Physical Education, Sports and Gender

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Summary

Researching gender across Physical Education (PE), sport and physical activity (PA) has firm associations with feminism. As a political movement for gender justice, feminist researchers in this multidisciplinary field examines the ways in which active bodies are dynamic and evolving. This feminist scrutiny is ,underpinned by scholarship that explores both formal educational and sporting contexts as well asnd informal activities. The term sport incorporates a range of physical practices and a review of extant literature demonstrates the persistence of gendered power relations and the consequences this has for PE, Sport and PA. While the disengagement of girls in formal physical education (PE) has been recognised as a long-standing and on-going challenge, PE remains narrowly conceived and defined, often with negative consequences for the young people involved girls and boys. Attempts to be inclusive in research practice expose a persistent dominance of the western/global north in knowledge production in sport, PE and PA scholarship and highlight prevailing discourses that impact negatively on engaging with complex issues in different contextsfacing people with disabilities. Empirical research studies inform praxis whereby feminist researchers analyse barriers to participation across a wide range of contexts that are not limited to young people and that extend to policy matters far beyond PE, such as public health and numerous sites of negotiation for access at community level and to a vast array of informal activity. Key themes for researching active bodies include space and alternative contexts; shifting gender boundaries and disrupting binaries; intersections and difference; exclusion and inequalities; healthism and wellbeing agendas. In this chapter, eExamples including masculinitiesy and

dance, parkour and changing gender choices, swimming and transgender, and public health discourse illustrate complexity and contradictions that move debates beyond a 'women in sport' focus. ~~Do we need to say – this chapter is feminist, gender focused.~~ The~~is~~ chapter is premised on feminist perspectives of sport and PE; the focus on active bodies enables informed discussion of the body, physicality and movement that ~~,~~ both theoretically and in relation to praxis.~~ and~~

Keywords
sport, physical education (PE), physical activity (PA), active bodies, gender binaries, healthism, feminism

Introduction

Researching gender across physical education (PE) and sport is discussed in this chapter via a feminist lens. Feminism is a political and theoretical movement for gender justice that has significant implications for PE, sport, physical activity (PA) and as we demonstrate here, for researching active bodies and gender. The term sport is used here to incorporate a range of physical practices. This is because ~~as we demonstrate~~, research engaging with 'active' bodies and the links and consequences this has for education, whilst dynamic and evolving, is underpinned by scholarship that recognises and details interrelationships between formal (educational and sporting) contexts and informal opportunities for a multiplicity of activities, which are situated in public pedagogy and community resistance. PE does not tend to feature very much in debates about gender ~~and~~ in education ~~generally~~ more broadly (Skelton, Francis & Smulyan, 2006). ~~but~~ W~~w~~e aim~~hope~~ to show how research in sport and PE ~~this area~~ is central in understanding gendered power relations and their consequences. While the disengagement of girls in formal physical education (PE) has been recognised as a long-standing and on-going challenge (Kirk & Vertinksky, 2016;

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Scraton, 2017), PE ~~in England~~ and ~~(and elsewhere)~~ ~~sadly~~ often remains narrowly conceived and defined, particularly in relation to traditional team-sport focused physical activity choices, in the UK and elsewhere~~spaces and outcomes (need a reference?)~~, despite some recognition of teachers' attempts to ~~increase and~~ widen choice of activities available~~y~~ (Smith, Green & Thurston, 2009). T~~This remains an underlying rationale for ongoing research and t~~he chapter reflects the different epistemological and methodological debates that inform our engagement with varied analyses of active bodies and ~~as such,~~ draws on feminist informed researc~~rac~~h in doing so.

Coverage is selective as the field is increasingly and encouragingly vast; our intention is to offer an informed review of research engaged with different, but intersecting spheres of gendered experiences of PE and sport. ~~and~~ C~~c~~ollectively, our research involvement spans a range of different studies including young people, informal and community-based sport and physical activity, and public health agendas. We acknowledge ~~Attempts to be inclusive in our research practice exposes~~ a persistent dominance of the W~~w~~estern/global north in knowledge production in sport and PE (Ratna & Samie, 2018). This is also the case regarding prevailing discourses that impact negatively on the inclusion of people with disabilities (Kiuppis, 2018). Not surprisingly, challenging inequality is a key~~n~~ objective for feminism and in this chapter. ~~throughout.~~ We provide some coverage of the intellectual landscape of gender, PE and sport as a helpful backdrop to the selected research developments detailed in later sections. This provides a platform for presenting our focus on active bodies addressed in the following sections: (a) bodies, spaces and alternative contexts; (b) bodies, new activities and shifting gender boundaries; (c) bodies, intersections and

difference; (d) bodies, exclusion and inequalities, and (e) bodies, healthism, wellbeing and disciplinary practices. We contextualize these areas of interest by initially providing an overview of salient, feminist material. ~~pstart with a context section…. Or something like that?~~

Feminist Research across PE, Sport and Physical Activity

Existing material on feminist scholarship across PE, sport and leisure reflects the centrality of theory-practice interrelationships, often referred to as feminist praxis and commonly underpinned by research evidence. Considerable value is given to empirical research that informs changing practices, for example, on~~in~~ PE in the UK (~~(~~Scraton & Flintoff have been central to the ~~empirical and~~ conceptual analysis of gender ~~n, (~~2001 an Bec to add) ~~,~~ Feminist theories of sport (Birrell & Cole, 1994; Markula, 2005; Messner & Sabo, 1990) have, from our perspective, beenare complemented by feminist accounts of~~,~~ leisure (Deem, 1992; Green, Hebron & Woodward, 1990) ~~.and~~ Thus, it is across these overlapping areas (Mansfield, Caudwell, Wheaton & Watson, 2018) that that we situate our work on active bodies and gender, intentionally avoiding disciplinary insularity. ~~avoidig. To focus only on PE for instance,~~ . In 1979, Ann M. Hall made an explicit connection between feminism and PE in 'Intellectual sexism in Physical Education'. Building from this critical feminist platform, scholars assessed gender and its relation to femininitiesy and masculinitesy in PE (Gorley, Holroyd & Kirk, 2003; Sherlock, 1987; Parker, 1996; Vertinksy, 1992) and sexualitiesy (Clarke, 1998; Sykes, 2001). Studies in the UK (Scraton, 1985;1992; Flintoff , 1993) highlighted the institutionalisation and significance of gender relations in PE, echoed in a range of studies since and in different national contexts (~~Pascoe, 2012;~~ Fisette, 2011; Larsson & Redelius, 2008;

Oliver & Kirk, 2015; Wright, Macdonald & Burrows, 2004; Sanchez-Hernandez, Martos-Garcia, Soler & Flintoff, 2018; Vertinsky, 1992~~2012~~).

Challenges to dominant models of traditional sport recognised gender relations as relations of power and research agendas developed around sport and oppression (Bryson, 1983), empowerment (Theberge, 1987), the philosophical basis of traditional epistemology applied to sport (Hall, 1985), reflecting moves to feminism and feminist critical theory more firmly (Hall, 1988). Hargreaves (1986) and Birrell (1988) challenged researchers to adopt critical and analytical approaches and move away from studies that merely offered descriptive accounts of 'women in sport'. Meanwhile, feminist leisure scholarship also highlighted how gendered power relations persistently shaped opportunities and constraints for women and girls' participation, as captured in review pieces that outline key research topics (see e.g. Henderson & Gibson, 2013; Parry & Fullagar, 2013).

In elite level sport participation, where attention has been focused around a need to increase role models for girls to aspire to engage and achieve in sport, discourses of the athletic body are persistently gendered amidst power regimes of regulation. For instance, we can see how gender binaries reproduce unequal power relations that ~~impact~~ detrimentally impact ~~on~~ performance~~-~~ driven active bodies (Wheaton et al 2019). Research in sport has continued to focus on the ~~impacts~~/influence of gender on participation, not only in terms of athlete involvement but extending critical analysis of leadership and governance. London 2012 (Olympics/Paralympics hosted in the UK) for example, was heralded as the 'women's Games' (Scott-Ellliot, 2012) with women as 44.3% of participants (Donnelly & Donnelly, 2013). Yet, gender continues to result in barriers and constraints to

participation including Saudi women's refuted involvement, opposition to women's boxing, the persistent gendered policy around clothing and kit and persistent stereotyping in sports media (Samie & Sehikoglu, 2014). Arguably, this has major implications for how gender and sport are~~and~~ perceived as well as culturally transmitted, be that in relation to role models, media coverage and more. "There remains a continuing absence of women in decision-making positions" (Adriaanse & Claringbould, 2016, p. 550) throughout governance, management, coaching, and officiating, often exacerbated by interrelationships across race and gender (Rankin-Wright & Norman, 2018).

PE, Sport, Health and Wellbeing and the Regulation of Women Bodies

~~For instance, W~~we can see how gender binaries reproduce unequal power relations that impact detrimentally on performance~~-~~ driven active bodies (Wheaton et al 2019). PE practices and policies have long served as a site for both the external regulation of individual and collective bodies, and internalized self-control of behavior and emotions. This is done through both formal curriculum delivery and informal sites of public pedagogy. The extant literature indicates that a health-hygiene-therapeutic technology has always been part of the established ideology of PE, sport and leisure as 'natural' for boys and men. What is also striking, however, is the evidence that the health promoting aspect of physical activity was particularly significant in the legitimation of female exercise for women across many countries of the world~~.~~ (Hargreaves 1994; 2000). In the UK, USA and Canada for example, in light of medical opposition to any type of female education, physical activity and physical education for (middle class) females was defended on the grounds of health and the development of stringent moral characteristics based on discipline and responsibility (Atkinson 1978; Hargreaves 1994; Lenskyj, 1991; McCrone 1988;

Vertinsky 1994). The closely associated practices of medical inspection, physical education and physical exercise in this context were characteristic of the promotion of the female feminine aesthetic, in addition to health and vitality, and the eradication of bodily weakness and chronic conditions. In elite schools in nineteenth century England, the significance of physical wellbeing in the enhancement of academic performance (an argument that ran counter to dominant ideas that intellectual exertion would decrease girls' physical capabilities) also provided justification for the physical education curriculum (Hargreaves 1994). Such ideals ~~,~~ further supported~~ing~~ a direct relationship between physical activity, corporeal regulation and social and academic control over females.

Histories of PE reveal that popular and academic knowledge of controlled physical exertion has always advocated the wider health benefits of physical activity, sport and sport-related practices (Atkinson 1978; Hargreaves 1986; Hargreaves 1994; Mangan and Park 1992**;** Turner 1996; Featherstone et al. 1991). Health matters are complex and contested in different ways. ~~Not least, a recognition that e~~Experiences of health differ between and within groups of people and are~~,~~ shaped by specific socio-cultural contexts and bio-psychological conditions that both result in, and from, inequalities, including gender. Knowledge, understanding and perceptions of health tend to reflect competing moral views about 'good/healthy' and 'bad/un-healthy' lifestyles and 'good/healthy' and 'bad/un-healthy' bodies (Shilling 1993; Turner 2008). Education about and through the physical is revealed as a mechanism for the application of the rules, practices and expectations typical of any given culture in specific time periods. Physical education reveals complex interrelations between embodiment, movement and education (Arnold, 1988). Indeed, p~~P~~articipation in physical activity broadly, prescribed and promoted through a host of interconnected

organizations, media and personnel, operates to produces not just physical abilities but, more broadly, an ability to care for and know one's own body in accordance with dominant corporeal ideals. Physical activity, sport, and leisure and practices of physical education then are therapeutic technologies in the sense that they are commonly the ways in which 'good' habits are internalized and taken on as unthinking habits of self-care (Mansfield, 2020).

The emphasis on corporeal control in schooling is also reflected in the development of the modern (White, Western) public health movement (Lupton, 1995) . Linked to capitalist ideals of productivity and the requirement of a healthy work force, public health regulations were initially largely aimed at combating the social diseases of the working class, such as typhoid, smallpox, tuberculosis, venereal disease and prostitution (Lupton 1997; Turner 1996; Hargreaves 1996). Coupled with existing notions of physical fitness, cleanliness and hygiene, public health came to be viewed as a serious problem that could be addressed through medical inspection, health education and physical exercise. Thus, the medical doctor and physical educationalist may be regarded as complementary professional personnel acting as agents of corporeal discipline and control (Atkinson 1978), their work helping to shape participants to conform with dominant expectations regarding productivity, health and morality. Organised, ritualised physical exercise is central to the discipline, regulation and control of women's and men's bodies, constituting a regime of control through sustained work on the body (Hargreaves, 1986).

Gender Binaries and Active Bodies

Key concepts in sport studies such as hegemonic femininity (Krane, 2001) and hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005) have informed a range of studies focused on gender and the body in sport (Cole, 1993; Maguire & Mansfield, 1998; Theberge, 1991; Markula, 2005). This research contextualises active bodies in critical contexts including gender and sexuality (Caudwell, 1999), gender and race (Scraton *et al.*, 2005) spatiality, gender and race (e.g., van Ingen, 2003), and sexuality/queer and whiteness (McDonald, 2002). Scraton's (1992) research exemplifies how researching gender and active bodies requires analysis of both institutionalised (education and PE) and socio-cultural dimensions (youth subculture, peer group friendship and media). PE is undoubtedly a site where gender is learnt and 'done' (West & Zimmerman, 1987) and remains a key context for gendered identity formation regarding physical activity (Flintoff & Scraton, 2001; Penney, 2002.

Gender based research in education more broadly argues for analysis of the ways in which young people ~~girls and boys~~ 'learn' and do gender in order to work on strategies to usefully intervetne in these gendered processes and limit negative consequences of gendered power relations (Paechter, 2006; 2012). A~~The~~ gender binary of masculinity and femininity is complex yet ~~and~~ fundamental ~~within~~to discourses surrounding the body in PE, sport and physical activity. Studies in the past may have been focused on egalitarian attempts at reform and equalising participation in PE, but an over emphasis on equal opportunities has since been problematised. In reviewing 'progress' in gender relations in youth sport outside education for example, Messner (2011) warns against post-feminist rhetoric that claims increased inclusion

for girls and women in sport somehow equates to diminished discourses of the 'naturalness' of men's and boys' active sporting bodies. Thus, we can see that cataloguing participation rates in sport and physical activity based research is only part of the story. Research concerned with whether young people have opportunities to perform gender differently in educational contexts has repeatedly shown how gender relations inform young people's sense of self and identity, particularly in PE and physical activity (Markowitz & Puchner, 2016~~; Pascoe, 2012~~). There are some studies that examine how masculinities~~y~~ are~~is~~ articulated and expressed in multi-layered ways in PE (see e.g. Gard, 2008; Gerdin & Larsson, 2018; Gerdin & Pringle, 2917; Pringle, 2008), pointing to the potential for masculinity to be performed and embodied differently. The interrelationships between gender and active bodies therefore requires analyses of alternative contexts, both spatially and as embodied practice, as a feature of engaging with the complexities of gender binaries and associated inequalities. This acknowledgement informs discussion throughout the chapter.

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Scraton (2018) and Hargreaves (2004), amongst others, usefully remind us that a range of inequalities remain prevalent and persistent on the basis of constructions of masculinities~~y~~ and femininities. ~~y and we consider this further in discussion of different research projects below; that is,~~ F~~f~~urther work on binaries and equalities is a key part of assessing active bodies from feminist perspectives. Developments in theorising the body have helped to broaden our analysis of active bodies in PE (Scraton, 2013) and in informal contexts. Drawing on poststructuralist feminist theories ~~of the body more broadly~~ (e.g. Butler, 1990; Grosz, 1994) critical analysis of how girls discipline their bodies via exercise and physicality as a means of aspiring to an ideal body type that is slender, white, able-bodied, and heterosexual is

presented (Azzarito, 2009). Garret's work (2004) demonstrates that young women's engagement in exercise is profoundly influenced by the dominant discourses associated with this ideal body type and Azzarito (2010) further emphasises the whiteness of successful sporty/active bodies. PE has made attempts to embrace new and different methodologies to capture the diversity of active bodies (e.g. Azzarito and Kirk, 2013; Oliver and Lalik, 2004) and some projects engage more explicitly with processes of racialaisation in PE (Stride, 2014), and sport more broadly (Benn, Pfister and Jawad, 2011; ~~Aarti's edited book referenced here? –~~Ratna & Samie, 2018).

Bodies, Spaces and Alternative Contexts

Building on the section 'PE, Sport, Health and Wellbeing and the Regulation of Women Bodies', we

~~In response to material outlined above , regarding PE and the regulation of young women's bodies in sport, exercise and PA, this section~~ reflect~~s~~ on how research on informal sport, gendered bodies, and space challenges some of the long-held assumptions about traditional 'sport' that continue to frame physical education and gender. PE based research has often been rooted in curriculum-based issues, questions of pedagogy, teacher education, including the experiences of lesbian teachers, and discourses of the body rooted in educational settings. ~~as we have alluded to above.~~ However, research on active bodies beyond the curriculum, and beyond 'formal' sports context, makes a significant contribution to analysis of spatial contexts of gender and the opportunities for a relative freedom of expression and engagement with physicality.

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Over the past few decades girls' and women's participation in sports and physical activity, including in schools, has become increasingly diverse. This has included entry into previously male-defined and dominated team sports such as football and rugby (Cox & Pringle, 2012; Williams & Bedward, 2000. However, of particular note is the popularity and expansion of more individual, informal and less-competitive sporting activities, from park runs, social cycling groups, to yoga, Pilates and Zumba (e.g. Sport England 2016, 2019). Indeed, participation trends across many national contexts has shown that while interest in traditional (single-gender) team-based sports is declining, these more informal, individualistic and lifestyle sport cultures continue to grow in popularity across many demographics (see Gilchrist & Wheaton, 2017; O'Connor & Penney, 2020). The term 'informal sport' has different applications nationally and internationally, and includes health and fitness activities (O'Connor & Penney, 2020), 'action sport' (Thorpe, 2016; Gilchrist & Wheaton, 2011, 2017) and 'traditional recognised sporting forms, played by groups who are not affiliated to sporting bodies or pay membership fees'(Jeanes et al. 2018, p.79). Here we focus on 'action' or 'lifestyle sports' such as skateboarding, surfing and parkour, which share characteristics including being self-organised, their spontaneous nature, lack of rules or regulation and the absence of defined and bounded spaces for participation. Some also have an emphasis on self-expression, and provide managed risk-taking (see Wheaton, 2013).

These sporting cultures have been seen as important arenas where feminist questions emerge (e.g. Wheaton, 2004, 2013; Laurendeau and Sharara, 2008; Thorpe & Olive, 2016). A growing body of qualitative feminist research has illustrated the varied lived experiences of the women who participate in lifestyle and action sport

cultures around the world, and the significant influence of action sports in shaping girls' and women's experiences of 'youth, media, sex/gender, sexuality, bodies and sport' (see Thorpe & Olive, 2016, p15). Research has considered if these more informal activities, and their different spaces of engagement - from the gym, to city streets, parks, mountains and oceans - has contributed to challenging the gendered cultures of sport, and experiences of inclusion and difference. Some suggest that because lifestyle sports are less spatially and temporally bounded than most institutionalised sports, space is opened-up in ways that may challenge traditional, often hegemonic, sporting masculinities and femininities. For example, Roy's (2011) research on surfing, shows how this 'opening up' of spaces, which she terms 'spatial ruptures', allows more fluid and alternative female subjectivities to emerge. Surfing, a masculine-dominated activity is adopted by women and girls 'not as "one of the guys", or even as girl-powered "future girls" but as a part of the renegotiation of dynamic female subject hood' (Roy, 2011). Thus, as research across different lifestyle sport spaces illustrates, while female entry into male-dominated informal spaces offers possibilities for challenging gendered norms and subjectivities, dominant discourses and practices - including the exclusion or marginalisation of less proficient participants - are also reproduced (Wheaton, 2013). Spaces such as beaches and streets may seem open to all, but nonetheless are still dominated and controlled by particular groups of men.

Recognising these challenges, managed female-only provision, including in 'safer' indoors or regulated spaces, have proved successful for targeting newcomers in activities including skateboarding and parkour (Atencio et al. 2009, Thorpe & Chawansky, 2018).

inclusive and welcoming space where some women feel more confidence (Wheaton, 2016). Yet, promoting women-only spaces does little to challenge the prevailing logic, or disrupt the ways in which particular males define, use and control space.

Bodies, New Activities and Shifting Gender Boundaries

The social value of these more informal and lifestyle sports for addressing policy agendas including physical activity and health promotion, and developing social inclusion, has been increasingly recognised and promoted (Tomlinson et al. 2005, Gilchrist and Wheaton 2011, 2017; King and Church 2014; Jeans et al, 2018). O'Connor and Penney (2020) extend these questions into the sphere of Health and Physical Education [H/PE] in Australia proposing that H/PE has an important role to play in achieving this.

Parkour is one of these 'new' informal activities attracting particular attention from policy communities and academics (Gilchrist & Wheaton, 2011). The activity involves 'efficient motion' over, around or through obstacles including walls, railings and roofs, by running, jumping, vaulting and climbing (Parkour UK 2011). It is accessible and cheap; no specialist 'sport' equipment is required, or formal spaces for practice. Like other lifestyle sports, it does not have a set of rules or outcomes. It is flexible and multi-faceted, with emergent forms intersecting with martial arts, gymnastics, dance and theatre (O'Loughlin, 2012), which allows it to be easily moulded into in PE, fitness classes (held inside and outside), and performance arts, for participants from kids to retirees (e.g. Parkour for pensioners, 2015; Wheaton & O'Loughlin, 2017). Proponents suggest it engages young people in physical activity and managed risk-taking, including those who dislike, or feel alienated from more

traditional sports (Angel 2007, Gilchrist and Wheaton 2011, Clegg and Butryn 2012, Fernández-Río and Suarez 2014, Grobowski and Thomsen 2015, Thorpe and Ahmad 2015).

The parkour community is 'a masculine social world' (Kidder, 2013, p. 6), yet, parkour has a cultural ethos that does not embrace values central to the dominant sport system including the win-at-all-cost ethos, aggression and exclusion. Its non-competitive and inclusive culture which promotes self-responsibility, self-mastery and collaboration, is important in understanding its appeal (Clegg and Butryn 2012). Arguably, by rejecting some of the central facets of hegemonic sporting masculinity, the 'recognised boundaries' of sporting masculinities are broadened (Wheaton, 2006; Wheaton, & O'Loughlin, 2017).

Some have explored parkour's adoption in school-based PE settings amongst primary and secondary students. Grobowski & Thomsen (2015) illustrate that when taught appropriately (i.e. sympathetic to parkour's ethos and engaged pedagogy) parkour challenged expectations about physical exercise and gender, allowing children to reconsider normative gendered roles and hierarchies, providing opportunities for social inclusion (Grobowski & Thomsen, 2015, p. 40). Similarly, Wheaton (2013) interviewed parkour coaches/facilitators, who discussed how in their mixed sex classes it was girls who often excelled. This surprised both the boys, (who often assumed that they had greater physical prowess), and the girls, (who often lacked confidence in their physical ability), challenging the gendered assumptions of children in PE classes. In primary schools, Fernández-Río and Suarez (2014) conducted a PE parkour intervention and explored student's experiences, also

showing particular appeal for the non–sporty children (boys and girls) who didn't like PE. They outline a range of educational benefits (e.g. being child-centred, developing maximum participation, and positive socialisation), but emphasise coping with managed risks, fear, and working on problem solving and decision making. The authors suggest that the cooperative learning structure used in the parkour learning unit they observed (2014), which characterises pedagogy in many parkour interventions (Wheaton & O'Loughton, 2017), allowed children to develop communication, cooperation and trust. These finding echo with O'Connor and Penny (2000) who suggest that the different pedagogical approaches underpinning informal sports could 'disrupt long-established patterns of privileging particular skills, knowledge and understandings in H/PE' (2000, p. 19). In the parkour emerging from community dance that Wheaton and O'Loughlin (2017) examined, a pedagogic philosophy underpinned practice that was participant led, explicitly challenged the notion of the teacher as expert and perceptions of who can participate. Rather than assess ability based on a single outcome (e.g. speed or strength), a non-hierarchical approach celebrated cooperation, process, diversity and difference.

Despite these findings, parkour's inclusion into school-based provision either as a 'taught' activity in PE, or extra-curricular provision, remains contested and variable, both nationally, regionally and locally (Wheaton, 2013; Puddle, 2019). Research in England suggests that a range of factors influenced this including; misperceptions of risk, fear, lack of knowledge and expertise amongst PE professionals, curriculum specifications, leading to contested and contradictory reception within the PE profession. Initially the Association for Physical Education, AfPE (do we need in full? claimed parkour was 'an activity that appears to fly in the

face of safe practice and acceptable risk', but later suggesting it 'has the potential to offer young people an alternative movement experience that is both challenging and fulfilling in both its skill and aesthetic demands' (Beaumont, 2008). Although some schools have expanded PE and sport provision, incorporating a range of non-traditional 'sports', these are still not the norm, partially in England where traditional team sports remain dominant. As O'Connor & Penney (2000) suggest, PE has much to learn from informal sport, including we suggest help understand, cultivate and sustain girls and young women's engagement in PA in school and beyond.

Bodies, Intersections and Difference

One approach to engaging with difference is to think intersectionally about our research. Researching boys and dance for instance also questions how participants express various articulations of their gendered active bodies in the contexts that dance allows (and denies). Such an approach to dance research contextualizes experience as embodied and spatial (see e.g. Watson 2017) and as outlined in the previous section, draws attention to complexity and contradiction. Where we might regard parkour as an alternative space for girls' active bodies, we might consider the role dance plays for boys as an alternative context; both, we suggest, highlight complexity and contradiction surrounding gender.

Research into boys who dance in formal educational contexts demonstrates how boys must repeatedly negotiate dominant discourses of masculinity that regulate (and restrict) opportunities for dancing and that also limit the possibilities for positive affective engagement associated with having or being a dancing body (Gard, 2008; Risner, 2003; 2014). Research has also shown that when boys dance in informal

settings (outside school) we cannot simply claim new and/or progressive masculinities on the basis of shifts in gender relations (Watson & Rodley, 2015; Risner & Watson, 2021). Displaying body competence and expressions of sporting capital is normalised for boys despite claims this is shifting. Linking physicality with masculinity is a normative, common language for boys and men (Messner, 2011), albeit differently embodied via class and race and sexuality. Arguably we need disruptive mechanisms to allow for increased participation in dance by boys, particularly in school and PE settings (Gard, 2008).

Boys who dance often reproduce yet also parody stereotypes of being male in the context of their expressions, articulations, representations and practices of masculinity across different styles including street, hip hop, cheer dance and carnival styles (Watson, 2018), as has also been noted in school based research focused on boys' behaviours more generally (Pascoe, 2012). Boys' engagement in dance is influenced directly by their social class (Watson & Rodley, 2015) and varying intersections between gender and race (Watson et al., 2013), in addition to where dance occurs, in what spaces, what types of provision are offered as well as exploring who participants are, as individuals living in a variety of communities (Gard, 2008). Researching difference requires being careful to not reproduce stereotypes that position dance as fundamentally a feminine activity or that certain dance styles 'belong' to different masculinities, such as black boys do street dance and white boys do ballet. Thinking intersectionally in our research prompts questions that explore identity formation to challenge and question black and working-class masculinities as dangerous and non-normative (Archer & Yamshita, 2003; Bereswill & Neuber, 2011).

Research can also usefully examine the role and influence of dance instructors (Risner, 2003; Risner & Watson, 2021; Watson et al, 2013).

Vulnerability and risk are illuminating themes in dance and masculinity research. Boys will take risks amongst other participants even where they cannot easily perform physical tasks such as full press-ups (in street dance moves) or moving freely and gracefully (contemporary dance). Data suggest boys disrupt some elements of dominant (sporting) masculine hegemony in that respect (Watson & Rodley, 2015) and offer support and encouragement to each other rather than overt demonstrations of dismissal and ridicule. Further analysis about the power relations of different dancing bodies is required on this basis to explore embodied gendered experience and expressions that always intersectional and context specific. Vulnerability and risk are of course relative terms. In other areas of researching active bodies some aspects of gendered experience remain marginalized and are paid little attention in the literature and across research agendas.

Bodies, Genders, Sexualities, Exclusion and Inequalities

Traditional physical education, in socio-cultural contexts such as the UK, received critical feminist scrutiny during the 1990s with researchers highlighting homophobia (Clarke, 1998; Flintoff, 1994; Griffin & Genasci, 1990; Lenskyj, 1991) as significant to exclusion and inequalities faced by LGBT students, and teachers. Key to these feminist analyses is the concept of heteronomativity and how it functions to privilege participation and participants that embody heterosexual sex-gender-desire. The focus on heternormativity enabled the development of a queer critique of physical education and a move beyond homophobia to the nuances of heterosexism,

transphobia and fat phobia (Sykes, 2011); heterotopias and queer pedagogy (Larsson, Quennerstedt and Öhman, 2014); queer inclusive physical education (Landi, 2018); and the already-queer spaces and practices of Physical Education (lisahunter, 2018 & 2019). Without doubt both feminist and queer perspectives have interrogated how ~~sport and~~ physical activity and sport are produced and re-produced ~~in physical education settings~~ to marginalise LGBTQ young people.

Further developing these critical analyses is the more recent turn to transgender studies and transfeminism by some scholars (Caudwell, 2020; Klein *et al.*, 2018 & 2019). Transgender and non-binary students face a specific set of conditions and series of hostilities when it comes to sport and physical activity; not least structural and ideological assumptions related to who can participate, when and how. These assumptions are often fixed to, and fixated on, the transgender and non-binary body, and the governance of physically activity bodies that do not comply with the normative sex-gender binary.

Research demonstrates that transgender people report mostly negative experiences of physical activity and sport, including physical education (Jones, *et al.*, 2017a; Pérez-Samaniego *et al.*, 2019). Aspects that are shown to cause exclusion and inequality for transgender and non-binary participants are: changing/locker rooms, school sport, and public spaces (Caudwell, 2014; Hargie *et al.*, 2017); how transgender people are publicly imagined through tropes of abjection and alterity (Pérez-Samaniego *et al.*, 2016); the binary arrangement of sport within UK University environment and policy (Phipps, 2019); embodiment, fear, transitioning, social support, physical education and how space is regulated (López- Cañada et al., 2019);

the body, pre- and post-transition, stigma and pride (Elling-Machartzki, 2015); and identity, participation, competition, physical embodied change and coming out in college sport (Klein *et al.,* 2018 & Klein *et al*., 2019).

Research–based studies evidence explicitly that central to transgender exclusion from physical activity are: the obdurate sex-gender binary arrangement of sport; current sport and physical activity policy and provision; past and present physical education pedagogy including a lack of an ethics of care for LGBTQ; and transfeminism. Klein *et al.,* (2018 & 2019) are explicit in their transfeminist framing. This approach is important because it provides opportunity for theory, politics and activism (transfeminist praxis) for transgender equality, and scope for trans allies to contest existing inequalities.

It is interesting that some strands of feminism remain closed to the inclusion of transgender and non-binary people and communities. For example, within sporting contexts feminist oppositions are based on the notion that transwomen threaten the category woman, the category sportswomen, the advocacy of women's space and women's sport. Some of this debate exists within the elite tiers of sport as is apparent in recent debate of the runner Caster Semenya (Wheaton, *et al.,* 2020). Griffin (2012) argues that this means transgender and non-binary athletes face similar exclusions to lesbian athletes as a consequence of the myth of the level playing field. For instance, Griffin compares how lesbian athletes were viewed as a threat to women's sport with how transgender and intersex athletes are considered through deep suspicion.

> ‘Although lesbians may be viewed as women who look or act like men, some people view transgender and intersex women as actually *being* men, in most places making them ineligible to compete … ’ (p. 106).

In a similar connection, Ahmed (2017) argues that transfeminist praxis shares with lesbian feminism a ‘militant spirit’ through ‘the insistence that crafting a life is a political work’ (p. 227). For Ahmed, gaining equality and inclusion has often been the work of individual transgender and non-binary people who are forced to work from a position of ‘a politics of transgender rage’ (p. 227). Instead, she argues, through transfeminism, trans allies can play a part in gaining transgender and non-binary equality and inclusion.

From a social justice position, equality and inclusion are paramount given that statistics demonstrate significant health and wellbeing inequalities for transgender and non-binary people and communities (e.g., Public Health England, 2017), especially youth (Connolly, *et al.*, 2016). Accepting the premise that schooling in sport and physical activity takes place through the physical education curricula in most countries, it is timely for feminism, and gender studies broadly, to explore more fully not only lesbian, gay and bisexual experiences of exclusion, but the often-forgotten groupings of transgender, queer, non-binary and gender non-conforming. To date, research is limited (see: Caudwell, 2014; Foley *et al.*, 2016; ~~Landi, 2018; 2019; Landi, Flory, Safron, & Marttinen, 2020;~~ Pérez-Samaniego *et al.* 2016), and the uptake of transfeminism in physical education research contexts is negligible (Landi, 2018; 2019; Landi, Flory, Safron, & Marttinen, 2020). However, a recent transgender

and non-binary swimming research project might offer insight of the benefits of physical activity (Caudwell, 2019 & 2020).

Swimming has a social history dependent on class, gender, ethnicity and empire, and health (Love, 2008) as well as moral codes of cleanliness embedded within the rationale recreation movement (Pussard, 2007). It is shown to be a sport with high levels of surveillance of the body, especially competitive swimming (Lang, 2010). At the same time, swimming is a popular physical activity and ranked sixth in the UK (Active Lives Adult Survey, Sport England, 2019). Swim England (2017) make clear statements about the physical and mental health benefits of swimming, and health geographers (Foley and Kistemann, 2015) identify the ways blue space (water) has therapeutic, restorative and salutogenic value in promoting wellbeing. In a recent UK Government (2019) document entitled: School Sport and Activity Action Plan, swimming and water safety are itemized as an action point (e.g., Government, schools and the sport sector will take further action to ensure all children leave primary school with vital swimming and water safety skills). Given the ways swimming is shown to be both disciplining (at elite level) and liberating (at recreation level), it is unsurprising that it raises tensions for transgender and non-binary individuals (Elling-Machartzki, 2017; Jones *et al.*, 2017).

Findings from the transgender swimming research project (Caudwell, 20202019) elucidate many of these tensions, including a range of feelings for before, during and after taking part in once-a-month one-hour transgender and non-binary swim sessions. The swim sessions (2018-2020) were at a local public swimming facility, but they were private-hire sessions, which meant the group has exclusive use of the pool.

Common feelings for before were: anxious, nervous, shy, stressed, self-conscious, dysphoric, tense, awkward, restless, worried and excited. Being in the water meant that many of the group felt free and liberated. After being in the pool, participants reported feeling: happy, content, calm, relaxed, confident, healthy, body confident, relieved, refreshed, peaceful, natural, energized and motivated to do more exercise.

A main finding from the transgender and non-binary swimming research project (Caudwell, 2020) is that participants need to feel safe and comfortable to take part in physical activity. By enabling and achieving feelings of safety in public space and in relation to transgender and non-binary embodiment, participants are able to experience the many health benefits of immersion in water. This is important as Foley and Kistemann (2015) recognise: 'One characteristic of blue space is its capacity to embrace bodies of difference in ways that are gently enabling' (160).

Bodies, Healthism, Wellbeing and Disciplining Practices

As we outline above, organised physical exercise, especially through the formal educational context of PE has long served as a central site for discipline, regulation and control of women's and men's bodies (Hargreaves, 1986). Established ideas about healthy bodies and active lifestyles continue to prevail in the policy arena of PA be that in community, clinical, workplace or school environment (Waddington 2000a, 2000b). Particularly in Western liberal democracies of the late 20th Century, the ideology of lifestyle has become an established instrument for educating people into public and private approaches to public health improvement. The language of lifestyle (self-reliance, and self-discipline) and its associated practices (principally connected to diet, physical activity, smoking, alcohol consumption, drug use and

sexual activity) secure the internalization of political ideology of healthism emphasizing individual responsibility for health (Crawford, 1980; Hopwell and Ingham, 2001). Physical activity, promoted in PE, sport and leisure contexts, constructs a predominantly outward aesthetic and performance of health defined by narrow ideals of beauty, vitality, heteronormativity and ableism. Such oppressive biopedagogical principles and practices prevail and an interdependent network of education, digital and social media and public health serve to reinforce established ideals of female bodies through surveillance, self-surveillance and an emphasis on introspection (Rich, 2018; Ringrose & Harvey, 2015; Wright, 2012). However, dominant narratives of health are contradictory and the possibilities for more self-defined and self-guided expressions of individual meanings of health through physical activity have been observed in relation to gender and femininity (Markula, 1995) experiences of fat and physical activity (Wittels and Mansfield, 2019; Mansfield and Rich, 2010), ageing (Mansfield et al., 2019; Dionigi et al., 2013; Phoenix and Tulle, 2018) and disability (Howe, 2008; Williams and Smith, 2018).

Such possibilities are arguably marked by critical analysis of the assumptions and belief systems that drive PA promotion and articulations of counter perspectives and alternative health paradigms in physical activity (Mansfield and Rich, 2010). Drawing on a radical turn in educational scholarship towards understandings of public pedagogy (Giroux, 2004) it is recognised that formal education and schooling are not the only sites of learning. A broader physical culture of educative practices allows for what Giroux (2004, 495) argues to be 'both a language and critique and possibility'. Scholarship in the field of *Fat Studies* has harnessed a public pedagogy framework by bringing the experiences and views of learners to the fore in understanding the

construction of body pedagogies that serve to instruct people about the acclaimed problems of obesity, overweight and fatness (Evans et al., 2008; Friedman, 2015; Rich, 2011), exploring the role of narrative in understanding and challenging fat oppression in environment-focused education (Russell et al., 2014), and articulating strategies for deconstructing and reframing obesity to create a more positive education experience (Cameron, 2015). Such work arguably points to the possibility of rich and diverse wellbeing experiences that can be gained through the educative foundations of physical activity. However, empirical work on PE and wellbeing is yet to be fully realised and there are opportunities and a need for different approaches to gender and active bodies that can include,~~, e.g.~~ e.g. transdisciplinary projects ~~work~~. Future directions in PE research might fruitfully engage with the wider theoretical and policy agenda on wellbeing. Such work might consider how the practices of PE, the spaces and places in which they take place and the complex socio-cultural dynamics that occur in such contexts shape peoples' emotions and their sense of meaning and belonging and how such understanding might contribute to wellbeing theories and policy agendas (Mansfield et al., 2019).

A note on epistemology

Long-standing and core pillars of feminist research agendas include, but are not limited to: making the research process visible; engaging researcher reflexivity and the positionality and standpoint of the researchers; the ethical relationships between research and participants; a rejection of researchers assuming authorial authority; ways of trying to connect with the reader in alternative ways; and highlighting the power relations and silences exposed through the process. Feminist approaches to researching gender and active bodies embrace many of these principles

and are mindful of epistemological starting points for research as well as our epistemic privilege as academic researchers.

A common concern across feminist research regarding epistemological standpoints is engaging in works '*by* women, *for* women' and (Stanley and Wise 1993, p. 30) and, 'where possible, with women' (Doucet & Mauthner, 2006, p.40). There are suggestions that there is a 'distinctly feminist mode of enquiry' (Maynard 1994, p. 10) but what this is and how it should be carried out is harder to discern. For example, commitments to praxis and/or gender justice may be paramount, whilst others are focused on critiquing dominant forms of knowing (see e.g. Kelly *et al.* 1994). A diversity of feminist epistemological stances is in circulation; difference and heterogeneity can and arguably must be represented and analysed (Harding 1991, Maynard 1994, Abbott and Wallane 1997). Methodology is a messy busy and this is the case for researching gender across PE, sport and physical activity. Nonetheless, there are some commonalities across researching PE and sport from a feminist perspective such as valuing in-depth qualitative approaches and challenging quantitative methods as these are often regarded contrary to feminism's epistemological basis (Maynard 1994, Westmarland 2001).

In addressing persistent inequalities feminist researchers have certainly become increasingly aware of the need to engage with difference, epistemologically and methodologically (Hill Collins 1986). Yet this is an area where we remain lacking across PE and sport research (Ratna & Samie, 2018; Watson, 2018). Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) for instance, in 'Decolonizing Methodologies' highlights how the term research itself is Eurocentric steeped in legacies of imperialism and colonialism in

ways that marginalize researchers as well the researched. Concurrently, we can see that research engaging disabled bodies remains limited and this points to an ableist normativity at an epistemological level and as our discussions go on to demonstrate, heteronormative discourses remain dominate, despite a commitment to destabilise gender binaries that impact so persistently on the possibility of embodying activity in equitable and autonomous ways.

In Summary

The chapter has demonstrated how the different contexts of people's everyday lives are dynamic sites in which to research gender and active bodies. It is clear there is a multiplicity of research foci engaged in analysing gender across sport, PE and ~~physical activity (~~PA~~)~~ and that formal and informal contexts are crucial to informed analysis. Material included here has drawn from a feminist approach that aims to expose and analyse gender relations as power relations and offer solutions for gender injustices to enable more progressive and alternative contexts for active bodies to participate, regardless of activity or setting. Research and gender are terms that require recognition of the epistemological and methodological bases from which they draw. Alongside this, the chapter has indicated that PE, sport and PA ~~physical activity~~ agendas have tended to lean towards a notion of praxis and a commitment to changing and challenging unequal gender relations. Policy contexts however, as discussed, are a discursive terrain and those that might appear potentially enabling are often persistently exclusionary when it comes to gender and intersections with other social markers. Examples used in the different sections on active bodes illustrate this. What our collective research demonstrates is that embodiment and spatiality are inextricably interrelated regarding who and where participation occurs and gender

itself cannot be understood in simplistic binary based ways. Drawing on shifting theorisation and analyses that recognises gendered beings and being gendered as situational and dynamic (Coston & Kimmel, 2012), we can usefully start to destabilise the overly simplistic binary of male/female and masculine/feminine that is so often, unproblematically used in both accounts of, and attempts to account for, active bodies.

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