad inclusivity is an aim of the NCPE, yet the negative gendered behaviours, attitudes and perceptions are omitted from this curriculum in what is referred to as the 'hidden curriculum'. It is within this hidden curriculum that relations are socially constructed, enabling and constraining, both reinforcing and challenging already existing power relations (Bain, 1990). With this persistent gendered dynamic in the PE environment, studies are highlighting large numbers of dissatisfaction and disengagement of girls in PE (Cockburn and Clarke, 2002; Ennis, 1999; Mitchell, Gray and Inchley, 2015; Casey, Hill and Goodyear, 2014).

What this brief gendered history illustrates is that as a social construction, PE does not exist in a vacuum but is influenced by broader prevailing gender relations, both historical and current. PE continues to be a 'masculine' subject (Kirk, 1998), which legitimises stereotypical gendered patterns in provision and participation (Penney, 2002). Such orthodoxies are demonstrated in a hidden curriculum of competitive team games, therefore instead of equality, the expectation that girls play like boys emerged, and those girls that did not engage were labelled a 'problem group' in PE (Hargreaves, 2002). Such gendered social processes contribute to gender stereotypes, disparities and can carry potential detrimental effect on peer-relations in female PE.

3.3. Long-Term Attitudinal Changes in Regards to Bullying and Contemporary Negative Peer Relations in PE

Linking this to the theoretical framework, long-term civilising processes can be seen throughout the history of PE. Elias (2012) argues that one largely unintended outcome of long-term civilizing processes has been gradual shifts towards more equal power-relations between and within various social groups, such as males and females, a process he referred to as functional democratization. This can be seen in the gradual increase in more equal opportunities for girls in PE. A gendered habitus in PE can be observed throughout the notion of the hidden curriculum, whereby these deep-rooted gendered views and behavioural norms are embedded and shared between individuals within the figuration of PE. Another of Elias' concepts which perhaps explains some sociological phenomena in PE is 'a quest for excitement'. Elias and Dunning (1986, p.44) illustrate how 'a de-control of emotional controls' can be witnessed within sport as de-routinization. As society becomes characterised by civility and increasing routinization and where large proportions of the population are subjected to complex internal and external controls, sport provides a means to experience an enjoyable 'upsurge of emotions' (Dunning 1997, p.482); where civility is temporarily forgotten (Thing, 2016). The social significance of many modern sports is their ability to offer people a 'quest for excitement', whilst retaining status and prestige in societies whereby heightened levels of civility are typically sought and highly valued.

Due to long-term sociological processes and changes, modern society has become more planned, routinized and mundane (Mennel, 1998) though perhaps less rigid, with children and teachers ruled by time and routine through school. The UK carries many cultural conventions and routines, a contemporary example of this is incredibly evident in recent years with the disruption of COVID-19 and the schooling system. Though national lockdowns and safety measures disrupted routines, routinisation came back almost immediately with the push to get children and teachers back to 'normality' in schools. So, sport has become a necessary and viable emotional outlet for many people. With the shift towards a more civilised society, and continued routinization, sport is a justifiable and socially accepted outlet for aggressiveness and competition. Moreover, the more violence and aggressiveness is curbed in the public domain, the more happens in private, this is clear as online violence and abuse becomes increasingly popular. For this reason, PE is a figuration that can offer certain behaviours to be socially permitted which are less attainable elsewhere within school life, such as high levels of competitiveness and aggressiveness; PE is a key outlet today for a controlled decontrolling of emotions.

In *On the Processes of Civilization*, Elias (2012) observed long-term processes of social refinement by drawing upon many empirical sources, which identified changes in the ways people relate to one another, the ways people identify with both themselves and others, and how people behave in public settings. These long-term civilizing processes saw change in people's behaviours and attitudes, such as a change in manners and a societal repugnance towards violence (Mierzwinski et al., 2019). In mapping these changes in people's attitudes and behaviours within Western European societies between the Middle Ages and 20th century, one overriding observation Elias made referred to gradual shifts towards heightened self-awareness and self-control of bodily functions and violent emotions (Dunning and Rojek, 1992). A further outcome of long-term civilizing processes has been informalization processes, which as the name suggests draws attention to diminishing levels of formality in the public demonstration of manners and emotions through various periods of recent history (Wouters, 2004). Central to these processes were the lessening of social constraints, which allowed individuals to experiment more with the ways they spoke, dressed and expressed their identities (Elias, 2012). Elias (2012) and Wouters (2004) argue that such experimental behaviours and emotional expressions can only be practiced due to heightened levels of civilizing processes. This is to suggest that as social constraints became less strict, a higher demand was placed on individuals own levels of self-restraint (Elias, 1998).

The need for people to exhibit increasing self-restraint over their emotions and exercise greater levels of foresight within their actions to achieve prestige and social mobility initially permeated within the secular upper classes; before becoming dispersed through various social constraints, such as central monopolies over the control of violence (Elias, 2012). The gradual internationalisation of social constraints into self-restraints was central to how people came to identify themselves as more 'civilized' and what, more broadly, Elias termed formalization processes. This can be seen through the gendered history of PE, with school playing a key role in civilising influences. Early forms of bullying in PE were linked to greater power-chances for boys who were older or stronger (Dunning and Sheard, 1979); when viewed from a modern perspective, these acts of physical violence seem brutal and severe (Mierzwinski et al., 2019). However, the prefect-fagging system legitimised these levels of violence as an external social control, maintaining power imbalances, control and relational hierarchies (Dunning and Sheard, 1979). Such acts of violence today are shunned, and schools rely on a more civilised form of internal control through anti-bullying policies and the expectant use of self-restraint; in addition, long term civilizing processes can be seen in attitudinal change between the historical acceptance of physical violence to the moral disgust present society shows towards bullying. Attitudes towards bullying in schools today has been

subject to broader changes in people's sensitivities and levels of repugnance in regard to instances of violence (Mierzwinski et al., 2019). Gradual shifts in people's perceptions towards open displays of physical aggression perhaps offers one explanation for increasing trends in verbal, indirect (social exclusion and gossip) or cyber bullying (Mierzwinski et al., 2019). Not only are these forms of bullying perhaps indicative of broader civilizing processes, but they are also more pervasive and harder to avoid or escape from and equally harder to detect and regulate.

Mierzwinski et al. (2019) argue that core principles within figurational sociology may help researchers achieve a means of conceptualising power-relations inherent within bullying in a realistic manner. Mierzwinski et al. (2019) suggests focusing on specific figurational dynamics may provide a means to avoid unhelpful generalised conceptions of bullying by helping to "emphasize the need to consider the subcultural variances between and within different social groups, as well as key contributory factors such as "gender and sexuality" (Mierzwinski et al., 2019, p.14). Furthering this, a more reality-congruent understanding of bullying in PE can be gained, as put by Mierzwinski et al. (2019), by offering a long-term processual approach to provide a more detached exposition of bullying, rationalising conceptions and emotions towards bullying and the ways in which these were established. Approaches such as the civilising process help to conceptualise the long-term changes in perceptions and behaviours of bullying throughout periods of time and acknowledge its continual dynamic nature. The individual civilising process allows an understanding of long-term changes in human relations and a shift of restraints from external to internal. Young people experience a period of socialisation in which they are expected to demonstrate self-restraint to refrain from aggressive emotional outbursts, both physically and now more commonly verbally, and this is indicative of behavioural and emotional refinement. Viewing negative peer-relations through this lens helps to identify and explain these sociological interactions.

Focusing on the fluctuating asymmetrical power-imbalances inherent in bullying lends a better understanding of why and how bullying occurs in PE, allowing attention to remain on the power differentials as opposed to subjective issues of clarity in the repetition and intent behind bullying behaviours (Mierzwinski et al., 2019). This not only helps to highlight of power imbalances seen within girl's negative peer-relations but may also help to identify why and which individuals or groups have this power advantage. Liston (2006) brings attention to modern sport as a battle ground over gender identities due to the increasing participation of females. This caused challenges in gendered ideologies within sport and what habitus/identities are deemed as masculine/feminine (Dunning, 2013). In FPE, the concept of

habitus may highlight shared contradicting feelings, views and behavioural norms within the negative peer-relations of bullying and banter.

Elias postures that 'I' identities within a figuration cannot be comprehended without understanding social relations entwined in the complex web of 'We' and 'They' identities (Evans and Crust, 2015). Nielson and Thing (2019, p.449) argue that "*Consequently, within figurations the actions of individuals are intertwined with each other, which cause unintended consequences and changes over time*". Nielson and Thing (2019) also highlight the idea of established versus outsider relations, the 'We' identity as opposed to the 'They' identity, that what may establish an individual in one figuration may qualify them as an outsider in another. I-We-They' identities are a key element of sport, as there is often a 'We' versus 'They' mentality, with a strong emphasis on togetherness and team unity within a 'We' identity, and strong rivalries against the opposing teams - 'They'. For young people, a sense of identity and 'fitting in' is highly valued, inclusion in one 'We' identity can mean exclusion from others. Balances between the 'I', 'We' and 'They' identities make visible any existing tensions and power imbalances between young people, showing relations to be both constraining and enabling (Nielson and Thing, 2019). The application of this relational element within FPE allows understanding of negative peer-relations as a 'We' versus 'They' and how 'I' identities are formed through negotiating these social tensions. To understand and depict negative peer-relations in FPE and how they differ to the typical masculinities of power 'attainment' in sport, the application of figurational sociology serves as an appropriate framework.

3.4. Conclusion

This chapter introduced key theorising within figurational sociology and provided definitions and explanations of key concepts such as figurations, interdependencies, power, habitus and 'I'-'We'-'They' identities. This theorising was applied to explain PE's gendered history and how contemporary social relations within PE have come to be, notably shifting attitudes towards aggression and bullying, which explains the more pervasive aspects within the hidden curriculum. Such aspects offer critical insight into the prevailing gender stereotypes and negative peer relations which can contribute to large numbers of girls dissatisfied and disengaged in FPE (Mitchell, Gray and Inchley, 2015; Casey Hill and Goodyear, 2014). Through adopting a long-term perspective, it is easier to negate emotive or moral leanings towards this topic and offer a more detached, reality-congruent insight into negative social interactions in FPE, understanding how these social constructs came to be. This being said, insights into negative peer behaviours are limited, as teachers can only offer their own insights

and experiences of what they have witnessed, unlikely to provide a complete picture of these interactions.

Chapter Four

Research Methodology, Research Methods and Research Process

This chapter frames the methodological approach and research methods adopted within this study, offering rationale for how these are best suited to answer the research questions outlined in Chapter One. After outlining the research design, this chapter details: the sample size, selection and recruitment process; the data collection process; researcher reflexivity; ethical considerations; and, finally, the data analysis process.

4.1. Research Design

In order to thoroughly consider and explore negative peer relations in Female PE through the sociological analysis of Female PE teachers' experiences, views and interpretations, this study adopted a subjective interpretivist research paradigm. This paradigmatic underpinning acknowledges and accounts for differing views and perceptions of individuals, and the influence that preconceptions, beliefs and values can have on individual's perspectives (Walliman, 2011). The characteristics of an interpretivist paradigm lends itself well to a qualitative study due to the idea that knowledge can be available in different forms and significantly are decipherable through the interpretations of studied persons (Smith, 2010).

4.2. Sampling Strategy, Process and Profiles

In order to gain Female PE teachers' experiences, views and interpretations of negative peer relations in secondary FPE, four key sampling methods were used to acquire an appropriate sample and suitable sample size. A combination of purposive, criterion, convenience and snowball sampling strategies were adopted (Sparkes and Smith, 2018). A purposive non-random sample was sought due to the nature of the research questions i.e. female PE teachers. To ensure suitability, rigour and credibility of the knowledge produced by participants (Sparkes and Smith, 2018), a criterion that participants must have been a female PE teacher for a minimum of two years within the UK was set.

Convenience sampling usually incorporates several logistical elements of the researcher's accessibility to participants such as financial costs, distance, travel or how many potential/ available participants (Thomas, Nelson and Silverman, 2015). However, due to the exceptional circumstances of COVID-19 travel, distance and financial costs were essentially eliminated as interviews were completed over a Microsoft Teams Meeting video call in order to comply with government lock-down regulations and measures. The researcher was able to contact three female PE teachers (i.e. former schoolteacher and link through university friend) who also acted as gateways to less-familiar participants through a snowball effect. Other participants were recruited through social media platforms.

Though there are some criticisms surrounding purposive and convenience sampling strategies due to potential researcher bias, acquiring more randomly recruited participants for the research proved significantly difficult due to the strain that COVID-19 had placed on teachers nationwide, so the participants used for this study were simply those that met the criteria, had the time to complete the interview, and were willing to do so within a three-month period. The criteria outlined did mean that some people who expressed a willingness were not selected due to their only just finishing teacher training, possibly rendering them not sufficiently experienced to offer authoritative views and experiences of negative social interactions. Others met the criteria but after initial agreement to take part failed to find the time to complete an interview, illustrating the messiness and precariousness involved within qualitative research (Bloyce, 2004).

Adopting this sampling strategy enabled the researcher to gain a sample of 12 participants acquired from 9 different schools, with a range in experience from 6 years to 45 years. 6 participants had 20 years or more of PE teaching experience, with 5 being - or had previously been - head of department. In terms of regionality, the participants teaching posts ranged across the country, in both the South East and North East of the England, representing schools of varying social classes, religious stances, reputations and academic and sporting success. More specifically, the schools of the female PE teachers interviewed ranged in standard and demographic, the IMD (index of multiple deprivation) rank for each school and the corresponding teacher is highlighted in appendix E (English Indices of Deprivation 2010, 2011), with IMD rankings ranged from 11036 to 32769. Information on school characteristics were described by participants through the first stages of interview questioning, aiming to gain context of teacher experience and background. Since ethnicity was not a focal point of this study, very little information was shared around the ethnic demographic of each school. However, with the exception of the independent Christian school, it was implied that most schools were predominantly white and represented much of the larger UK ethnicity context.

These details offer necessary context to the female PE teachers' experiences, views and interpretations of negative social interactions gained, offering significant credibility to the data attained.

4.3. Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews are renowned as the gold-standard of qualitative data collection as in this method of collecting knowledge participants are provided the means to convey their own thoughts and feelings in a rich and flexible form of communication (Brown and Potrac, 2009; Chantler, 2014; Neuman, 2014). The use of semi-structured interviews provides the researcher with both structure and preparation combined with elements of flexibility. The preparation of an interview guide helps to direct and answer the research question, whilst providing an opportunity for the researcher to respond to the interviewee's thoughts and feelings in a way that further explores and elaborates on those reflections throughout the interview (Roderick, 2003; Kvale and Brinkman, 2009; Sparkes and Smith, 2018).

Before conducting interviews with participants, an email was sent with brief insight on the researcher, the study and the criteria for participants. For those that met the criteria and could offer their time, a further email was sent containing an information sheet and informed consent form (Appendix B), so the interviewee had full knowledge and understanding of the context of the research and what was required of them as a voluntary participant. This consent form was electronically signed and emailed back to the researcher prior to the commencement of the interview. The interview guide was deliberately divided into two main parts, and so each participant was made aware that they may do the interview in one sitting or split this into two shorter interviews at separate times should they prefer.

A date and time for each interview was arranged via email or phone and interviews were conducted over video call via Microsoft Teams. However, the interviewer ensured that she interviewed participants in a private, quiet space to further ensure confidentiality; for the participants the interview took place in a home or workspace. Most interviews took place in one sitting, though some interviewees opted for two shorter interviews at separate occasions. At the start of each interview, a brief discussion took place to remind each participant of the purpose of the interview, what it entailed in terms of topics and structure, reassurances of their anonymity and confidentiality, and asking them if they were happy for the interview to be recorded before gaining their verbal consent.

Once the researcher began the recording for the purposes of a post-interview, in-depth analysis, the interview commenced. The questions were divided into sub-headings of logical sections and topic areas to maintain the interview structure and participants understanding, consisting of open-ended questions and additional probing where required (Appendix C). The interviews were relaxed and without a strict pattern, allowing conversation and flexibility in questions and answers, which ease both the researcher and the participant (Ennis and Chen, 2012; Law, 2019). The sub-headings were as follows: *Background of teacher and school context; Physical education compared with other subjects; PE teachers' compared to non-PE teachers'; FPE teachers' compared with MPE teachers'; FPE teachers' views on FPE engagement; FPE teachers' views on girl peer-group dynamics; FPE teachers' views on banter* and *FPE teachers' views on bullying.* These questions were agreed between the researcher and supervisor and aimed at gaining an appreciation of the gendered social dynamics within FPE and then, more specifically, nuances within negative social interactions within FPE. These questions gained approval by the York St John University board of ethical approval. Each interview followed the skeleton interview guide, covering each question in addition to further questioning if a particular point of interest arose. The researcher was prepared to stop the interview at the first signs of any distress from the participant (Ennis and Chen, 2012). As the interview closed, the participants were asked if there was anything of interest to add in relation to the study which had not been covered, and then thanked for their time and participation. The researcher then guided towards a debrief sheet (Appendix D) containing contacts of support such as 'Mind' that would provide help and advice if any issues had arisen during the interview. Each interview lasted between 55 minutes and 144 minutes.

4.4. Researcher Reflexivity

After the completion of an interview, the researcher engaged in a brief reflection which gave opportunity for notation of key points and initial thoughts for future contemplation. Bryman (2016) emphasises the importance of this method to eliminate potential bias, which served to be a significant practice in this study due to the brief previous relationships held by the researcher with some of the participants, who continued to teach at the school attended by the researcher once she had left. The use of a reflexive journal ensured that an audit trail was kept, this method provided mitigation against researcher bias in addition to dependability and confirmability (Sparkes and Smith, 2018; Tracy, 2013).

A pilot interview took place to aid the researcher in familiarisation of the interview guide, gain some sense of possible duration of interviews, and the minimisation of leading the interview

to promote particular answers (Roderick, 2003; Armour and Griffiths, 2012; Ennis and Chen, 2012). This pilot process helped when completing the other interviews, particularly in providing me confidence in the interview guide, my ability to probe and, importantly, my ability to develop rapport in an online medium with essentially a stranger. Building rapport between an interviewee and interviewer is a necessity according to many researchers (Matthews, 2010; Ennis and Chen, 2012; Law, 2019), however this was somewhat limited under the restrictions of COVID-19. Whilst rapport was difficult to build prior to the interview, the interview itself therefore played a central role in building a rapport where the interviewee felt comfortable to express honest and rich knowledge. Upon reflection, the early stages of the interview guide (Appendix C) significantly aided in this, due to the personability of the questions regarding the participants own teaching context and background and some exploration of their personal experiences and views. Another method in establishing rapport was the use of a more relaxed interview technique, which at times saw light-hearted jokes and laughter reciprocated between the interviewee and the interviewer.

4.5. Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was submitted November 2020, and was granted ethical approval in January 2021, allowing the data collection via interviews to proceed. Ethical approval was granted on the premise that certain conditions and processes were followed. Each interviewee was informed both verbally and in writing that their participation in the study was entirely voluntary; it was also communicated that should they wish to withdraw from participation in the study they may do so at any point without prejudice against them. On consideration of the study, two prominent and potential ethical issues were that of anonymity and confidentiality. These are crucial elements to ensure the study is ethically upstanding; with particular regard to the nature of this study, this project would not have been given the green light if anonymity and confidentiality could not be assured (Parker, 1996, Bourke, 2003; Kelly and Waddington, 2006; Brown and Potrac, 2009).

This was important to consider as the data collection consisted of interviewing teachers currently in schools about the nature of child interactions. All interviews were recorded via Microsoft Teams as well as on a voice recording device as a back-up. Both recordings were securely stored on a password-protected university OneDrive account, solely accessible by the researcher and project supervisor. For each interview, the participant was informed by the researcher prior to interviewing that the name of the school and any other names referenced would remain anonymous and completely confidential. Each participant was also informed

that each teacher would not be identifiable, and pseudonyms would be given in place their name so that other participants and even those from the same school would not be able to identify who had expressed what. The participants were also ensured that full transcripts and interview recordings would not be accessible to the general population during or beyond the study but would be secure and solely accessible by the researcher and the project supervisor (Gibson and Brown, 2009).

Another potential ethical issue was the sensitive nature of the research question and subsequent interview questions, as the topic of bullying and banter may be triggering to some individuals. This was minimised through the careful planning of the interview guide (Appendix C) which sensitively phrased and explored questions, and the follow up of a debrief sheet to each interviewee with several accessible contacts should the topic have been triggering and any support post-interview was required (Appendix D).

4.6. Data Analysis

In order to analyse the data collected, thematic analysis was agreed between the researcher and supervisor as the most appropriate method of data analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) propose a six-stage thematic analysis, in which large amounts of qualitative data, such as transcripts and audio, can be managed and analysed in an effective manner (Bryman, 2016). This aided in the organisation, categorisation and presentation of data, producing a more sophisticated and systematic form of the results. For phase 1 of Braun and Clarke's (2006) stages, familiarization is key. Transcribing, reading and re-listening to audios were utilised as part of becoming familiar with the data. During this phase, initial thoughts were noted down regarding reoccurring themes, views, words and patterns. Once interviews were completed, audio files and verbatim transcription documents were stored in a secure folder, accessible by the researcher and supervisor.

In phase 2 initial codes were generated, whereby data of relevance to each other were grouped together, whilst maintaining a figurational sociological outlook. Maintaining a theoretical perspective assisted in this process and helped to more clearly define these codes and highlight links to the figurational sociological concepts of habitus, interdependence, power relations, figurations and 'I'-'We'-'They'. In phase 3 the priority was searching for themes in the codes generated, these were generalised by grouping together all relevant codes and data, whilst the researcher maintained a theoretical sociological perspective. During phase 4, these themes were reviewed, as the data most relevant in answering the research question

were prioritised. This was a particularly crucial step in this study due to the sheer mass of data. Additionally, due to the interconnected nature of figurational sociological concepts, many of the codes fit into several themes. These themes and codes were reflected on, reworked and reviewed several times before a final outline of the data was produced. As a result of this process, the researcher was able to identify and name nine predominant themes in phase 5, forming the sub-sections within the results and discussions chapters.

4.7. Reflections and Limitations

Upon reflection of the study, there are some limitations worth considering. Arguably, having a larger sample size by interviewing more FPE teachers could have provided more breadth and depth in understanding FPE teachers views, interpretations and experiences regarding negative peer relations in female PE. This being said, COVID-19 played a crucial role in limiting the number of available participants for this study, as teachers were under significant pressure and had limited time to offer for interviewing. Some female PE teachers had responded with availability but did not meet the inclusion/exclusion criteria to be interviewed. Therefore, the maximum number of available participants were used for this study. Reinforcing this, as seen throughout the interview transcripts, data saturation was still reached across most topic areas.

COVID-19 largely influenced several aspects of this study, one of which was access to resources. Through a series of several national lockdowns across 2020 and 2021, access to the York St John University library was at times prohibited, limiting much of the referenced resources in this study to online academic sources. Whilst a detailed literature review was outlined and key literature around figurational sociology had been utilised, there may be other relevant physical books, not accessible online, which may have been useful to this study. However, with the assistance and additional sources offered by an experienced research supervisor, the affects COVID-19 has had on limiting access to academic literature has been minimised as much as possible. Another way in which COVID-19 impacted the research process of this study was the use of Microsoft Teams meetings for interviews, rather than meeting the interviewees in person. In some ways, this was beneficial for both the researcher and participant, as travel was no longer a factor in whether the participant could be interviewed, and additionally helped regarding time-constraints. This also meant the interviewee could be video recorded, rather than voice recorded, offering perhaps a truer reflection of the interviewee's stances and thoughts on topic areas. However, operating over video call came with several difficulties. At times, particularly in the early stages of data

collection, the interviews felt a little stale, and hard to establish and develop good relationships with the interviewees, though this became easier to work around as the interviews went on. Additionally, there were often technical issues regarding connection and buffering, this affected some interviews more than others, and meant participants had to repeat answers, potentially synthesising initial responses rather than give a more detailed answer. Whilst probing was utilised throughout the interviews, there were occasions in which further probing would have offered more detail and further insight into broader topics, such as perhaps differences between male and female engagement in negative peer interactions in PE which may have identified gendered differences more explicitly. However, this study is focussed solely on negative peer relations, banter and bullying in FPE, and such probing could detract from the intended research questions. Additionally, as these negative interactions in female PE are lacking in data and research, drawing comparisons at such an early stage may be difficult. This is certainly a potential avenue for future research.

4.8. Conclusion

This chapter detailed what research methodology and research method was used, and why, for this study. This approach and method enables participants varying opinions and perceptions to be gleaned, as well as appreciating the ways in which preconceptions, beliefs and values can influence participants' perspectives. Through using varied sampling strategies, a sufficient number of participants were recruited, whose experienced and diverse profiles provide credibility to the knowledge attained. The researcher's role in this knowledge production was acknowledged and mitigated where possible, ensuring trustworthiness was apparent. Two further ways to ensure credibility and trustworthiness is by implementing robust ethical considerations and adopting a sound data analysis approach.

Chapter Five

Female PE as a unique gendered figuration

5.1. FPE as a Very Sociable Environment

One key theme acknowledged by all 12 interviewees was the sociability of PE, which by many was deemed a unique quality of PE compared with other subjects. In their view, PE offered young females' opportunities to socialise because of the informality and openness of certain spaces, the organic or encouraged mixing of students and constant interaction between pupils, in addition to PE being widely perceived as a social subject.

In contrast to classroom-based subjects, PE involves many social spaces, all offering different and countless opportunities for girls to socialise with one another. Esther offers some insight as to how these spaces are unique to PE and how the transitions from one to another can foster an environment of sociability in terms of fostering verbal interactions:

> *PE teachers have to be really skilful because everybody is moving and everybody is on…you know, that the whole environment is completely different…If you are moving and there's more conversation and the conversation is allowed in practical PE, you know you can't…you can't teach it quietly…Coz it's…because they're moving and they're excited and there's a lot of…a lot of chat and…and you don't get that in the classroom, so it is just different.*

Echoing this sentiment but offering a more specific example, Kelly referred to more *"playground"* like behaviour in year 9 PE. She continued:

> *But obviously if you think when they come to PE they're lining up outside the changing room, there's opportunities for chit chat and comments, they're changing in the changing room. You are obviously not standing there watching them all and again there's opportunity for comments to be made and things…they bring it with them into your PE lesson.*

Whilst illustrating the sociability that PE offers young girls, Kelly also recognises difficulties in monitoring these conversations and interactions between girls. Esther also highlighted the role that the changing rooms play in enabling girls' social interactions:

> *They come into the change rooms, and this has never changed I don't think over 35 years, they come in into the changing rooms and girls talk. They stand and talk and they would…they need to kind of communicate with each other, there's lots of chat and*

> *sometimes being in a changing room is an environment in school where it's like extended break, isn't it? You keep talking, and so then they go "oh God, gotta get changed" and getting changed is a bit of a faff isn't it, you know, "coz my hair is gonna get wet and this is gonna happen" …changing rooms is always a bit of a cauldron.*

The environment of changing rooms has an embedded culture of chat for girls in PE, and often this is unvetted. Beth extends this culture of chat in PE to further unique spaces such as the minibus. When asked if girls are chatty in PE, she says "*I think definitely, and especially when you're taking them on team events, etcetera. You're on the minibus and you're chatting, you have a chance to see them in a different way"*. Beth highlights the opportunity as a teacher to witness those social interactions. Upon being asked if issues between girls are brought into the PE environment, Beth additionally presents the changing rooms as an opportunity for unvetted social interactions and PE's unique social spaces:

> *I think it can do. But hopefully that would be dealt with by the teacher who can see what is going on, but there is more free reign, if I'm thinking of it, where they are left alone. So could feel worse, say in a changing room environment or in a team. Whereas it's more monitored in a classroom situation, coz you're put in a set seat and you might feel safer.*

Isa offered a similar perspective, but framed how PE is less formal than other subjects, and how PE's unpredictability lends itself to humorous interactions:

> *I think sometimes there's an opportunity to have more of a sense of humour in PE outside, coz daft things happen…And I'm not seeing you can get those kinds of scenarios in a classroom, you know, classroom's a little bit more stuffy, a little bit more formal*.

Organic and encouraged interaction was also highlighted as a unique feature of PE by several participants, meaning there is constant potential for varying social interactions between girls. Esther sums up how the positives and negatives of constant social mixing of girls in PE, creating a social minefield.

> *They get to know people they wouldn't have otherwise spoken to, and I think that's the beauty of PE coz you have to mix. You have to, you have to mix with people, don't you? And this, I mean, this is always something that worries me, that sometimes we get memos round saying please keep such and such away from such and such. That's great in a classroom, but, you know, it's just a minefield in PE. Because all the time you're thinking "Right I mustn't put them in that group. I mustn't put them in that team. I mustn't do that" and so but I suppose when you're having to think like that, you realise that the social mix is… is constant in PE. It's what we do all the time.*

Fran additionally focusses on the unique feature of constant social mixing in PE, and how PE is viewed as a social subject:

> *I think in PE they're willing to give it a go and they're willing to work with different people, and naturally you… in PE you put them with different people all the time. But I don't let them always choose their pair, whereas in a classroom they're kind of a bit governed by the seating plan…I can imagine in an RE lesson or something like that, they'd be told off for having that conversation. Because* [PE is] *a friendly, friendlier subject, it gives scope for chit chat when it's appropriate*.

As evident in the data above, the female PE teachers highlighted the ample opportunity for young people to mix and interact both verbally and physically. From previous studies, the social aspects of PE are shown to be a significant factor for young people. Pupils perceived benefits of PE was a space in which they could have fun and be social (Smith and Parr, 2007). Girls enter their PE classes with an expectation of fun sociability, one key association being laughter with friends. Due to this constant socialising, many of Elias's figurational sociological concepts can be observed, both in obvious ways as well as perhaps more nuanced and complex ways. If we consider PE as a figuration in of itself, which makes up part of the broader school figuration, a sub-figuration, it was evident that social relations and behavioural norms in FPE were considered as more diverse and different in many respects to those experienced across other aspects of the school. The more nuanced networks of interdependencies and power relations between all those involved in FPE were partly determined by the different social spaces, different types of activities and different expectations that girls had upon entering FPE. Combined, these structural and attitudinal factors meant girls interactions were faced by less social constraints, were more enabled through opportunities and, therefore, were arguably more fluid, child-centred and child-driven compared with other classroom-based subjects.

Focusing on perceived relative unique spaces PE offers girls, spaces such as changing rooms, mini-bus journeys and transitioning between spaces were described as informalizing spaces, spaces where young girls could engage in informalizing behaviours and relations. Indirect verbal bullying is also linked to informalizing behaviour, something literature has identified as a typical form of bullying for females (Iossi Silva et al., 2013), and so these spaces provide equal opportunity for negative peer interaction. Additionally, the hidden curriculum (Bain, 1990) plays a significant role within these spaces, socially constructed relations may foster deep-rooted gendered views and other socially permitted behaviours not taught or challenged by the national curriculum. As noted by Elias (2012), as social constraints lessen, people have greater opportunity to experiment in various forms of individual expression, one of particular interest to this study is the ways in which people speak and identify themselves. The point here is these social interaction opportunities may be less available in more rigid classroom-based lesson with clearer academic/intellectual focus. This said, it is important to remember,

Elias (2012) also noted that within increasingly civilized societies when social constraints are removed people are increasingly expected to exercise degrees of self-restraint upon the knowledge of expected behavioural norms. However, in this particular figuration, it seemed clear that PE lessons offered girls de-routinizing experiences and an emotional outlet for young girls, permitting behaviours and vocal interactions which may not be allowed in other figurations within school life. These findings provide important context to the figurational dynamics at play when negative social interactions may take place, as these do not happen in isolation, in a social vacuum, but are enabled and constrained by the prevailing social dynamics within a figuration. From here, it is important to consider central relations within this figuration which enable and constrain social interactions, namely teacher-pupil relations.

5.2. Teacher-Pupil Relations in FPE

Each interviewee felt strongly that female PE teachers had a unique and positive relationship with their pupils compared with teachers in other subjects. Many participants felt as PE teachers they had opportunities to build relationships through trust and fun, whilst others highlighted the intimacy of the PE environment, and opportunities to be privy to informal chat, unlike typical classroom-based teaching.

Astrid illustrates how girls' relationships with PE teachers tend to be very positive and a unique feature of PE, even with pupils that are widely viewed as poorly behaved:

> *We tend to have a better relationship with the worse behaved kids. They seem to respond to us better than other teachers within a classroom, I'm not too sure why that is. Again I don't know if it comes back to the fact that because we love our job and because we can have fun with it that they're a little bit more trusting with us in the fact they feel more comfortable around us…but I do think that the kids sometimes see us as the fun teachers and I think that is because like we love our jobs, and yes we do potentially have the fun aspect of being able to take them outside, getting them to run around, getting to enjoy themselves and teach them all these valuable skills as opposed to just sitting in a classroom and teaching them how to like do algebra or whatever.*

Hannah also acknowledged the unique and positive nature of PE teacher relations with poorly behaved pupils:

> *I don't know whether it's just our nature, I feel that, you know, personally if you start to chat with the kids that are the behaviour issues the right way, then they're not a behaviour issue for you, if you take interest in them. I guess we've got similar personalities in PE and I guess we are all happy to strike up that conversation, you know, and to make sure the boundaries are clear.*

Fran and Isa both identified how the elements of intimacy and vulnerability within the PE environment can form and reinforce female PE teacher relations, opening more opportunity to build strong teacher-pupil relations. Fran offers insight into the approachability of PE teachers, and their unique role in dealing with more personal aspects of teenage bodies.

> *I would say kids have a lot more respect for a PE teacher…I find kids would openly talk to a PE teacher more. It's not very often I would raise my voice like, and you always hear of other subject teachers raising their voices at a kid for doing something wrong. Whereas I think we're very approachable, very chilled, and kids would happily come and speak to us and be open. As a PE teacher you're the one that deals with the…like the body odour, the changing…I think kids think we're a bit more down to earth than say a history teach or English teacher. So more approachable.*

Isa offers more of a holistic view on the same aspect of the unique teacher-pupil relations due to this intimate aspect of PE, and the multifaceted nature of these relations and interactions:

> *I think a lot of people can talk about formal and informal. You know, when you're in that classroom, you're stuck between those four walls…when you're outside, you've got a whole…a whole different…whole different space. And it is a different relationship in a sense because it's you're expecting the physical, and you're expecting the social, and you're expecting the emotional.*

Another unique aspect of teacher-pupil relations in PE specifically is the role that other and various figurations play. Esther and Kelly raise the significance of changing rooms, minibuses, extracurricular activities and fixtures in the development of those uniquely strong relations. Being privy to 'locker room talk' is highlighted by Esther as she talks about coming across any behaviour issues in the changing rooms:

> *I always think that PE teachers are very privileged because we're privileged to changing room talk…and I always say there's another place as well that you're privileged and that's minibus talk. Because you hear, you hear stuff on a minibus coz they don't…they don't think you're listening. And changing rooms is similar, they don't think you can hear things, so you hear…you pick up snippets that're quite, yeah, quite yeah, useful information as a teacher actually is to know kind of what's happening, friendship groups, things like that. But yeah, minibus talk is really quite something.*

Kelly echoes this when talking on teacher-pupil relations in PE and PE's unique figurations on helping to develop those relations:

> *I often think PE's a very unique subject compared to many other subjects in that we do build those relationships, I believe stronger and better, because it is much more of a subject that we can interact with pupils more…I think those relationships are evident with the girls, especially that you teach and that you take to the extracurricular fixtures*

> *and you get to know in the minibus drive into the fixtures and things. I think that's very unique to the subject of PE.*

The theme of PE being a very socially interactive figuration extended to teachers' relations with girls, with teachers self-identifying as being “fun”, “open” and “approachable”. As FPE was considered to have different figurational dynamics to other classroom dynamics, FPE teachers considered themselves to have differing social relations within girls compared with classroom-based teachers. Some literature supports these perceptions around unique PE teacher-pupil relations; a study by Mouton, Hansenne, Delcour and Cloes (2013) found PE teachers to have high levels of emotional intelligence (EI) and self-efficacy, demonstrating effective listening and communications skills, and positively impacting student engagement. Additional research has also found PE teacher behaviours (individualised conversation, enthusiasm, general friendliness, caring behaviours for example) are effective in students feeling supported, underpinning teacher-student rapport and help build mutually respective relationships (Sparks, Dimmock, Whipp, Lonsdale and Jackson, 2015). In this study, types of social relations and teachers’ more laid-back approach was considered as being reciprocated by girls, contributing to perceived close social bonds built upon trust and little judgement. Close social bonds and trust between teachers and girls were partly attributed due to PE’s “physical”, “social” and “emotional” elements of PE, which also enabled girls to get to know their teachers at a more personal level. These bonds would not have been possible if it not for the personalities of the FPE teachers, what Hannah described as “our nature”, reinforcing the literature around unique and positive PE teacher social relations (Mouton et al., 2013; Sparks et al., 2015). It was clear that FPE teachers considered themselves to have a habitus that could be shared or was similar to the girls, enabling and facilitating a broader space of sociability and informality. This more personal expression of habitus may be due to the lesser academic constraints and confinements of space as such in other classroom-based subjects. Having considered the perceived structural and social relations differences FPE offered, it is necessary to consider another key facet to this, the single-sex environment from which FPE took place.

5.3. FPE’s Single-Sex Nature and Gendered Social Dynamics

The unique single-sex environment of PE can facilitate gendered social dynamics in ways other subjects may not. Common themes of perceived gendered differences in Male PE and Female PE teaching were highlighted. Additionally, some insight was offered into the perceived differences in girls’ engagement in PE surrounding notions of exposure, judgment, fear of failure and avoidance of negative appraisals.

On discussion of differences between Male and Female PE teachers in their teaching approaches and style with boys and girls respectively, Beth felt that Male PE teachers tended be “macho” and exhibited “boy comradery” with the boys they taught, and felt girls were naturally ‘softer’ and more ‘caring’. Esther shared similar views on Male and Female PE teaching differences:

> *I think PE…female PE teachers are a bit more nurturing…I'm not saying the boys don't care, coz they really care, they really care. But it…it's different, it's…there's more banter I think, maybe. I think there's more banter with the boys than there is with us. A different kind of banter maybe, but it…it's caring but it's not as nurturing I think.*

The views of the ‘caring’ female PE teacher were also shared by Isa and Kelly. Isa illustrated an example of female PE teachers being more persuasive and encouraging versus her male counterparts in situations where pupils are trying to opt out. Kelly further exemplifies this caring FPE teacher role when addressing differences in Male and Female PE teaching:

> *I think females are a lot more caring…and I think we're possibly more into our…having a B team and a C team and a D team than the males…But I think generally…we would be a lot more caring, we'd rotate play perhaps more…then the males more about, well, I guess the winning than the taking part.*

All interviewees said they felt female participation in PE was good at their current school, however the majority of interviewees highlighted many examples of girls reluctancy to participate in instances where they feel exposed, judged, self-conscious or fearful of failure or negative appraisal. Both Fran and Gemma gave accounts of how they perceived girls to be ‘governed’ by boys in classroom settings, for fear of standing out of being wrong, but conversely showing confidence and more personality in the single-sex practical setting of PE. Gemma expanded on this:

> *I do think they’re chatty because it's probably one of the only subjects again where they actually get to be with their friendship groups a little bit more, because obviously they're all girls together and compared to having been in mixed gender classes.*

Astrid, gave an example of when the presence of boys had a negative impact in a practical PE setting:

> *They are so bothered about boys, it gets to the point where that when they do start to become aware of themselves, that they're really bothered about what the boys think.*

The fear of being watched and feeling judged in front of others was perceived as a key reason for girls wavering participation in PE. On the topic of girls' physical activity likes and dislikes, Gemma emphasised girls general dislike for performing on their own as they feel *"the whole class is watching them",* and attributed low effort levels to girl's feelings of self-consciousness. Liz also talks about the impact of girls feeling watched and judged in PE:

> *It really does affect them and it does have an impact on them. They don't want to do it; they want to run off and hide and go in the dance studio and not have anyone watching them, and to be fair I don't really blame them.*

Astrid and Esther gave examples around gymnastics and dance as sports in which girls feel like they stand out or can blend in. They both believe girls seemed to prefer activities in which they can avoid being noticed and judged. Astrid voiced how she felt girls "*prefer the sports where they can potentially just blend in".* Esther spoke about the success of her after school dance classes:

> *I think girls also knew that in dance, the group was so big that there was hiding space. You could go along and just do an hours dance without having to be at the front, without being watched, without being judged…if you were new or you weren't as confident or a bit self-conscious, you could come along, you could do an hours dance and nobody would pay you much attention or judge you, and that's…that I think to some girls, for some girls that's really important.*

Exposure and fear of failure were additionally raised as affecters of girl's participation by Charlotte, Fran and Hannah. Hannah felt "*perhaps when there's not as much opportunity to look like you failed*" those were the sports girls preferred. On questions around what activities girls like the least and why, Charlotte answered:

> *It's very exposed if you…if you're sent out on a run, it's very exposing if you're the last one coming back and they don't, they don't like that exposure…I think with girls they hate to be shown up to be rubbish and it's the sports where it really shows that if they're not naturally PE minded, they don't like it.*

Offering thoughts on why girls may feel like this, Beth talks around the gendered expectations and socialisation for girls in PE:

> *I think girls tend to come across as more…lacking confidence in PE than the boys do…I think it's socialisation in the sense of like, you always expect boys just to be able to run, kick a football, throw, catch. They do it all the time in the playground, so in every aspect of their life. Whereas girls…they don't naturally…and it's not expected of them to, therefore they don't necessarily do that. Whereas it's naturally expected for a boy to do that.*

Throughout the themes of this subsection, attention was drawn to FPE teacher perceptions around gendered social dynamics, much of which were in line with gender essentialism and stereotypes seen throughout supported literature (Scraton, 1992; Stets and Burke, 2000; Humberstone, 2003). This is seen in Beth, Isa and Kelly's depiction of differences between female and male PE teachers' pedagogies, whereby females are viewed to have social bonds rooted in softer emotions such as caring, empathetic and less competitive. Fran, Gemma and Astrid all noted the value of single-sex lessons whereby girls could be with their friends and not feel self-conscious by what their male counterparts think. This finding reveals that PE is often a heteronormative environment, one which heightens as young people grow older.

However, this notion of self-consciousness extended to female peers whereby girls felt watched, judged and exposed in PE lessons, particularly in activities in which they 'stand out', FPE teacher emphasised the importance girls placed on blending in. Arguably, this was used as a method of self-preservation, as girls felt the need to minimise the exposure of 'I' in their 'I-We-They' identities, and place increased value on their 'We' identities as girls prioritised "blending in" and avoiding shame and failure, a similar finding to that of Nielsen and Thing (2019). This is seen in multiple FPE teacher accounts of girl's hyper-awareness to feelings of judgement and exposure, and the desire to hide or blend in. Such a reaction to heightened self-consciousness and need to preserve girls 'I' identity perhaps may be linked to the social constraints young females place on one another, supporting the workings of Smith (1999), in addition to the external expectations of others as highlighted by Beth, which girls have internalised through socialisation. Whilst referring mainly to young girls' psyche, this context is important as it provides insight into the prevailing attitudes of many girls within the female figuration, which will most likely influence their peer group dynamics and social interactions. Whilst important to acknowledge girls' self-involvement with the socialisation and perpetuation of gendered stereotypes, the FPE teacher role is equally of note. As key facilitators of socialisation in the PE figuration, use of language, reinforcement of stereotypes, role modelling and lesson planning (Brown, 2005) may well serve as affordances in girl's feelings of exposure, failure and comparison, linking to lack of participation and dissatisfaction. The reflection upon such contributions is vital as to the impact these factors may have on opportunities for negative peer relations in FPE, and how this effects girls' engagement and satisfaction.

Chapter Six

Peer Group Dynamics and Social Relations in FPE

6.1. Age-Specific Differences

It is important to note, and perhaps state the obvious, that secondary schools in England separate young people per year group, usually based on a September 1st birthday. Young people usually enter secondary school at 11 years of age, in year 7, and stay at least to 16 years of age, until the end of year 11. Therefore, it is common for FPE teachers to teach across the age spectrum within one day. Age-specific differences in girls' behaviour and peer group dynamics were noted by the majority of interviewees. The younger year groups were viewed as better behaved and more amicable amongst peers, while year 9 was identified as a problem group in girls' behaviour and peer-group relations for almost all interviewees. Key-stage 4 year groups tended to be seen as more mature, better behaved with more stable peer-groups. The FPE teachers felt they had stronger bonds with the older girls and therefore sometimes could be more personal, informal and jocular in their interactions with these girls, and this was reciprocated. Summed up, Isa provides a brief overview of her thoughts and wider shared views on girl's behaviour differing between year groups:

> *7 and 8's are great. 9's not worth knowing, same for year 10. Year 11's are gorgeous by the end of it. You know, you can…You can see the maturation as you go and you can…I find that the strong peer group is the year 9, personally. And I think the other girls in the department are "Oh God my year 9 group", and I go "Yeah, one or two in mine are a little bit dodgy" and I think there's a lot going on. There's a lot going on with those kids in year 9.*

Year 7 and 8 were voiced by most interviewees as better behaved, enthusiastic in participation and more amicable amongst peers, with undefined peer-groups. Citing age-based differences, Beth said "*In year 7 they would tend to go with anybody that you put them".* This was echoed by a further eight participants, who all identified year 7 as generally well behaved and very keen. Danielle felt the younger years were focused and *"very engaged and on the whole really well behaved".* Gemma offered her thoughts on why this could be and behavioural changes depending on age:

> *I do think that year 7's are better behaved. Maybe that's because they've just come from a primary school where like they were like the oldest in the school and then back to being the youngest again. So they are better behaved, a little bit scared, I think that's why.*

Year 8's were identified as usually well behaved with more established relations and occasionally peer-group issues starting to occur. Esther expands on this:

> *I like 8's, because they… they've kind of found their feet a bit more in PE, but there's still kind of they don't mind doing a gym sequence, they don't mind doing a dance sequence. Their inhibitions haven't kind of caught up with them yet.*

Both Fran and Astrid highlight the start of behavioural and peer-group problems in year 8. Fran describes peer-relation troubles as "[Year] *8 they're treading their water, they're finding their feet and do have friendship issues generally all-around school".* Astrid highlighted how these issues can bleed into the problem year of year 9:

> *So year 8, they wobble, they have a big wobble and it can either be squashed or it filters into year 9. I'd say year 8 and year 9 are probably the most troublesome year groups, I think that's when they start finding themselves, they've got a little bit personality…I think come year 8, that's where some of the nastiness can start coming in, and that's across all subjects, we see it everywhere.*

Year 9 was highlighted as a problem group almost across the board, with issues in girls' behaviour and peer relations due to testing boundaries, hormonal changes and volatile friendship bonds. Beth explained how she experienced resistance in setting groups in year 9, as girls made comments such as "*Oh I cant' be with…*" and "*Why*?", expressing a want to stick with their friendship groups. Danielle also identified increased vocality in her year 9 groups, unstable peer relations and possible reasons why:

> *I'd say when you get to year 9, that's when you start to get a guess, them becoming a little bit more vocal or friendship groups are little bit more solid and not. Like you've kind of got a more forged friendship group, but then if there's a problem, there's a bigger problem because of that…Year 9 I guess hormones are starting to kick in, they're starting to become a bit more independent and therefore generate more of their opinions, and they've had enough time now to start to know what they do like and don't like, and they can vocalise those opinions.*

The notion of boundary pushing in year 9 girls resonated with almost all interviewees. When prompted, Esther explained why she found year 9 a difficult group:

> *Well, I think they're learning to flex their muscles at that age. They're learning to just kind of just push boundaries and it's just hard to work…they become self-conscious and so in terms of behaviour you sometimes get more challenging behaviour in year 9. They…it's not…at the girl's school, it's not that they refuse to do, they don't refuse to do it, they just don't do a lot.*

Fran similarly referenced year 9's pushing of boundaries, but contrastingly said this is the reason she prefers teaching year 9:

> *Why I like 9's so much is I think they're testing the boundaries, their friendship groups are changing, they're looking at doing…starting their GCSE's so their timetables have changed, their friendship groups have changed. They're turning into young adults, so I think there, their friendship group are different.*

Gemma and Kelly suggested some reasons as to why year 9's are more volatile in behaviour and peer relations. Kelly said:

> *It just tends to be the year group that they seem to fallout with everybody, year 9. I think it, you know, there's a lot of transition for them going through puberty, but it's definitely year where there's lots of fall outs and lots of physical changes as well for them to manage their body.*

Gemma and Liz offered some thoughts around the impact of external factors for conflicts in friendship and peer group changes. On girl's peer group dynamics differing between year groups, Gemma replied:

> *Obviously you find that in between…like year 8 and year 9 sometimes their… their peer groups change and that can cause conflict and especially sometimes going in from 9 to 10 as well, obviously when they've chosen their options. So if they…they adapt…their peer group dynamics are changing anyway.*

Regarding the same topic, Liz offered some more insight:

> *We get, you know, again, the mean girls that are finding…are finding their kind of platform and they kind of naturally…they naturally start to divide in year 9. I think we do… we introduce the GCSE in year 9 and that has a direct impact on those kind of peer dynamics because sometimes they're starting to form kind of new friendships because of the types of kids that are in their classes. I think they all get a bit…a bit bitchy in year 9 as well.*

Coming into the Key Stage 4 years, some residue behavioural issues from year 9 were highlighted in some year 10 groups. However, most interviewees described their older secondary year groups to have positive behavioural changes and growth in maturity, in addition to positive and stable peer relations. Astrid explains:

> *By the time they hit year 10 and 11, they mature a little bit. I think their GCSE's are their main focus, they understand what their priorities are at this point, and I think that's when their behaviour starts to change. Year 11, you see the biggest change in the students.*

As Beth talks about changes in peer group dynamics between age groups, she notes:

> *10 and 11 they're a bit more mature, and will liaise with everybody, that's how I see. If you say "Oh, would you mind going with" and they say "Yeah, no problem"…in 10 and 11 they tend to know who they are and they can be by themselves, or with somebody*

Offering another element to positive behaviours within the older years, Kelly gave her reasons as to why year 11 is her favourite year group, and the strong relational bonds she shares with them:

> *I think my favourite year group I'd be torn between probably Year 7 and probably year 11…I think the year 11's because you've built up that relationship with them and you know, you do know your ones who are excelling at sport and they're your ones that you're taking regularly to teams and competitions and things. So I think you build up an extra special relationship with them.*

The data shown here through the perceptions and experiences of FPE teachers shows young girls as dynamic, open and malleable processes. This is seen as girls peer relations and dynamics change frequently throughout the key stages of school. As these young girls develop socially and in maturity, various changes to peer dynamics, behaviour and attitudes can be witnessed. From the good engagement and behaviour of year 7's, to the fraught relations and pushing of boundaries in year 9, to the stable, positive relations in year 11. These changes and contrasts can be linked to Elias' (1978) notions of Habitus and 'I'-'We'-'They' identities, and his reference to childhood being the most impressionable phase of habitus development. As young girls navigate the development and establishment of a stronger sense of 'I' by a better understanding and awareness of a dominant 'We' (Nielsen and Thing, 2019), this forms a key phase in the development of habitus in young people. In other words, as girls form an understanding of themselves through relations with others and the 'norms' within the figuration, this informs key developmental stages of their individual habitus. As their identities are socially informed, prevailing 'We' norms emerge from year to year, which may constrain or enable multiple social dynamics and relations which girls try to manage and balance. In this data, this is something year 11's seem to be better at than year 9's, arguably due to the maturation of year 11's and previous experiences of navigating these changes in dynamics. This aligns with McPherson, Curtis and Loy (1989) and their notion on peer groups as an affecter of individuals attitudes, behaviours and values.

Looking at the behavioural differences from year 7 through to year 11, the same concept can be applied. Such behavioural differences can perhaps be linked to girls' adaptation to, or need to adapt to, differing figurational dynamics in PE and the enabling and constraining social

processes within. As mentioned, PE can offer an emotional outlet for young people (Dunning, 1997), permitting certain behaviours and vocality which may not be permitted elsewhere, creating perhaps a more socially dynamic and unstable volatile environment. As such, vast differences can be seen in the behaviour of year 9's and the behaviour of year 11's, as year 11's may have learned to adapt in a more effective way, minimising conflicts and negative social dynamics.

From the data, girls seem to become more certain of who they are, of their friendships and of their priorities the older they get. With age comes beliefs and experiments in autonomy and sense of 'I'. This may link to differences in behavioural and vocal responses to authority attempts, either towards teachers or peers. In year 7's, there's a sense of awareness around being the youngest, new to the school figuration, and perhaps intimidated by authority in the form of teachers and pupils, showing very little if any signs of negative responses to authority. In year 9, as the girls start to become more aware of themselves and work out who they are, they are more inclined to vocalise opinions, test friendships, push boundaries and challenge authority during that transitional period, whilst trying to understand and establish their sense of 'I'. This can be seen in girl's frequently changing relationships and problematic behaviour towards FPE teachers. This theme was of relevance to almost all interviewees, however, as noted by the work of Ross and Horner (2014), teachers have a responsibility to appropriately lesson plan and deliver these lessons in a way that nurtures positive peer relations, confidence and engagement in lessons. There may be elements of common PE teacher practice which fosters or neglects to challenge these negative behaviours in an effective way. That being said, in year 11, such dynamics subside as girls are able to negotiate this field more successfully, maintaining a better understanding of 'I' and 'We' and how this plays out in various power relations such as teacher-pupil and peers. These findings illustrate how social factors and figurational dynamics influence girls' identity and habitus formation. Collectively, this social and psychological process influences peer group dynamics in terms of friendships and collegiate practices.

6.2. Friendships, Peer Group Dynamics and 'Teamwork'

As noted in the Introduction Chapter, a central tenet lauded in PE is its ability to foster pro-social behaviours and values which enable teamwork and friendships to prosper. Most interviewees acknowledged friendships to be of significant value to girl's peer relations in PE, and additionally acknowledged some strains and power struggles in these relations. This is shown in the data below as some female PE teachers highlighted girls' preference to stick with

their friends in PE, a clear division of peer groups in the lesson and divisions between more able and less able girls. Further explored are some common power dynamics between girls in PE, and the ways in which the PE environment can exacerbate fallouts in team and group situations.

Some interviewees felt girls preferred to stick with their friendship groups in the PE lesson and shared their experience of this. Liz spoke about the interform competitions she has in PE and noted *"you can see the enjoyment levels are just very different when they meet with their…their kind of comfort blanket"*. Fran also found this to be the same across school years:

> *Lower down the school they stick with their friendship peers, who they feel comfortable working with. When they get higher up the school, because they're choosing a sport, I think they then pick…are tempted to go with what their friends want to do. So that they enjoy it more*.

Interestingly, Fran felt this was unique to girls, something they did in order to *"feel more comfortable"*. However, she felt competitive girls would choose the sport over sticking with their friends but did not feel this compromised friendships.

Clear groups and division of peers in PE lessons were evident in many experiences of the interviewees. Gemma noted the four clear groups she had in her lessons: a sporty group, girly group, a SEN (special educational needs) group and others, who typically tended to do the minimum. Kelly had similar experiences with the formation of girl groups in PE:

> *I must say it's evident of a divide. Just thinking as well about my PE, purely PE groups, it's …it's very evident, the sporty ones and the…we kind of I think, have three groups. You've got your sporty ones, you've got your academic ones, and then you kind of obviously got your middle group who are okay, can get by in either situation, and I think the dynamics between the top and the bottom are very wide.*

This notion of a divide between the "top" and bottom" was highlighted further by Kelly wherein her sporty girls excelled in PE, and her academic girls shone more in the classroom, as opposed to in PE. Danielle and Liz saw a similar divide, specifically between sporty girls versus non-sporty girls. Danielle saw this divide in her year 7's:

> *Year 7 where they come in mixed ability, I do think sometimes your less able PE can be quieter and your kind a more able PE can maybe be more confident, more vocal, and that can cause a little bit of a kind of 'me and them' a little bit.*

Liz addressed her thoughts on how this sporty group is naturally drawn to each other:

> *I think there will always be, you know, that core group of girls who do play in all of the different sports. They will still have that kind of natural friendship, and that natural bond and the dynamics are always going to be there for that.*

Whilst sometimes these groups and divisions may exist harmoniously or neutrally on the whole, the competitive and less formally controlled environment of PE can cultivate and exacerbate negative relations between groups or individuals, particularly in team games. Danielle and Astrid expand on the ways this can present itself in a PE setting. Danielle shared:

> *You do see friendship issues in PE, again, because there's that interaction, you sometimes they end up, yeah, having to interact with somebody in a group or team that they don't get on well with from another lesson or something's just happened and it comes to PE. Yeah, it might be that something has literally just happened at break time, they come to PE and they're upset and we deal with it then. It might be that there's friendship problem that's exacerbated in PE because they're in teams with those people and there's that interaction that isn't as controlled as in a…in a classroom environment that yeah, we address in PE.*

Astrid offered her thoughts and experiences on trying to manage these fallouts as the PE teacher:

> *So I tend to put the kids that don't like each other on the same team, so they have to work together and they then kind of forget that 'She said this mean thing. She said that mean thing', and then they actually walk out* [the lesson] *sometimes a bit more positive. It's worse when we put, say for example, if there are two girls falling out and they're against each other on opposite teams, that's when it can really thrive, and it can be the nastiness at that point. So, I tend to kind of strategically put them together.*

When probed further on the nature of these fallouts, Astrid explained:

> *I think sometimes for the girls it's a big show to the crowd, think they like to play to the crowd and kind of be seen that "Oh well, she wasn't nice to me, so I can't work with her, so I'm going to be the one that's gonna go off and be all dramatic about it" and you squash it and yeah, then they're fine…It is mostly friendship issues. It is mostly "I've fallen out with her. She's now being mean. She's now saying stuff behind my back"*

Charlotte, Esther and Isa highlighted an example of fallouts and a particular dynamic at play-queen bee syndrome, in which one individual tends to be dominating and the other withdrawing. When asked if issues between girls are brought into PE, Charlotte said:

> *Particularly on lessons whether having to work together, you know gym dance, where you've got to partner work or something else. If there's been a bit of a bust up before hand, just nothing, nothing happens, there's no communication and they don't achieve very much. You'll get a…one will withdraw generally…you do sort of get your groups where you've got a dominant girl character that seems to have unseen control over*

> *other girls and their sort of feeling that it matters to them what the queen bee thinks, you know, the queen bee syndrome.*

Charlotte was additionally asked what some common reasons might be for these fallouts, she did not feel there was a root cause. However, she did explain "*a lot of it is what they thought the other one meant, and often it's miscommunication and interpretation that was worse than it really was, and a lot of it is feeling that their confidence had been betrayed*". Isa voiced a similar experience of this dominating versus withdrawing behaviour upon being probed on the hierarchy of groups in female PE:

> *Yeah, you've got the kids that have got what I call real leadership qualities. And they tend to be those extrovert students who are quite good at PE, and possibly the ones that are playing outside of school, and they tend to lead. They can lead…I'm thinking of one in particular who could lead too much...you can start to see the, you know, some of the other girls retreating a little bit, or you know they don't…they don't work as hard or they choose a soft option…Very few would sort of voice an opinion against them if I'm honest.*

Throughout the outlined perceptions and experiences of FPE teachers were the strains and power struggles in girl's peer relations, some cultivated due to the figurational dynamics in PE, some transferred into PE from other aspects of the schooling process. An application of 'I'-'We' identities and power dynamics help to better understand some of these social processes, as well as considering how the unique figuration of PE can exacerbate issues in such relations, leading to some dissatisfaction and disengagement from girls in PE. Again, the importance girls placed on the 'We' is highlighted as significant in their social relations in PE, as seen in the data around the need/desire to stick with friends and the formation of defined 'sporty', *'academic/girly'* and '*other'* groups in PE lessons, reinforcing literature highlighting the importance girls place on social relations in PE (Smith and St. Pierre, 2009). The data shows a need and a struggle to balance 'I'-'We' identities within PE's social and competitive environment. Girls' expression of 'I' identity seemed significant in how this was perceived and managed by peers, evident of PE's enabling and constraining social processes. With clear divides in core groups, and a 'Me/Us and Them' dynamic fostered between the more and the less competent in PE, girls must negotiate which group(s) they align with, where this fits into existing relations and how this affects the broader dynamic of the figuration. This may mean that engagement in banter and jocular interactions are more difficult to navigate as girls must develop and establish their sense of 'I' in new and fluid figurations of 'We'-'They'.

As noted in terms of girls socially prescribed identity development, the role of 'They' identities seem to play a significant role, particularly around 'sporty' girls and 'non-sporty girls' in which

their identities are rooted in opposing traits, causing rifts and divisions within the PE lesson, this is indicative of literature on gendered stereotypes, supporting the idea that girls must display masculine associated traits to be successful in sport, or sport may channel out girls entirely (Krane, 2001; Kew, 1997), again contributing to negative peer dynamics and girls dissatisfaction and disengagement in PE. This 'sporty' girl group appear to have strong social bonds, linked to increased informal time spent together via fixtures, club sports, and extra-curricular activity as well as sport as a common ground, which we know to allow for heightened emotions and a quest for excitement (Dunning, 1997), sport offers a powerful platform and role for shared and social habitus. Whilst FPE teachers did not feel that the 'sporty' girl's allegiance to sport compromised existing relationships, it may be interesting to further understand this from the girls' perspectives, and if the fluidity of these friendships across school are tested in PE.

PE's competitive, less formal and less stable environment was shown to enable and aggravate existing negative peer relations between girls. Team activities were highlighted as primary affecters; previous relational issues often came to a head as interactions in such settings were less controlled than that of a classroom setting. This was especially true for girls on opposing teams, as this amplified the nastiness. In such an environment as PE, promoting competition and de-routinization, there are constant and dynamic negotiations of power. PE provides ample opportunity for power struggles and often these are weighted asymmetrically, whether an individual outweighs another in physical prowess, leadership skills or in social standing, for example. A more blatant example of these asymmetric power struggles was seen in FPE teachers' experiences of the 'Queen Bee', whereby one girl particularly dominates the social field, and the other(s) withdraws. This perhaps can be linked to social processes involved in the following chapter, in which girls' experience social bonds with increasing value on love and emotion, these bonds can become jeopardised when self-consciousness, self-preservation, pride and shame become involved.

6.3. Competitiveness, Momentary Fraught Relations and Self-Consciousness/Doubts

As noted in the Introduction Chapter, central to the NCPE is the opportunity to engage young people in competition, to foster a competitive spirit. This functional role of sport is often given importance due to its 'real-world' benefits, i.e. young people will leave school and enter competitive social worlds. The competitive nature of PE seemed to bring out some interesting dynamics within girl's peer relations in PE. Some interviewees highlighted how PE distinguished and separated ability levels in a more exposing manner than other subjects, and

this contributed to some variation in peer group dynamics, such as group separation and rifts in friendships. Themes predominantly raised were ability cliques, namely sporty girls versus less able, being 'made fun of' for being too good or not good enough, and the sporty girls dominating the lower ability girls. Interviewees had experiences of where the competitive environment of PE exacerbated these issues.

Astrid shared how her groups did have some cliques regarding ability levels:

> *I mean, I've got some sporty girls that are really, really good friends with the non-sporty girls and there's no stigmatism to it, they're not mean to each other or whatever, but I do tend to see that there are some cliques made in the lessons depending on their sporting ability to be fair.*

A similar experience of a sporty clique was voiced by Danielle, as she offered how the nature of PE can affect the separation of groups and girls:

> *You do have your sporties that kind of maybe do stick together a little bit. But I think for the reasons I said it is really hard in sport, this is coz we've had big discussions about setting and whether it's fair or whether it's good and my opinion is, I think is a really important thing because of students…yeah, if you're gonna play sport, it does really separate out ability different to other subjects.*

Danielle and Esther both noted how this difference in ability in a competitive environment can emphasise power imbalances between girls, affecting friendships. Danielle shared:

> *I think sport can have a problem if you've got that real imbalance and they're trying to work together because it can get really frustrating if "the person that I'm working with can never get the ball back to me", um…or "I just feel really stupid". So I do think it kind of, it can kind of open up different things that could affect friendship, for example.*

Upon being asked if girls peer groups dynamics change during competitive activities and sports, Esther responded:

> *You sometimes see it, you sometimes see it happen. Particularly in something like Netball when you are marking someone. Now Netball's a problem because you have to…if there's an imbalance, you can get a really strange dynamic going on.*

Fran gave some insight into the interactions of the sporty and non-sporty groups, sharing a recent experience of capture the flag:

> *Like I'm just thinking we play capture the flag towards the end of term and it was proper mixed, but you still get the sporty girl's clique. Yet actually everyone individually brings something to the team. And I could imagine if they were then to have a team*

> *conversation it would be the sporty girls that would overrule the conversation and the quiet ones wouldn't get heard*.

This domination exhibited by the 'sporty girls' was also an experience shared by both Hannah and Gemma. Hannah said that girls had an awareness of others ability and there was reluctance from her less able girls to work with the more able:

> *I often find that actually the…the not so able girls really do not want to be in the same team as the more able girls, even they might be…they'll chat normally in class. Whereas I think when there's competition involved, either they don't want to…they see that the more able girls are more able, they think they can't keep up with them or they don't want to be against the more able girls because they just know they're going to be embarrassed.*

For Gemma, she experienced her sporty girls dominating and her less able girls withdrawing due to negative verbal interactions in team scenarios:

> *Sometimes* [girls who play for school teams] *become a little bit angry with others who are a little bit slower or don't know what they're doing and we're experiencing that quite a lot at the moment because we used to have a split top set and bottom sets. But this academic year we've had a mixed…mixed setting, and that's become a lot more evident…I don't think they mean it, I think they just lose their temper. So, it starts off with like "oh come on" and then some…sometimes it can like be a full-on outburst. But that's quite rare…sometimes you get the whole full…full blown tears. Sometimes they even withdraw even more into themselves and don't want to do it at all.*

In Charlotte's opinion, these two ability groups also presented two very different mind-sets, again impacting these peer group dynamics. Charlotte felt girls care more about being with their friends:

> *Some are very much a together, we are all, you know, we're in a group and others are a bit more separate little groups and girls' fallout with each other. So, there's much more...it matters to them who is on their team. Whereas boys only care about winning, they don't care about the process. They don't mind who's on their team as long as they win. Whereas a girl, girls will generally rather have their friends on their team even though their friends are rubbish. And that may mean that they'll lose the game.*

When prompted further on this, Charlotte felt this was not a value shared by sporty and competitive girls, when asked if peer- group dynamics change during competitive sports she replied:

> *If they are competitive animal possibly. Because the winning becomes more important than the friendship*.

Fran gave an example of the sporty girl's competitive mentality potentially causing rifts in relationships regarding girls choosing their own teams in sports days:

> *I can imagine the peer dynamics as…I would have hated doing that, like sitting down with all the girls around me saying "right, you're not very good, you need to do rounders". I can imagine that peer group dynamics, the more sporty ones would have been thrown into the sports that they want to win. And the less able…do you see what I mean, and that would have caused a rift between friendships.*

A few interviewees had noted their lower ability girls being upset and made to feel not good enough by the more competent girls, Danielle shared this often manifested itself as "*someone being unkind because 'I'm not very good', or 'I let the team down' or, you know, 'they're all having a go at me because I didn't score the goal'"*. Conversely there were a couple of mentions of nastiness towards girls for being too good at sport. Esther voiced her experience of this nastiness towards the sporty girls:

> *Now sometimes that happens between, within groups of sporty girls. I have seen that happen, and sometimes it happens between the groups, so the groups of sporty girls and non-sporty girls. And I think that has never changed throughout my career. I've always seen that happening, and then you often get some girls who go…who kind of go into their shells a little bit in terms of how good they are and they almost try to not be as good as they are…we're doing mixed ability at the moment, coz they're in their bubbles, and yes, it does work, but I do think that the top end girls thrive in a top set. Because they're not…there's not that kind of nasty comment flying around about the fact that, you know, you're…you're good at your sport and…I don't know. It doesn't happen all the time, but I think it can be problematic for girls. I think it can. I don't know that boys get that.*

Similar to the previous discussions section, this section highlights the strains and power struggles girls experience in PE, and the ways in which PE can exacerbate this. The competitive nature of PE seemed to bring out some interesting dynamics within girl's peer relations in PE. Some interviewees highlighted how PE distinguished and separated ability levels in a more exposing manner than other subjects, and this contributed to some variation in peer group dynamics, such as group separation and rifts in friendships. The unique figuration of PE, as stated by Danielle, really does "*separate out ability different to other subjects"*, this can cause formation of cliques based around ability. PE's competitive and exposing nature has the ability to distinguish 'I' identities within 'We', or conversely against 'They' in a very public manner, one which is much more visible than in other school subjects. Ability and the management of such ability seem to be at play as an affecter of negative peer relations, this was something multiple participants highlighted as difficult to manage within lessons. The highly charged competitive environment of PE seemed to bring ability power imbalances out. Themes predominantly raised were ability cliques, namely sporty

girls versus less able. Whilst this was a commonly raised issue, the roles and responsibilities of PE teachers and their provision of appropriate lesson planning remains an important factor (Borowiec et al., 2021). Without careful reflection and consideration, the PE set up may well contribute to social rifts and negative peer relations, promoting further disengagement and dissatisfaction. As key persons in the PE figuration, the ways in which FPE teachers contribute and shape PE's social construct and the social processes within is equally as important.

Girls experienced being 'made fun of' for being too good, supporting previous literature Noret et al. (2015), and for not being good enough, with sporty girls dominating the lower ability girls (Hills, 2007), as other data has drawn light to. Interviewees had experiences where the competitive environment of PE exacerbated these issues, such as letting the team down, ability imbalances in games and activities and the frustration/embarrassment involved. This supports Ahlgren's (1983) older workings around competitive attitudes negatively affecting friendships. Offering an alternative perspective to this prevailing belief, it is important to note that girl's competitive spirit and ability to cope with adversity in sport may be tested and evidenced in FPE, as opposed to merely developed (Green, 2007). It is necessary to appreciate how young girls enter FPE with preconceived conceptions and experiences of competitiveness. Therefore, arguably, a more balanced position would accommodate the two when assessing the role and influence of FPE on young girls' peer group dynamics. Another more nuanced finding, offering a different perspective, was how social processes outlined above meant girls experienced internalised feelings of shame and embarrassment as external constraints of social judgment and negative vocal reactions in competitive and heated settings promoted this, again evidencing the ways in which negative peer relations contribute to dissatisfaction and disengagement in PE.

Holistically, this can be tied into some gendered social processes. Girls who were less able in PE were labelled as 'academic' and 'girly' with traits that aligned more with traditional forms of femininity, whereas girls who were more sport-inclined were depicted as competitive, over-ruling and dominant- traditional masculine traits, supporting findings of Krane (2001) and Kew (1997). Perhaps this rift between groups (Sport vs non-sporty girls) and feelings of peer related shame and judgement stem from socialised gendered attitudes, as we know there to be clashes between femininity and sport historically (Nixon, 2008; Schmalz and Kerstetter, 2006), and challenges around gender identity (Krane, 2001). Some of these findings are re-visited in the next chapter which focuses more specifically on certain aspects within young girls' social interactions, namely bullying and banter.

Chapter Seven

Verbal Interactions, Banter and Bullying in FPE

7.1. Teacher Views on Banter and Differentiating it from Bullying

The consensus on banter from the female PE teachers interviewed is that banter is viewed mainly as a positive, or at least had the potential to be positive in the right circumstances, although there is scope for a darker side to banter. Most participants recognised key characteristics of banter, such as humorous, walking a fine line, informal, and reciprocal between people with a good relationship. Most interviewees regarded banter to be primarily used amongst boys, however all participants felt girls also engage in banter perhaps in a different way, with many feeling that boys pushed boundaries and crossed these 'blurred lines' far more than girls. 10 out of 12 participants noted banter was something they engage in within their own teaching with pupils.

Beth summarised banter as:

> *Joking among sports people to kind of wind them up. I see it as more of a macho sort of thing, than what girls do...I think it's definitely something more men do. But I…that doesn't mean that women wouldn't do it, but I haven't been part of…maybe it's the groups I choose. They haven't really got involved in that.*

Whilst Beth agreed banter could develop camaraderie, she also stated "*if it is nasty, or has a darker side, then definitely not, but if it is just fun and both sides see it as fun, I think it's okay. But it's knowing where that line is*". Beth later expressed her views on banter needing a mutuality between the user and the recipient.

One other summary of banter reflected by many other participants was that of Isa's:

> *Banter is when two people who have got a really good relationship, have mutual respect, have got a cracking sense of humour, and can say things to each other without offending them or without one of them taking affront. And if one does take a front, the relationship is strong enough for that person to voice "I didn't like that.*

Danielle had a positive outlook on the general use of banter, characterising it as "*healthy and wholesome*", light-hearted and a positive affecter of engagement and strong relations. Though Danielle highlighted the dualities of banter and expressed her views on differences between male and female lines:

> *Banter has a…is a kind of double-sided thing because yeah what someone might see as banter, someone else wouldn't. My understanding of banter is having a laugh with students in a way that's healthy and wholesome and not over that line. And maybe that's kind of what I was mentioning earlier with the boys, I think their lines are different to ours. I think we do as girls we are a bit more…well, no not necessarily, but I know we are self-conscious, I know from my own personal experience, and therefore very aware of what you can and can't banter about. And there's not loads of things you can banter about, anything personal is not…it can't be anything personal. It's gotta be about what's going on in the situation or whatever.*

Danielle emphasised the importance of knowing where those lines are as a teacher, and banter's potential for inclusivity and exclusivity:

> *There are definitely lines and you've got to be really careful on what that is. And modelling that both as a head of department with my staff and as a teacher engaging with my students like yeah, you gotta be very aware of where the line is and careful on it, but I think it can be a very positive thing at building relationship and being inclusive of people. It can also be exclusive if you…if you're just bantering and it's an 'in joke', I don't think that is very helpful.*

Knowing 'the line' and having a strong relationship with those bantering or receiving banter were prominent themes for most interviewees in viewing banter positively, with many emphasising the need for reciprocity and mutuality. Esther expressed that her *"impression banter is it's reciprocal. It's… there's a reciprocity to it. You know, that it's…we…it's almost like I think with banter you take turns".* The female PE teachers in this study generally agreed banter was not necessarily bullying, however banter could be construed in such a manner. This was dependant on factors such as repetition, perceptions of the recipient and an imbalance of power.

On being asked if she thought there could be issues between differentiating banter and bullying, Charlotte responded:

> *I think once* [banter] *begins to undermine self-confidence then it becomes unpleasant and can be detrimental.*

Danielle and Gemma both shared views on banter not necessarily blurring into bullying. In Danielle's opinion, *"if banter is bullying, I think you'd soon see it, where banter can upset somebody but wouldn't necessarily say it's bullying".* Gemma shared her influence of CPD training on distinguishing banter from bullying:

> *What we got drilled into was an our CPD session that it has to be persisted for it to be classed as bullying. And banter, sometimes…banter is rarely persistent about one*

> *thing, if that makes sense. It generally changes its topics, and that's why it's deemed as a joke. But if it's…if it's…if it's making someone feel awful about themselves or just generally down, then that I would say then is deemed as bullying rather than banter. If the…if the person…if the group of people who are involved in banter give it equally and take it equally, then I think that's OK. But it's when it's…when it's out…it's when it's one side's outweighed compared to the other, then it can be classified as bullying. So yes, it is…it is difficult to sometimes distinguish what is banter what is bullying.*

Regarding the element of a power imbalance, Beth additionally highlighted "*bullying occurs when somebody's got the upper hand or somebody's not enjoying what is…what is going on".* For Esther and Isa, differentiation between banter and bullying was all about the perceptions of the recipient. Esther expressed:

> *It's the recipient, it's the person who it's said to that makes the difference as to whether it's banter or bullying. And that's in my…in my head, so if something is said to a student and she says something back and it…and it's done in good faith and there's humour in it, that's banter to me. If the same thing is said to a student, you know, it could be exactly the same sentence, and if she says that to a student but that student does not take that in that in that context, that's bullying.*

Hannah voiced a similar opinion but stressed the importance of strong relations:

> *If you're having banter with someone who you don't know particularly well, I don't think that can be classed as banter because you don't know how that person is going to take it…I think banter should remain within friendship groups with an understanding of…with an understanding that if you're gonna say something that you could…you think is banter, the person who you're saying it to will receive it in that way as well.*

The majority of FPE teachers were able to identify multiple aspects of banter's characteristics, such as banter's dualisms, jocular nature, synonymity with sports and 'lads' and the 'back and forth' interaction (Mierzwinski, Cock and Velija, 2019; Haugh and Bousfield, 2012). FPE teachers also recognised verbal bullying as malicious in intent and repetitive in nature. In this sense, this may positively suggest FPE teachers may be able to distinguish banter from bullying. This being said, interviewees also recognised the double-edged nature of banter, with the potential for banter to either add or detract from PE lessons. Banter was therefore seen as both an enabling and constraining social interaction, adding light-heartedness and indicative of healthy and strong relationships, but also serving as a vehicle for social exclusion, undermining self-confidence and allowing for power chances.

With 10 of 12 participants stating they engage in banter in their own teaching, and 11 of 12 viewing banter as a mainly positive social interaction, FPE teachers believed they had a role in setting the tone for banter in lessons and something they felt they role modelled well. This further evidence data presented in Chapter Five which illustrated FPE teachers' personality

and more informal social relations within young girls, which differed to those of non-PE teachers. Banter was noted to be used by teachers and pupils in a mostly inclusive manner, socially cohesive and to make light of situations or mishaps. However, unlike males (Nichols, 2020), banter was not noted to be used to challenge social norms, but more to diffuse situations. Banter therefore can be used as a tool to reinforce 'We' identities, and shared/social habitus, both important elements in girls' significant relations in PE. Collectively, placing these findings within a long-term perspective, data presented here demonstrates the increasing nuances at play with language and everyday social interactions (Mierzwinski et al. 2019). As young developing people, young girls are increasingly expected to exercise degrees of foresight and emotionally awareness over their social interactions, such as banter, in order to not cause offense or cross perceived lines of behavioural acceptability. Given this, it is worth placing this finding within the context of the competitive environment and peer group dynamics at play in FPE.

7.2. Banter within Social Relations in Female PE

As noted in Chapter Five, FPE was considered an informal space and one where young girls entered in the knowledge that they could be social, socialise and have fun with peers. Therefore, there were ample opportunities to banter in FPE. Despite this, all interviewee's felt banter was something they saw more in boys and males, though said girls still do engage in banter, either to a lesser extent or in a different way. As teachers, almost all interviewees engaged in banter with their pupils and more so with older year groups, and girls they had formed strong relationships with through extra-curricular, club sports and fixtures, stressing these strong bonds as crucial to healthy engagement in banter. Almost all interviewees also felt that banter had the potential to both add and detract from the atmosphere and camaraderie of PE classes depending on how it was utilised. Most interviewees generally felt that girls engaged in and received banter well, and many felt particularly they're 'sporty' girls or girls in team sports particularly exhibited banter with one another.

Danielle explained how she was able to have more banter with girls as a PE teacher due to the informality of PE:

> *I would say as PE teachers we probably do have more banter with the girls because there's a lot more of that informal time. So that start of the lesson where they've not gotta be silent and they are chatting and you're walking with a couple of girls to the store cupboard you quickly talk about what they did, you know, you have more informal chats and therefore you have more chance to kind of have light-hearted chat which can be banter or fun or like you know friendly, basically.*

Universally agreed across the interviewees that used banter within their own teaching and relations with girls was the use of banter primarily with older girls and girls who are deemed ‘sporty’, those who compete in school teams and in extra-curricular activities. Kelly acknowledged this:

> *We would have obviously much more, if you like, banter with maybe our GCSE and A-Level pupils because we've got to know them more, and we know their strengths and their weaknesses. And they…I think they sometimes give as much back as they get as well to members of staff…So definitely older ones, I don't think I have that relationship with the younger ones. I think you've got to have that relationship with somebody first before you can engage in that…I guess it is a bit of humiliation, but in a nicer way. But certainly I would…you know, there's certain girls you know you wouldn't say those comments to because they'd be very offended.*

Fran and Esther emphasised the importance of a ‘time and place’ regarding the effect of banter on the PE environment. When talking about her engagement in banter with girls, Esther addressed how she felt banter had a time and a place, and banter in highly competitive environments was something to avoid:

> *Let's say you're in a final of a tournament, before it, half time, no banter. I wouldn't, I wouldn't engage at that point. Coz I think that…I think the emotions are a bit too…a little bit more highly charged and you've only got to kind of say something to someone and they're a bit kind of hyped up or something’s not quite going right in the game, and you say something that would be absolutely taken as a real funny comment in a training session, and you say it at half time team talk or on the court, or something like that and it could completely blow up in your face. So, I think in a pressurised competitive situation I wouldn't even go near it.*

Female PE Teacher engagement in banter was also highlighted by multiple interviewees particularly with their sporty girls. This was attributed to the increased informal time and teachers shared experiences with girls which helped to form strong social bonds. Danielle gave an example of this, in which she felt confident in knowing her ‘sporty’ girls:

> *With your sporty girls that are on fixtures, you end up having that more time where you know something funny will happen and you will laugh about it, and you know whether someone finds it funny or not.*

As a hockey coach, Danielle specified she had more banter with the girl's hockey team than her other teacher- pupil relations as they have “*gone through more experiences*” together. Additionally, Esther, Gemma and Fran noted they banter more with their sporty girls and girls within extra-curricular because they know them better.

Regarding girls' engagement in banter with each other, several themes were apparent within the data collected from the interviewees. Just as the interviewees noted their engagement in banter with the older girls and sporty girls, they felt this was reciprocal- older girls and sporty girls were thought to engage in banter more, both with teachers and their peers.

Fran gave an example of what girls she feels particularly engage in banter:

> *Someone that's a team player, someone that's confident. I'm thinking of two girls that give banter all the time. They're your classic girls' footballers, because they're around banter life. And I think a team sporty person, someone that plays for a team, is part of a team, understands what's important about a team*.

Kelly also agreed she thought girls in team sports tended to engage in banter more. Danielle suggested why it may be she hears sporty girls engage in banter more often:

> *So I think naturally hear a bit more banter from your sporties because again you're spending more time with them and they involve you a bit more…that may because they're a bit more vocal and you can hear them, so they tend to be more confident, a bit more chatty.*

Many interviewees also felt strong peer relationships were a significant factor in utilising banter in a healthy way. Upon talking about her year 10 class, Esther gave an example of such interactions:

> *It's between certain friendships and certain groups. There's girls in the group who they know they would not banter with…It only happens when there's that relationship between the peers I think, between the group, between the girls that are saying it.*

Hannah and Isa also identified strong peer-relations as an important factor in the nature of banter between girls. Isa argued that good relationships could take banter when both parties are "*mentally strong*" and strong in their friendship. Hannah similarly explained:

> *I'm just thinking about 2 girls, they would happily dish out, receive it, give it back, it was all fun and games. And they kind of knew where the line was, I suppose. So maybe it's a maturity thing, that it's easier to engage or better to engage in when you understand what it is and what the personal boundaries of your friendship groups are, know how they're gonna receive things and know if you know that someone's going to receive something in a negative way and still say it, then that's when it's a problem.*

Understanding personal boundaries and not crossing these lines is something that several interviewees had noted as distinguishable between boys' and girls' engagement in banter. Danielle felt girls' banter was not offensive however boys' banter was more so in that "*their*

lines are slightly different to our lines" and more "*brutal*". In Kelly's experience, girls were quick to intervene to prevent the crossing of these lines, jumping in with *"we were just having a joke now. Let's move on now!"* Fran similarly agreed that the extreme pushing of boundaries and regular crossing of lines was unique to boys' engagement in banter, and something that very rarely happened with girls. Isa voiced some additional differences between boys' and girls' engagement in banter:

> *No, I think boys do it... I think boys probably do it a little bit more and I think they tend to take it to the extreme…But I think the girls can be equally, you know, strong with the…and I'd even go as far as it was bitchiness, "You let the team down" or "you couldn't catch it, you're useless".*

Some interviewees felt girls knew topics that could and couldn't be joked about with their peers. Topics which girls bantered about varied, however there were 3 primarily consistent across the interviewee's identification of these topics - Situational/skill-based, appearance and boys. Danielle said the girls at her school typically bantered about situations or boys, and banter was often utilised to make light of a situation. Esther also agreed "*it's situational. Yeah, yeah, it's usually from what I've seen, it's situational in PE. Something has happened and then something will kind of spark a conversation*". Fran's experience of girls engaging in banter was predominantly about boys, though this was age dependent:

> *I would say the older the girls, the more banter is about boys or relationships. Whereas the younger girls wouldn't. Like I would never engage, or they wouldn't engage with me about…Like I said to you, one of them saying that the other teacher was fit or hot, that's the older girls. And for example, my sixth form girls would give banter about their weekend or other boys in the group, so they're confident. Whereas like Year 9, 10 and 11 would be about boys and years 7-8 would probably be about like Tik Tok or being on social media. So it's very relative to their age.*

Whilst Isa also identified some skill-based banter amongst girl's peer groups, both her and Kelly shared experiences in girl's banter aimed at appearance. Isa offered some examples and thoughts on this:

> *Some of it is to do with appearance, you know, coz they've all got their eyebrows. And it's like "I can't sweat coz I've done me eyebrows". And then the other girls are like "Oh, come on. Get a grip", you know, whatever. So a lot of it is around appearance, if I'm honest, or it's a skill set that they haven't quite performed at a particular time…You know what we don't want is for it to become really bitchy, unkind, thoughtless. And so that you empower yourself at the behest of somebody else, which is definitely not on.*

Banter is often rife within sporting environments as evidenced in contemporary literature (Clarke, 2018; Nichols, 2020), and FPE was no exception. However, nuanced aspects of

gendered banter were identified. More broadly, it is useful to consider how language plays a significant role in young people's peer relations and their navigation of social spaces, including physical activities and physical spaces such as PE. There are clear relationships between language and power, and a more current form of negotiating this power through language is the use of banter. Arguably, banter has become an effective power resource within contemporary relations, as society increasingly frowns upon physical oppression aggression and violence, a moral repugnance due to long-term civilising processes (Elias, 2012). However, banter in FPE between peers and teacher-pupil relations did not seem to be used to establish dominance or power, but rather to foster and enable 'positive' social bonds and form a central part of informal relations. This can be seen in FPE teacher descriptions of the use of banter both by teachers and by pupils, using phrases such as "*light-hearted", "you've got to have that relationship"*, knowing who they can banter with, knowing the relationship must be reciprocal and balanced, and having awareness of where the lines are and not crossing them. This is contrary to findings in Mierzwinski and Velija's (2020) study, finding banter in male PE utilised to gain more power in addition to homo-social bonding. This additionally contrasts the work of Nichols (2020), who found males used banter to convey harsh truths and hurtful opinions. However, as highlighted in Lawless and Magrath's (2021) research, these findings add more context to the use of banter as socially cohesive in a sporting context.

Whilst banter can be viewed as an enabler of positive social bonds in FPE, such interactions still retain the potential to be negative. As acknowledged by some participants, whether the interaction is positive or negative is reliant on the interpretation of the receiver of banter. The use of banter among young people therefor may be meant with good intent but can be received poorly, as banter with such dualities and nuances requires high levels of cognition and emotional intelligence from both parties for there to have been a successful and positive social transaction (Mierzwinski et al., 2019). For this reason, engagement in banter from older and 'sporty' girls seems explicable. Older pupils may have a more refined cognitive and emotional intelligence than those of their younger peers, sharing stronger and more personal bonds within their peer relations. For 'sporty' girls, the frequency and success of banter within their relations and social dynamics may be linked to a strong sense of 'I'-'We' identities, developed and reinforced through additional informal times such as extra-curricular activities and fixtures. In this sense, they may also develop cognitive and emotional intelligence, attuned to their specific figurations.

An interesting theme is the nature of girl's banter, and the topics in which they engage in, comparing to that of boys. Girls' topics of banter seemed to differ from each interviewee,

however one significant commonality was girls' self and social awareness of what to banter about. As Danielle put "*I know* [girls] *are self-conscious, I know from my own personal experience, and therefore very aware of what you can and can't banter about*". Perhaps we can then assume girls may have socially heightened sensitivities to such interactions, linked to historical male and female differences in social constraints and contemporary self-restraint through informalizing processes (Elias, 2012; Wouters, 1989). Therefore, girls may exhibit learned and heightened cognitive and emotional intelligence when engaging in banter with peers. This perhaps is why banter throughout the data above is depicted as milder and less brutal by girls, than by boys.

Uses of banter, whether good or bad in their intention, may still evidence verbal oppression, as this is difficult to detect or prove. Such forms of verbal oppression are subtle, subjective and contestable; this is in contrast to the blatancies of physical oppression and aggression. Whilst FPE teachers felt they were able to identify clear differences in banter and verbal bullying, this highlights the difficulties PE teachers face in identifying, differentiating and appropriately addressing these negative verbal interactions, as literature suggests (Jiménez-Barbero et al., 2020), potentially influencing girls' satisfaction and engagement. In order to attain a more accurate representation of FPE teachers' abilities to differentiate and deal with verbal bullying, a child-centric approach would be required.

7.3. Changing Rooms Fostering Bitchiness and Nastiness, and General Negative Interactions

Despite the much-lauded positive elements within PE, there is much evidence detailing how bullying can manifest in PE (Bejerot, Edgar and Humble, 2011; Hurley and Mandingo, 2010; Roman and Taylor, 2013). FPE involves various informal spaces which enabled social interactions, some of which may have little adult presence. The changing rooms were spaces interviewees felt were evident of girls bullying, bitchiness and nastiness. This was due to the changing rooms being largely unmonitored and unvetted social environments and providing opportunities for problems to spill over. Many interviewees referenced one instance or more of physical fights in girls changing rooms, or other physical nastiness, though the participants universally agreed negative verbal encounters were more common. The use of online bullying was raised as a prominent issue, in which the changing rooms provided an opportunity for nastiness to unravel and manifest in a more obvious manner.

Astrid explained why she thinks changing rooms can foster an environment of bullying and bitchiness:

> *Pre-COVID, changing rooms would predominantly be an issue for girls' issues, the bitchiness, the nastiness, that would potentially sometimes be an issue coz they can very rarely be monitored, and the way that our changing room works is that we have little nooks and crannies and that girls can sometimes tuck themselves round there and that's when nasty comments can be seen and heard if obviously we couldn't see them. Changing rooms can sometimes foster that environment because again, they're not watched 24/7 and they think it's an opportunity for them to get away with things.*

Hannah and Beth also experienced girls' bitchiness and verbal nastiness between peers. Though they felt girls wouldn't engage in these behaviours in front of the teacher, verbal nastiness was present in the changing rooms and other less monitored environments. Hannah witnessed this in the walking transitions. Beth on the other hand, saw these negative interactions on the minibus:

> *There would definitely be more bitchiness. I find boys would do more banter and girls would be a bit more bitchy. And I think it's such a shame, but it is the case. Obviously, as a teacher, you don't necessarily hear as much, because they wouldn't do it in front of the teacher. But say on the minibus I have heard comments that aren't as nice about other people and things like that.*

Kelly gave another potential explanation for the changing rooms facilitating such negative relations, as the space in confined and social interaction is hard to avoid:

> *I think it's those opportunities when they're walking to the changing room, isn't it? Those social times, and the changing, when they're coming in, and perhaps they've not…they've avoided that person for lesson 1 and lesson 2. And then they've come in to all get changed and because it's a larger number of people getting changed they've probably then come into contact with that person or a friend of that person and it's probably, you know, started again that way.*

Avoidance was noted in Esther's experience of the changing rooms, in which girls attempted more private areas of changing:

> *The changing rooms are, I think for some girls, they could be difficult places. Very difficult places. See, that also begs the question, you know, we've had a lot of girls who asked to change in the loos and they go and change in a…in a cubicle. And that's… that's something to watch as to why they've asked to do that. Because you often think well is somebody saying something or are they just self-conscious? Or is there something else going on?*

Many interviewees felt that problem between girls could and did spill over into the changing rooms. Isa and Kelly both gave varying examples of this. For Kelly, her experience of behaviour issues spilling into the changing room was as a result of instances prior to the lesson

from other subjects. In Isa's instance, negative verbal interactions and aggressive court energy had spilled over into the changing room as a result of the physical PE activity:

> *Generally speaking, once the game was over, it was over and I've only had very, very few occasions where it's over spilled into the changing rooms. You know, where you know, "my team was better than your team"…"they can be piscivorous some of those year 11 girls, you know, "my team's better than your team", like "Girls! Quit!".*

Isa and Beth both highlighted girls' tendencies towards verbal nastiness and the lack of limitations on what that nastiness can be about. In Isa's experience, "*the girls tend to just use their voice, which I think can be quite hurtful in its…in its own right".* For Beth, she believes:

> *Girls can just be… horrible to each other sometimes, you know. And you just think…I know it's like the part of growing up, but yeah, they can just pick on them for anything, you know, from the…the way their hair is to their clothes, to how they look, to what their friends are like*.

Whilst girl's verbal nastiness or bitchiness was prominent throughout the data, a point worth noting was the number of experiences interviewees recalled regarding physical bullying. Astrid gave an example of an instance she felt was particularly nasty:

> *Over the years, we've had lots of issues in* [the cubicles], *so we've had to shut those changing rooms off. It typically tends to be that the more popular girls will try to go into the cubicles and then they hide, they get their phones out, they take pictures, they mess around, they do things like that. So we've decided to shut the cha… the cubicles and everybody has to get changed in the same space, because then it's fair and then it gets rid of that hierarchy and things like…we had some nasty, nasty girls who would lock people in the changing rooms and in those cubicles. And then we, like as teachers, when we were rounding out the cubicles later on we would find that…we found the student and have to like let them out at the start of the lesson.*

Astrid also recalled an additional time she witnessed a girl's physical fight in the changing room, stating *"girls fights are horrible".* For the first time in her career, Fran experienced a girl's physical fight last year in the changing rooms. Whilst Gemma acknowledged these instances to be rare amongst girls- with girls more often using verbal nastiness, she referenced one or two circumstances of physical fighting. For Danielle, she found girls in her class had expressed loss of property as girls had been purposefully moving/taking personal kit and equipment. Esther additionally recalled one of her worst experiences of physical violence in PE, with an instance of bullying outside of lesson time which led to a physical instance one lesson.

Frans's experience of physical nastiness in girls seemed to be more casual in comparison to full blown fighting. She noticed more issues in body language and domination of spaces:

> *I see a lot of eye rolling, even at me. So year 9 predominantly, if you ask them to do something, they roll their eyes and you get the classic…I always say you get the mean girls, from the video, you know you've got the mean girls. So I, in PE, I try and separate them.*

Fran went on to say these 'mean girls' tend to:

> *Make others feel uncomfortable. Make nasty comments. Make people feel like they…Say for example in the…in the sport, so we've got badminton, they'd predominantly try and dominate a court and not let anyone else use that court.*

Several interviewees emphasised the presence of social media in these extreme negative interactions between girls. Astrid, Charlotte, Gemma and Kelly all shared experiences of the issues they experienced with online bullying. Gemma shared her thoughts on the nature of girls verbal fights, and how online fights then spill into school:

> *There could be anything with girls. Some…it could be to do boys, it could be to deal with something that happened on social media. Social media comes up quite a lot like conversations and things and photos, so it's generally quite like out of school stuff that then spills into school.*

Gemma went on to talk about what girls typically tend to raise issues about:

> *Nasty name calling really, which is then…is generated from then something that's being said online or something that someone has done wrong or something like that. It's like…I'd say like bitchiness with the girls.*

Astrid felt online bullying was something girls utilised more than boys:

> *I think because I'm a female teacher, I think I tend to know more about the girls issues than I do the boys. So the girls would let me know that there are…that has been something said and Snapchat is the worst because it's there and then it goes and so it did tend to be more between the girls. I think boys will just or just say it face to face, *inaudible* and then tend to have it out, whereas girls tend to be more online and behind the screen and things like that.*

Upon being asked what issues tend to come up between girls in PE, Kelly also spoke widely around the impacts of social media:

> *So issues that would come up...It's usually falling out from what somebody said. Maybe comments on Facebook or something, or a text message. Often not things related to the lesson. So they'd come in with things already, so that was that was an issue we often come across. Or comments that people would say really that we pick up on or that we'd hear from other people or different things. I think generally that was quite a*

> *shift across school, that we were picking up more to do with the, you know, text… bullying through text messages or Facebook*

The figuration of PE somewhat promotes and enables verbal jousting through a shared habitus, socialised expectations and a competitive ethos, seen in interactions between teachers, pupils and 'I'-'We'-'They' identities. Forms of negative banter, verbal oppression and verbal bullying are against notions of fair play, sportsmanship and respect, often chartered as key aspects pertinent to sport and PE (Craig, 2016; McPherson, Curtis and Loy, 1989). However, behavioural lines in PE can become increasingly blurred given several aspects. The informal and competitive aspects of PE place strains on young people to navigate these spaces with less refined and not yet developed self-awareness and self-control. This in combination with teachers' individual personalities and styles, all affect the social acceptability of differing informalities and jocular interactions in lessons.

The female changing room provided girls with an opportunity and an outlet for oppression in the form of verbal and physical bullying, similarly to literature supporting evidence of bullying in boys changing rooms (Mierzwinski and Velija, 2020; Noret et al., 2015; Jimenez-Barbero et al., 2020). As accounted by multiple FPE teachers, the changing rooms are a key site for negative peer relations and bullying behaviours, due to these spaces being largely unvetted and unmonitored more so than other areas in PE and around school. Because of this, girls are solely reliant on internal self-restraints regarding social interactions, rather than the additional social constraints of the presence of PE teachers. In this sense, this may be why forms of bullying are more frequent in the changing rooms. To be clear, this is not to simply say PE fosters a bullying climate, as the literature often implies. In this instance, this is to suggest FPE may not teach young girls to bully each other per se, but it may provide opportunities for bullying to take place due to, in this case, informal spaces such as changing rooms. A possible critical view of the FPE teacher responses is how the negative peer dynamics and social processes in the changing room coincide with PE teacher roles and responsibilities. FPE teachers are able to identify this issue, and play a key role in the prevention and intervention of such interactions, in order to promote an inclusive and engaging environment (Zalech, 2021; Borowiec et al., 2021). Conversely, this perhaps is a slightly 'rose-tinted' view, as FPE teachers must try and maintain social control and negotiate power balances in the figurations they pertain to; whilst there is a teacher-pupil authority relation, this relationship, interdependencies and power within it are fluid and constantly dynamic. This data at first glance may appear problematic or even ironic, however through a figurational sociological lens, these perceptions and interactions are more implicit of tension balances within the FPE figuration with regards to behaviour and control.

Another element to this is the physical space of the changing rooms; in classroom-based lessons, social interaction is monitored and limited, and in PE there is often ample space or social 'hiding' space to avoid conflicts and confrontation. In the changing rooms however, space is limited, and physical and emotional avoidance is increasingly difficult. Therefore, the depiction of the changing room as a cauldron for social interactions is not surprising, allowing for opportunities for nastiness and bullying to thrive. Some instances were as a result of issues spilling over from the previous lesson or intense competitive nature of PE, others due to existing relational issues. The majority of interviewees recalled instances of physical violence and fights when asked about issues in the changing rooms, which reinforces some current literature on female bullying behaviours (Shariff, 2008), whilst challenging the notions of others (Hurley and Mandingo, 2010; Iossi Silva et al., 2013). However, additionally highlighted by such research is the difficulty teachers have in differentiating forms of verbal bullying from banter or jest. In consideration of this, so many instances of physical violence were highlighted as bullying as this may be more considered an "issue" by FPE teachers than that of negative verbal interactions. A possible explanation as to why FPE teachers were easily able to highlight physical violence as severe bullying instances, rather than those of a verbal nature is societies continuing moral repugnance towards physical violence. Additionally, the engagement of physical violence in girls' challenges some of the gender nuances in bullying behaviours broadly recognised throughout literature (Hurley and Mandingo, 2010; Iossi Silva et al., 2013), namely girls' usage of verbal and indirect bullying. FPE teachers noted 'nastiness' and negative verbal interactions as more commonly used by girls such as name calling, verbal fights over whose PE lesson team was better, and comments around peers clothing, hair, appearance and friends. However, several and various uses of physical instances were raised as more severe, such as girls locking peers in cubicles, physical fighting, taking personal items, body language and domination of PE spaces such as courts. Whilst this data reinforces PE as a site for bullying and emphasizes attributing factors to girls' dissatisfaction and disengagement in PE (Bejerot et al. 2011; Hurley and Mandingo, 2010; Roman and Taylor, 2013), it challenges the ways in which girls are believed to primarily engage in bullying behaviours.

To summarise, changing rooms were highlighted by FPE teachers as key spaces in which bullying and bitchiness take place, these spaces are often unmonitored and unvetted and so girls are reliant on self-restraints, often underdeveloped at the adolescent stage of life. These themes and responses were addressed through a critical lens, in which PE teachers are acknowledged to contribute to these social processes involved in girls' engagement of negative peer relations, with attention to teacher roles within the FPE figuration. The changing

room set-up provides opportunities for tensions from break times and lessons to spill over, as there is no space to hide socially or physically. As PE often serves as an emotional outlet, in which these emotions can be heightened, existing relational issues between girls can be exacerbated and often come to the surface in such an unmonitored environment as the changing room. FPE teachers highlighted multiple instances of physical bullying in the changing rooms, contrary to previously existing knowledge around girls bullying behaviours.

Chapter Eight

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to determine and sociologically analyse FPE teachers' experiences, views and interpretations of negative peer relations in FPE. As outlined in the study's initial chapters, the extent and prevalence of bullying experienced by young people at school is concerning and the utilisation of verbal bullying is prominent. The term banter has gained traction and popularity throughout young people over recent years and is particularly synonymous with 'lads' and sporting environments. Boy's experiences of this are fairly well researched, however research around negative peer relations in FPE, and girl's utilisation of banter and bullying is scarce. This thesis offered a comprehensive review of literature informing this research, with particular attention to gendered processes, socialisation, banter and bullying within PE and sport. Literature, key concepts and social processes of figurational sociology were defined, outlined and related to contemporary society, PE and girls' relations. In order to explore this topic, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 secondary school FPE teachers who were asked a series of questions around their own experiences and views of negative relations in FPE, allowing for data analysis. Through the application of Elias' figurational sociological concepts to theoretically analyse the empirical data collected, this thesis explored and offered explanations around female engagement in negative peer relations/dynamics, banter and bullying in FPE. Namely, Elias' figurational sociological frameworks of figurations, power relations, 'I'-'We'-'They' identities and habitus in addition to some broader concepts of a quest for excitement and long-term civilising processes were utilised to frame the depiction and analysis of these negative peer relations in FPE, and FPE teacher roles and contributions to these with regards to their responsibilities.

8.1. Answering the Research Questions

FPE teachers' views and experiences of negative peer-relations within PE were explored throughout the interviews and data analysis. Several key themes were identified regarding FPE teacher views and what they felt influenced female peer relations and social dynamics. Two of these themes were 'PE as viewed as a very sociable environment' and 'PE's gendered social dynamics'. All 12 of the FPE teachers interviewed viewed PE as a unique space for social opportunities; due to PE's informality, less controlled spaces and the constant mixing between peers, interviewees noted how this allowed for more frequent and informal verbal exchanges between girls. Several spaces such as the changing rooms were raised as having

an embedded culture of chat for girls in PE. FPE teachers reported positive conversation including banter and general jocular interactions as well as everyday chatter such as school life or appearance. Conversely, general negative behaviours constituting as bullying were reported by FPE teachers, such as 'bitchy' comments and physical violence. FPE teachers felt they had unique opportunities to be privy to these less monitored social interactions. The constant social mixing in PE creates a social '*minefield'* as stated by Esther, as interviewees shared experiences of trying to minimise negative social interactions between certain pupils. The FPE teachers interviewed highlighted PE's single-sex nature and gendered social dynamics, reinforcing literature on gendered relations in PE such as Scraton (1992), Stets and Burke (2000) and Humberstone (2003), and offering insight into how this affected girls peer relations and dynamics, specifically girl's feelings of exposure, failure, judgment and self-consciousness. This was as a result of how girls felt others viewed them, and girls often preferred environments in which they could 'blend in' and go unseen.

FPE teachers also had shared experiences of age differences and girls' engagement in sport regarding negative peer relations and banter, and this affected their own engagement in banter and informal interactions with girls. Throughout Key Stages 3 and 4, the interviewees experienced varying levels of behaviour, engagement and negative peer relations, Year 9 presented as a problem group for all interviewees, with particular issues in behaviour, attitude and friendships. Interviewees acknowledged friendships to be significantly valued by girls in PE, but also highlighted some strains in relations and some group divisions. Several FPE teachers noted the ways in which the PE environment can exacerbate relationship issues, particularly in team settings, for example games such as Netball, and many of the interviewees experienced divides between athletically competent girls, and their lower ability girls. Attributed to this was how PE distinguishes and separates out ability level unlike other subjects. This meant there were cliques based on ability, and additionally feelings of frustration or embarrassment in girls were often aggravated and lead to negative verbal interactions and responses, with some girls being made fun of for being too good, or not good enough which effected engagement and satisfaction in PE.

FPE teachers' experiences of dealing with bullying issues and their ability to differentiate between bullying and banter in PE raised similar themes across most interviewees. Mostly, the FPE teachers interviewed felt bullying was not a big issue at their school, but there had been a few instances, in these cases FPE teachers separated these girls as much as possible, minimised 'closed-off' or hiding spaces, and intervened if the FPE teachers heard anything hurtful or inappropriate. Each FPE teacher stated they knew the anti-bullying policy and processes to take in order to deal with such instances. Regarding differentiating between

banter and bullying, FPE teachers felt they were able to aptly distinguish between the two. This was reinforced by most PE teachers correctly characterising banter as humorous, informal, dual-edged and synonymous with 'lads' and sport. FPE teachers also recognised the traits in bullying as repetitive in nature, indicative of a power imbalance and dependent on the recipient of these bullying behaviours. Banter was noted by all FPE teachers to have the potential to be negative or malicious and be regarded as bullying. Though, when asked about bullying instances and issues in FPE, most accounts were experiences of physical fights or general 'bitchiness' and exclusionary behaviours rather than negative verbal instances.

The ways in which negative peer-relations, bullying and banter in FPE are gendered were less obvious and more nuanced throughout much of the data. The application of Elias' figurational sociology was especially helpful in highlighting these gendered social processes and how perhaps they came to be. Banter was viewed broadly by FPE teachers as used more by male pupils and teachers, perceiving this banter to be more brutal and often 'over the line' in comparison to girls. This being said, FPE teachers did find girls engaged in banter however, in a more sensitive and self-aware way, topics bantered about tended to vary between something skill based/situational to comments regarding aesthetics. Banter was found to be used particularly by 'sporty' girls and this was reciprocated by FPE teachers. In relation to bullying and broader negative peer relations, FPE teacher views on this were interesting and indicative of some gendered perceptions. On topics around girls' relational issues or girls negative-peer relations, verbal instances were often described as '*bitchy'* or '*nasty'*, '*girls can just be… horrible…*' or '*you've got the Mean Girls*' in reference to the infamous Mean Girls (2004) film. Upon brief mention of Male involvement in similar behaviours however, this was implied or stated as 'banter', or more downplayed in description. Interviewees also felt girls tended to utilise eye-rolling, name calling, exclusionary body language and online presence as forms of negative interactions or bullying behaviours but did not feel boys used these.

8.2. Added Empirical Knowledge and Theoretical Explanations

FPE teachers viewed PE as a uniquely social environment, allowing girls to interact in a more informal way than other lessons, mirroring Smith and Parr's (2007) literature of PE being primarily a socially enabling space. The application of Elias' long-term processes to the history of PE, such as informalization processes (Wouters, 1989) meant a lessening of social constraints. This has enabled girls to experiment with the ways they speak and express their identities in a more informal way (Elias, 2012), whilst PE has simultaneously offered girls de-routinizing experiences and an emotional outlet. However, this creates equal opportunities for negative peer interactions. Social processes have led to increased opportunity for girls in PE

and sport, however historical gendered attitudes such as stereotyping, shaming, 'appropriateness' and opportunity have perhaps impacted girls contemporary internalised feelings of shame, fear of failure, self-consciousness and doubts in FPE. This is through long-term gendered socialisation and the hidden curriculum (Bain, 1990). FPE teachers expressed strong social bonds within teacher-pupil, as shared habitus enabled more interpersonal relationships with pupils. However, girls were depicted in lessons as feeling exposed, judged and self-conscious, placing an increased importance on 'We' identities with a desire to "blend in", this is perhaps due to the social constraints young females place on one another.

The FPE teacher views around age-specific differences in peer-relations and peer-group dynamics shows young girls to be dynamic and open processes. This provides some additional knowledge on the ways in which social process and interactions manifest in the setting of FPE. Clear throughout much of the data in this study is the significance of relations, friendships or the 'We' identity as Elias suggests, shown in the data to be dynamic and open as girls go through each school year. In previous literature, girls' relationships were shown to be highly valued in PE, and a core factor in their enjoyment (Smith and St. Pierre, 2009). From the data found in this study, there seemed to be particular emphasis on 'I'-'We' identities for girls, and the figurations they were part of, informing the key developmental stages of individual habitus. As identities are socially informed, 'We' identities may constrain or enable multiple social dynamics and relations which girls must try to manage and balance. This perceived relevance of peer relations on girls is much like that of Smith and St. Pierre's (2009) work, and significant in girls' satisfaction and enjoyment.

PE provides opportunities for power struggles and often these are weighted asymmetrically, whether an individual outweighs another in physical prowess, leadership skills or in social standing. In the socially dynamic environment of PE, with ever-changing groups and dynamic power relations, girls must learn to successfully navigate and negotiate this, to minimise conflict and negative social dynamics effectively. Additionally, the competitive environment of PE was highlighted to exacerbate relational issues between girls, due to the competitive nature, de-routinization and continual dynamic negotiations of power within PE. With PE's exposing nature, the ability to distinguish 'I' from 'We' or 'We' from 'They' was evident in the clear divides of core groups in FPE, particularly between the more able and less able girls. This led to feelings of failure, self-consciousness, shame, judgment and exposure for girls, potentially jeopardising relational bonds. Attitudes affecting friendships, satisfaction/engagement and shame/embarrassment from perceived social judgement and reactions in competitive settings align with the workings of Noret et. Al (2015), Hills (2007) and Ahlgrens (1983). Due to these social processes and dynamics, girls must learn to negotiate

which figuration they align with, how this contrasts with existing relations and the ways this impacts the wider dynamic of FPE. With this in mind, engagement in banter and jocular interactions are therefore more difficult to navigate successfully as girls must develop and establish their sense of 'I' in new and fluid figurations of 'We' and 'They' identities.

10 out of 12 participants highlighted engagement in banter was a tool within their own teaching and seen as a mostly positive social interaction. Banter and bullying were easy to distinguish in terms of definitions for FPE teachers, as they were able to correctly identify aspects of each. With enabling and constraining potential, FPE teachers saw banter as light-hearted and indicative of strong relational bonds, but also able to socially exclude, undermine, and allow for power chances. Through Elias' (2012) long-term civilising processes, individuals power struggles have shifted from physical violence to verbal due to moral repugnance towards physical violence. This arguably explains the ways in which banter can be an effective power resource within contemporary relationships. However, in the experiences of the FPE teachers, power did not seem to be a factor for girls in their utilisation of banter, but rather a tool to foster social bonds, and make light of potentially awkward or tense situations. Banter therefore can be used as a tool to reinforce 'We' identities, and shared/social habitus, both important elements in girls' significant relations in PE. Interviewees still acknowledged banter's duel-edged sword, and the potential for these jocular interactions to be malicious and negative, though they felt this was dependent on recipient. This 'fine line' of banter requires high levels of cognition and emotional intelligence from both members to be executed effectively and result in a positive and socially beneficial interaction, and strong bonds in 'I'-'We' identities arguably help to refine and develop this skill, identified by FPE teachers as older students and 'sporty' girls.

The topics in which girls engaged in banter in PE varied from situational/skill based to others aesthetics, however the FPE teachers felt girls knew the 'lines' within these topics in order to sensitively engage in banter. This was opposed to FPE teachers' views on boys' banter, described as 'brutal' and frequently 'over the line'. Though some comparative further research would help to explore the differences in boys' and girls' engagement in banter, arguably long-term gendered social processes affecting gendered sensitivities may play a role in this. PE provides young people with a viable emotional outlet, allowing certain behaviours which may not be socially permitted elsewhere in school life. Banter, verbal oppression and bullying provide an 'upsurge of emotion' in relation to society's contemporary quest for excitement (Elias and Dunning, 1986). The uncontrolled, unmonitored and unvetted figuration of the changing room enables a 'cauldron' of this, supporting evidence of bullying in boys changing rooms (Mierzwinski and Velija, 2020). In the changing rooms, girls are more reliant on their

unrefined internal self-restraints as opposed to the external constraints placed by the presence of FPE teachers. Many of the FPE teachers recalled instances of physical violence and fights in response to issues in the changing rooms and issues being brought into PE, contradicting some current research on girls bullying behaviours (Harris and Petrie, 2003; Hurley and Mandingo, 2010; Iossi Silva et al., 2013) and reinforcing the work of Shariff (2008). Previous research highlights some issues in teachers' ability to differentiate between and respond to verbal bullying and banter (Jimenez-Barbero et al., 2020; O'Connor and Graber, 2014). With this in mind, this may be a reason as to why so many instances of physical violence in FPE were highlighted by FPE teachers. With society's moral repugnance and heightened sensitivity towards physical violence, FPE teachers may consider these physical fights as more severe and problematic than that of negative verbal interactions. A critical consideration of these findings is of the role and responsibilities of PE teachers. As key influencers of the PE figuration and the social processes involved, FPE teachers must be reflective in their planning, practices, language, behaviour and delivery in order to provide an inclusive environment and encouragement of peer support to promote engagement and satisfaction of girls in PE. Though this is indicative of fluctuating power relations and tension balances within FPE, often difficult to control and navigate.

8.3. Future Directions

Observing the lack of existing literature on banter, bullying and negative interactions in female PE, future research in various forms would help to build a broader and more accurate picture of these relations in FPE. Firstly, whilst this study has focussed on FPE teacher views and experiences, focus grouping secondary school girls would help to solidify or challenge the data found within this study. Gaining data on the first-hand experiences of girls in PE would be key in developing academic research in this area and reinforce the sociological theories behind these behaviours and interactions. Additionally, some comparative studies would be beneficial to contextualising some of the findings of this research. One being an age-based comparative study, to establish the differences and ways in which these negative peer relations come to be across year groups, and another being a sports-based comparison between girls who are part of sports teams, clubs, and extra-curricular physical activity, and those who are not, and the banter/bullying and negative interactions which take place. Expanding this knowledge could help academics understand the 'how's' and 'whys' of banter, bullying and negative peer relations in female PE, and better equip female PE teachers to address these situations. Primarily, this research could inform strategies to enhance the PE experience, this could be in the form of challenging routines, informing teacher practices, and developing peer group dynamics within education. As key implementors of change, FPE teachers can incorporate

such strategies to positively influence girls peer group dynamics. Such contributions could help the minimisation of oppressive and destructive negative peer relations between girls in the PE setting, and potentially aid in the management of dissatisfaction and disengagement in PE.

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Appendix A: Ethical Approval

York St John University,
Lord Mayors Walk,
York,
YO31 7EX

28/01/21

School of Science, Technology, and Health Research Ethics Committee

Dear Kate,

Title of study: Peer-relations in Female Physical Education: a sociological analysis of teachers' experiences, perspectives and interpretations.
Ethics reference: STHEC0026
Date of submission: 20/01/21

I am pleased to inform you that the above application for ethical review has been reviewed by the School of Science, Technology, and Health Research Ethics Committee and I can confirm a favourable ethical opinion on the basis of the information provided in the following documents:

Document	Date
Application for ethical approval form	20/01/21

Please notify the committee if you intend to make any amendments to the original research as submitted at date of this approval, including changes to recruitment methodology or accompanying documentation. All changes must receive ethical approval prior to commencing your study. You are now free to begin data recruitment and collection for the above approved study.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Daniel Madigan
Chair of the School of Science, Technology, and Health Research Ethics Committee

Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form

Participant Information Sheet for Teachers

Name of school: School of Sport, York St John University
Title of study: Peer-relations in Female Physical Education: a sociological analysis of teachers' experiences, perspectives and interpretations
Postgraduate Student: Katherine McRoy
Supervisor: Dr Mark Mierzwinski

Introduction
You have been invited to take part in a research project examining female teachers' experiences, perspectives and interpretations of peer-relations within Secondary Physical Education (PE). Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important that you understand why this research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read this information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. If there is anything that is unclear or if you would like more information, please contact me Katherine McRoy (postgraduate student, School of Sport, York St John University) or my supervisor Dr Mark Mierzwinski (School of Sport, York St John University) using the contact details on the following page.

What is the purpose of this investigation?
The aim of my study is to investigate peer-relations and how they might affect females' engagement in PE. I am interested in exploring how peer-relations and group dynamics change across different age groups or when girls take part in different sports or physical activities. I am also particularly interested in verbal communication amongst girls and how this links to popularity and friendship groups. One thing I would like your views and experiences of the notion of banter and the extent this could be linked to behaviours that could be judged as bullying.

What will you do in the project?
As this project involves teachers' experiences, perspectives and interpretations, you will be asked to take part in 2 interviews which will last around 1 hour each, these may be done in one sitting or separately. The interview can take place at a time that is convenient to you, preferable online via Microsoft Teams. The interview will ask questions about PE, PE teachers, girls' peer relations and social dynamics in PE.

Do you have to take part?
No. This is a voluntary-based study. It is up to you to decide whether or not you would like to take part, but your contribution would be greatly appreciated. If you do decide to take part, you may later withdraw from the study without giving a reason and without penalty.

Why have you been invited to take part?
You have been invited to take part in this project because you are a female PE teacher, which is the sample I am looking to interview. You have at least two years' experience of teaching and therefore can give your views and experiences of girls' peer-relations and group dynamics in PE.

What are the potential risks to you in taking part?
This study is minimal risk and should not have any psychological impact. You can withdraw from the project by informing me (the researcher) via email and any words used by you will be removed from the data that has been collected. You may request that the information you have provided is removed from the study at any point until the data has started to be analysed. This means that you can request that your data be removed from the investigation until four weeks (28 days) after the date that you took part in the study. Debrief forms will be provided and will give information on support should you experience any distress from the interview.

What happens to the information in the project?
All interviews will be audio recorded for transcribing purposes, but all answers will remain confidential. Pseudonyms will be used for you and any people that you mention in order to maintain anonymity of personal and the school. All data collected whilst conducting this investigation will be stored securely on the password protected OneDrive storage system, which is used for the storage of research data at York St John University, in line with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation Duplicates if documents may be stored on a password protected file, however only myself and my supervisor will have access to these documents. The information collected whilst conducting this project will be stored for a minimum of 6 months. Thank you for reading this information – please ask any questions if you are unsure about what is written in this form.

What happens next?
If you are happy to take part in this project, you will be asked to sign a consent form in order to confirm this. A member-check will be put in place to ensure that the data collected is correct and interpreted correctly by myself. This will be sent via email to your account to check the transcript and that the data you shared is correct. It is possible that the results of this research project will subsequently be published. If this is the case, appropriate steps will be taken to ensure that all participants remain anonymous. If you do not want to be involved in the project, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for reading the information above. This investigation was granted ethical approval by the Research Ethics Panel in the School of Sport at York St John University.

Researcher contact details:

Katherine McRoy
School of Sport,
York St John University,
Lord Mayor's Walk,
York,
YO31 7EX.

Email: katherine.mcroy@yorksj.ac.uk

Dr Mark Mierzwinski
School of Sport,
York St John University,
Lord Mayor's Walk,
York,
YO31 7EX.

Email: m.mierzwinski@yorksj.ac.uk

If you have any questions/concerns, during or after the investigation, or wish to contact an independent person to whom any questions may be directed or further information may be sought, please contact:

Dr Daniel Madigan
Chair of Ethics for Research Ethics Committee for Science, Technology & Health
York St John University,
Lord Mayors Walk,
York,
YO31 7EX.
Email: d.madigan@yorksj.ac.uk

Informed Consent Form

Name of school: School of Sport, York St John University
Title of study: Peer-relations in Female Physical Education: a sociological analysis of teachers' experiences, perspectives and interpretations
Postgraduate Student: Katherine McRoy
Supervisor: Dr Mark Mierzwinski

Please read and complete this form carefully. If you are willing to participate in this study, please circle the appropriate responses and sign and date the declaration at the end. If there is anything that you do not understand and you would like more information, please ask.

- I have had the research satisfactorily explained to me in verbal and / or written form by the researcher. **YES / NO**
- I understand that the research will involve completing an interview looking at teachers' views and experiences of girls' peer relations and peer group dynamics within PE, which will last around one hour and will be recorded on audiotape. **YES / NO**
- I understand that I may withdraw from this study at any time without having to give an explanation. I understand that I should contact you via email if I wish to withdraw from the study and that I can request for the information that I have provided to be removed from your investigation for a period of four weeks (28 days) after the date that I took part in your study. **YES / NO**
- I understand that all information about me will be treated in strict confidence and that I will not be named in any written work arising from this study. **YES / NO**
- I understand that any audiotape material of me will be used solely for research purposes and will be destroyed on completion of your research. **YES / NO**
- I understand that you will be discussing the progress of your research with your thesis supervisor at York St John University. **YES / NO**
- I consent to being a participant in the project. **YES / NO**

Print Name:	Date:
Signature of Participant:	

Appendix C: Interview Schedule

PE Teachers' Interview Schedule

1. Sign consent documents - explain confidentiality and anonymity.
2. Explain the interview guide and structure of the interview
3. Explain that the interview will be recorded and some of issues regarding the study.

First Section – Background of teacher & school context

1. How long have you been teaching PE?

2. How long have you worked at [name school]?

3. Have you taught at a different school? (did they differ to this school? If so, how?)

4. How would you describe [name school] as a school to a stranger? (i.e. area, social class, academic/sporting reputation, behavioural standards)

Second Section - Physical Education compared with other subjects

5. Do you or have you ever taught other subjects or in a classroom? (if so, which subjects or GCSE/BTEC/A-Level PE, and Another i.e. Citizenship)

6. If so, how do you find classroom teaching compared with teaching PE?

7. Do you find girls' behaviour differ when in a classroom/during form time compared with PE? (if so, how? could you give me an example?)

8. Do you think girls' peer group dynamics differ when in a classroom/during form time compared with PE? (if so, how? could you give me an example?)

Third Section – PE teachers compared with non-PE teachers

9. In general, how would you say PE is viewed by non-PE teachers?

10. Similarly, how would you say PE teachers are viewed by non-PE teachers?

11. Do you think PE teachers differ in their teaching approach & style compared with non-PE teachers? (if so, how? could you give me some examples?)

12. Do you think PE teachers have a different relationship with pupils compared with non-PE teachers? (if so, how? could you give me some examples?)

Forth Section – FPE teachers compared with MPE teachers

13. Do you think that FPE teachers differ to MPE teachers in their teaching approach & style? (if so, how? could you give me some examples?)

14. Do you think that FPE teachers have a different relationship with girls compared with MPE teachers do with boys?

15. How would you describe the peer relationship between FPE & MPE teachers at this school?

16. Do you think there is much difference between MPE & FPE teachers in terms of their teaching approach, style and relationships with girls?

Fifth Section – FPE teachers' views on engagement FPE

17. Do you have a favourite sport to teach girls? (why?)

18. Do you have a favourite year group to teach? (if so, why?)

19. What sports & physical activities would you say girls like the most? (why do you think that is?)

20. What sports & physical activities would you say girls like the least? (why do you think that is?)

21. In general, how would you describe girls' engagement in PE? (Why do you think that is? Can you give some examples?)

Sixth Section – FPE teachers' views on girl peer group dynamics

22. Do you find the behaviour of girls differs between year groups? (if so, how & why?)

23. Do you find girls' peer group dynamics differ between year groups? (if so, how & why?)

24. Do girls' peer group dynamics change during competitive activities and sports?

25. In general, are girls chatty in PE? If so, what types of things do they discuss?

26. Do you think friendships can be formed in PE? (can you give me some examples?)

27. Would you say there are distinct peer groups in PE i.e. the sporty ones or cool or popular ones? (if so, how does this play out in lessons etc.?)

28. In terms of peer group dynamics, is there a clear difference between girls who play for school teams and those who don't?

Seventh Section – FPE teachers' views on banter

29. Have you come across the term 'banter'? (If so, how would you describe it?)

30. What are your thoughts on banter, do you have any views on it? (i.e. would you say it is gendered i.e. more a male thing?)

31. Does 'banter' come up as a topic of discussion across the school more broadly? (how common would you say it is?)

32. Is it something you engage in within your teaching or relations with girls? (can you give me some examples? Older girls or younger girls?)

33. Would you say girls engage in banter? (if so, what do they discuss? How is it received? Does it differ between ages?)

34. Do you think banter adds or detracts from the atmosphere & camaraderie of PE classes?

Eighth Section – FPE teachers' views on bullying

35. Can you explain to me the process by which girls get changed before & after PE lessons? (i.e. changing room set-up, time scales)

36. Do you ever come across any behaviour issues in changing rooms? (i.e. too noisy or complaints)

37. During your time of teaching PE, have you had complaints of bullying? (within or outside of changing room)

38. If so, what types of things do girls complain about? (are their common themes?)

39. Do issues between girls come into PE? (if so, how do you try to deal with this?)

40. Do any complaints come from girls or parents & how are they usually dealt with? (can you give me some examples, generic not specific examples, what is the official procedure to dealing with cases, is this dealt with in-house?)

41. Is bullying a topic that you covered during teacher training & have you ever had any CPD concerning bullying in PE? (If so, can you describe this, what did it involve?)

42. Does the school have an anti-bullying policy? (is this easy to implement this? Do you consult this policy when dealing with specific cases?

43. Do you think there can be issues differentiating between banter & bullying?

44. If you could change one (or two) things about how you can improve girl peer group dynamics, what would they be?

45. I think that is all the questions I have, thank you so much for your responses, do you have any further general comments to make concerning this topic area? Or the research process moving forward?

Many thanks once again – provide/mention de-brief sheet

Appendix D: Debrief Sheet

Participant Debrief Sheet

Name of school: School of Sport, York St John University
Title of study: Peer-relations in Female Physical Education: a sociological analysis of teachers' experiences, perspectives and interpretations
Postgraduate Student: Katherine McRoy
Supervisor: Dr Mark Mierzwinski

Thank you for taking part in this research project. I greatly appreciate the fact that you have taken the time and effort to help with this investigation.

As explained in the Participant Information Sheet that was provided before you decided whether to take part in this project, there were some potential risks of becoming involved.

If you have been affected in any way as a result of your involvement in this project, please be aware that impartial support, advice, help or guidance may be available from the following groups or organizations:

Samaritans	*116 123*	*https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/contact-samaritan/*
Mind	*0300 123 3393*	*https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/helplines/*
NASUWT -The Teachers' Union	*0121 453 6150*	*http://www.nasuwt.org.uk/advice.html*

If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the research project please contact York St John School of Sport Administrator, on admin.sport@yorksj.ac.uk

Thank you again for your time.

Best wishes,

Katherine McRoy
Postgraduate Student,
School of Sport,
York St John University,
Lord Mayor's Walk,
York,
YO31 7EX.

Appendix E: IMD Rank and Association to Participant

Teacher Pseudonym	School IMD Rank
Astrid	17006
Beth Charlotte	32556
Danielle Esther	31471
Fran Liz	15102
Gemma	11036
Hannah	32769
Isa	25426
Kelly	32644