'It's just the thing you do': Physical and digital fields, and the flow of capitals for young people's gendered identity negotiation

Abstract

This article examines young people's negotiation of their identities in relation to gender. We explore this through two important sites for young people – physical relationships in the school environment, and mainstream social media sites (e.g. Instagram and Facebook) – with the suggestion that social media is an important site for young people that permits discursive and identity exploration. Specifically, we use a Bourdieusian framework to examine the flow of capital between fields as well as the identities that arise. We draw on the experiences of young people aged 15 or 16 from 70 semi-structured interviews (33 young men, 37 young women; mean age = 15.7) at three socio-economically contrasting schools. We argue that for capital to be accrued, young people's identities are largely required to be consistent between the physical and digital worlds. Moreover, these identities are heavily tied to polarized gender stereotypes of heightened masculinities and femininities. Thus, a young person's popularity (reinforced in both the fields of social media and schooling) is partly maintained by the negotiation of their gendered body and a gendered identity.

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Youth can be viewed as a liminal, ambiguous stage, that falls awkwardly between independence and dependence (boyd, 2014). It is a betwixt and between period, where young people actively begin to construct their identities in relation to their changing position in society (Willis, 1990). Hall, Coffey, & Williamson, (1999), assert that these developing identities require space of their own to 'become'. However, without economic and social autonomy, young people are not always afforded this space, particularly outside of adult surveillance.

In contemporary society, a prominent site of identity exploration is the digital world (Valkenburg, Schouten & Peter, 2005), specifically social media (Buckingham, 2008). We define the digital world as the interpretation of online activities by individuals and social media as 'any digital environment which involves interaction between participants' (Seargeant & Tagg, 2014, p. 4). As such, for many the digital world has become a primary site for leisure, participation and communication (Dobson, 2014; Royal Society for Public Health, 2017). For young people in particular, the disruption to societal physical boundaries provided by social media offers a unique place for discursive and identity exploration.

This article builds on those principles to consider how young people negotiate their identities in both digital and physical spaces, using Bourdieusian theoretical concepts. Previous research suggests that young people's physical and digital worlds are connected (Valentine & Holloway 2002; boyd, 2014; Buckingham 2008), and identities formed in one have a significant effect for informing one's identity in other fields. For instance, in this article we consider that one's online social media identity, formed through digital profiles on mainstream social media sites such as Instagram and Facebook, cannot differ too greatly

from one's physical identity, for congruence is required between the two fields. Our aim is to build on this and examine the flow of capital between these two fields.

Our use of the term youth focuses on youth as a unique sociological space of identity construction between childhood and adulthood (McRobbie, 1984), rather than as a fixed stage of development. There are many studies that explore identity formation through specific stages of adolescent development (see Meeus 2000 for a thorough analysis), and several linked to the digital world (see Manago, Guan, and Greenfield, 2015). Our interpretation of identity draws upon classical social theory (Goffman, 1959), such that it is a collaborative discursive project negotiated between the self, others and the environment.

Through this approach and using interviews from case studies in three demographically different schools, we focus on gender as a lens of analysis. Our position is that gender is 'real only to the extent that it is performed' (Butler, 1988, p. 527), managed through institutions, signifiers and discourses (Butler, 1990; Cook & Hasmath, 2014). Thus, it is performative rather than being a fixed category of identification. Specifically, the embodied nature of gender is closely linked to how identities can be managed and deployed through digital (and visual) space (Buckingham, 2008). Our argument centres on how the 'correct' performance of gender between the physical field of schooling and the digital field of social media influences the accrual of capital for young people.

Background

For many young people, digital spaces, and social media in particular, differ from the physical world by disrupting societal designated adult boundaries, thus offering young people space for agency. This works on several levels. First, '[s]ocial media enables a type of youth-centric public space that is often otherwise inaccessible' (boyd 2014, p. 19), whilst blurring boundaries between the public and private. As such, young people can publicly construct and

affirm their identities, which is crucial in terms of establishing their sense of self (Hall et al., 1999). Second, 2.0 technologies encourage dynamic participation, disrupting the user/participant model (Seargeant & Tagg, 2014), where young people are often positioned as the passive consumer. Third, the digital world and social media offer a space for play and production of the self. Thus, young people can create a bricolage identity, piecing together the best elements of themselves to present to the wider society (Willett, 2008). This is enhanced through the prevalence of images and self-portraits on mainstream social media sites such as Facebook and Instagram, where self-perception is formed through both the photographer and the photographed (Lasén & Gómez Cruz, 2009). Technological 'tricks' – the edit and the filter – become integral methods of representation (Gómez Cruz & Meyer, 2012), as such identities can be discursively constructed and performed (Seargeant & Tagg, 2014).

One suggestion is that social media provides an opportunity for young people to experiment with their self and challenge normative representations of an 'ideal' body (Buckingham, 2008; Tiidenberg & Gómez Cruz, 2015), that can be tied to hegemonic masculinities and emphasised femininity (Connell, 2007; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Cook and Hasmath (2014) suggest that social media can offer the potential to disrupt traditional gendered expectations, yet the dominance of specific gender discourses work as norms and contribute to how individuals construct their identities. Therefore, social media offers a novel way for young people to make connections, create and maintain friendships, and represents a way of forming one's identity, asserting (virtual) territory and self.

Alternatively, social media can be viewed as an extension of the physical world in which young people already operate. Through social media, identities can be explored or negotiated whilst simultaneously being anchored in offline identities and relationships

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(Davis, 2012, 2014). Through our Bourdieusian framework, social media represents a field, wherein, if one's habitus matches the requirements of the field, congruence and reproduction of one's identity is likely. To this extent, Gunkel and Gunkel (1997) warned that the internet could reinforce classed, raced and gendered boundaries that are already evident in society. boyd (2014, p. 23) agrees, indicating that the internet has not met its hope of being 'the great equaliser'; instead, it can reflect and reiterate prejudice and discrimination. This indicates the need across the academic field for intersectional analyses of social media, identity and youth; however, in this article we focus upon the lens of gender.

In relation to reproducing dominant gender identities, Kapidzic and Herring (2011, 2015), Ringrose (2011), and van Oosten, Vandenbosch & Peter (2017) all found that young people use social media to replicate heightened versions of masculinity and femininity. Döring, Reif and Poeschl's (2015) content analysis of selfies suggest gendered representations are more extreme on social media than in conventional media. More specifically, Harvey, Ringrose and Gill (2013) showed that online 'likes' comments and 'tags' operate as ways for young people to (re)produce masculine performances that can also be both classed and racialised. 'Tagging', as a literal way to mark the presence of someone or something, creates a link between digital and physical spaces. In Harvey et al.'s (2013) study, displays of masculinity were present through images of 'six packs' or designer clothes and accessories.

Social media practices – such as accumulating likes/followers/friends – are methods for young people to create a 'successful' digital network (boyd, 2008; Buckingham, 2008; Schwarz, 2010), and hence value. It is how gender is linked to 'success' or discrimination that we are concerned with in this paper.

Regardless of whether individual actions on social media are conforming to or disrupting norms (Cook & Hasmath, 2014), identity work is an important part of young people's lives. Fitting into peer groups or standing outside is an integral part of youth. In this article, we explore young people's identity formation through empirical research and a Bourdieusian framework. The following section will outline our Bourdieusian approach, linking his concepts to the emergent field of social media.

A Bourdieusian Approach

In *On Television,* Bourdieu (1999) was critical of television as a form of cultural symbolic violence. Whilst written before the emergence of social media, Bourdieu's critique of media culture as subversive is applicable, and demonstrates how media messages can be reminders of what is collectively viewed as both acceptable, and vulgar. The central premise of this article is that Bourdieusian principles of habitus, capital, field and doxa are applicable to social media and how young people present their gendered identity. These concepts are explored below.

Habitus refers to a 'system of durable, transposable dispositions…principles which generate and organize practices' (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 53). One's habitus is developed through socialization where it is 'acquired' and learned (ibid., p. 290). Within a Bourdieusian habitus, behavioural options are not free, instead, operate through a 'forced choice' (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 173), indicating how one's life history and experiences can dictate which choices are possible – gendered, racialised and classed experiences can intersect to impact on one's habitus. In relation to gender, scholars have utilized Bourdieusian concepts of symbolic violence and doxa to explain the consequences of the presumed 'naturalness' of gender and its basis as a binary (Lawler, 2004; McNay, 1999). Doxa refers to an adherence to relations of order which reflect people's experience of the social world – people act in accordance with

what the social world expects of them (Bourdieu, 2001). The expectations of gender operate across multiple fields (Chambers, 2005), and therefore, doxa explains how conformity and reproduction of stereotypical gender norms is possible.

Fields represent specific arenas within the social world which are characterized by their own rules and struggles for legitimacy (Bourdieu, 1985b). Young people participate in different fields, which can include schooling, family, peer culture, and media (Dagkas & Quarmby, 2015). This concept is also prevalent in developmental research, including Brofenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory which posits that it is crucial to study the child in the context of multiple environments. Yet, through using Bourdieusian fields, the variability and meanings allocated to different fields (Bourdieu, 1984) is realised, and offers the potential for young people co-constructing the regulatory principles which govern each field. Practices within each field which are deemed legitimate and socially valued can acquire capital. For this paper, we specifically refer to two fields: the field of digital (social) media, and the physical field of schooling (physical relationships located within the school environment). These fields have their own rules and expected forms of behaviour: for instance, social media has specific expectations as to how users should engage with the technology (e.g. editing photos, 'set' poses or idealized types of photos, 'selfies' etc.; Yau & Reich, 2018). For young people, the potential fields they can inhabit are limited by their relative lack of independence. This means the immediate social fields of schooling, and recently, social media, hold significance for how young people present themselves for social legitimation and acceptance. When one's habitus matches the requirements of the field, congruence occurs and this is rewarded with capital (Bourdieu, 1984; Dumais, 2002; Metcalfe, 2018).

Bourdieu identified four types of capital (economic, social, cultural and symbolic), and the accumulation of different configurations of capital indicates one's position within the

social field (Bourdieu 1984). The value of capital is field specific, and can vary in amount and importance (Huppatz, 2012). Mottier (2002) highlights how symbolic capital occurs when economic, cultural and social capital are perceived as legitimate. The field of social media, through its interactive nature and 'tagging' demonstrates how identities can be legitimized and function as symbolic. In relation to gender, capital is often allocated to gendered bodies which approximate idealized gendered representations of masculinity and femininity (Cook & Hasmath, 2014; Lawler, 2004; Manago et al., 2008). For young people, social capital in the form of social status and position, is important for young people within their peer social networks (Holland, Reynolds & Weller, 2007; Metcalfe, 2018; Putnam, 1995). Young people often place emphasis on social status and popularity (Ferguson & Ryan, 2019; Read, Francis & Skelton, 2011), and the accumulation of social capital through indicators of popularity (e.g. social media 'likes', friends, position within the social hierarchy) demonstrates the utility of a Bourdieusian framework to explore how capital rewards legitimate gendered identities for young people in practice. Bourdieu's concept of illusio helps to explain why capital is a useful method for exploring young people's behaviours. Illusio refers to a belief in the game (Bourdieu, 1984), and in relation to gendered identities, by appreciating the gendered expectations and subsequently embodying these to obtain social and gender capital, young people are demonstrating their belief in the benefits of conforming to expected gender norms. It is possible for some individuals to *not* believe in the game, and thus may not reproduce expected gendered behaviours (e.g. similar to the acts of resistance in Cook & Hasmath's [2014] study), however the prioritization of social status and popularity is likely to limit instances where this is the case.

This paper studies how the fields of social media and schooling overlap (Dagkas & Quarmby, 2015), whereby capital from one field is actualized and 'lived' in another. Drawing on Valentine and Holloway (2002), Bryon, Albury and Evers (2013, p. 35) suggest that

'young people experience online and offline social worlds as mutually constitutive', rather than as separate entities. Thus, it is misleading to refer to these intertwined spaces as separate worlds'. The consideration of how capital is transferred between these intertwined fields permits a new interpretation of how young people can negotiate their identities.

The Present Study

The data presented within this article were collected as part of a wider research project that considered the way young people in schools negotiate their gendered identities through sport (see Metcalfe [2018] for an overview of other elements of the research project). All research conducted was approved by Durham University's ethics board. The research questions for this present study were: 'How do young people negotiate their gendered identities online using social media?' and 'How do young people understand their sense of self between online and offline fields?'. For this paper, a small sample of data is presented in relation to the role of social media for the negotiation of one's gendered identity. The Bourdieusian framework influenced the development of research design: reflecting Bourdieusian principles of reflexivity (of both the participant and researcher) and a sensitivity to the lived experiences of young people. As adults, it is often seen as impossible to fully understand the perspective of youth (Punch, 2002), particularly in relation to social media and new technologies; yet through acknowledging this chasm, we were able to fully listen (and learn) from what the young people discussed. Moreover, the gendered identity of the first author (female) may have been a factor in the development of interview rapport with the young people; a critical reflexivity is required to ensure the interview process is inclusive for both young women and young men regardless of the interviewer's gender. As a former teacher from the area in which the research took place, the first author shared elements of her habitus with those she interviewed, thus requiring constant reflexivity of how this position of shared experiences

may have influenced the questions asked, interpretations made, and subsequent analysis conducted.

Three schools within the same county in North East England were selected based on different demographics. They were chosen to reflect a different classed habitus associated with each school which was relevant to the broader research project under which this data was collected. The importance of the type of school in influencing how gender is constructed and performed is explored by Arnot (2002, p. 137), who argues that private schools 'are likely to set up a different set of relations between male and female pupils than state schools'. For this article, the schools are referred to numerically: School 1 is an 11–16 mixed comprehensive state school located in a deprived area, with a higher than national average of students receiving free school meals (FSMs, used as a proxy for socio-economic status; David, Edwards, & Alldred, 2001). In contrast, School 2 is an 11–18 mixed comprehensive state school in a more affluent area, with less than average numbers of students receiving FSMs. The ethos of these two schools also differ, with School 2 being nationally regarded as a top state school for achieving excellent public examination grades at A-Level, compared to School 1 whose ethos centres on raising aspirations and transforming lives. School 3 is a mixed independent (fee-paying) day and boarding school with an established history and tradition. Whilst School 3 offers bursaries and scholarships to some students from less privileged backgrounds, the overwhelming majority of students are fee-paying, reflecting the middle-class image associated with private education in the UK.

At each school, all young people in Year 11 (aged 15–16; the last year of compulsory school-based education in the UK) completed a questionnaire used as a screening process to select individuals for interview (School 1 n=107, School 2 n=173, School 3 n=52). In total, 70 young people were interviewed (33 young men/37 young women; School 1 n=32, School

2 n=22, School 3 n=16), either in self-selected pairs (51%) or individually (49%)[1]. Two young people identified during their interviews as being non-binary; however, in their questionnaires, they self-categorised as 'female', thus being included in the 37 young women listed above. Young people self-identified a willingness to be interviewed, and of those willing, interviewees were selected using their questionnaire responses to produce a varied sample. The questionnaire contained an open-ended question that asked young people to finish the sentences: 'Masculinity is…' and 'Femininity is…'. Responses to this question often provided either stereotypical and derogatory gender norms or liberal and feminist ideas, thus enabling a varied sample of responses to be selected for interviews. All names used in this paper are pseudonyms allocated randomly during transcription. Semi-structured interviews lasted between 30–75 minutes (average length = 46 minutes), covering topics of school relationships, gendering of sporting bodies, gender norms, social hierarchies, and the relationship between media and gender norms. The questions focusing on media discussed issues associated with the representation of the gendered body in digital fields. For instance, young people were asked: 'how does social media link to "real life"?', 'how do your experiences of social media make you feel about your body?', 'when posting a photo of yourself online, talk me through what you do before posting'. All young people interviewed discussed the role of social media and relevant content, relating to the pressures of social media on identity formation. During the interviews, the role of mainstream social media sites emerged as a distinct (Bourdieusian) field for young people, and interviews adapted to this to develop questions to explore how indicators of success (e.g. 'likes'; Schwarz, 2010) influence how young people present their identity. Instagram and Facebook were primarily mentioned

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[1] No young people chose to conduct their interview in a mixed-sex pair. Two self-identified female young people also identified as gender fluid, and during their interviews, discussed experimenting with identities and appearance in relation to their dynamic gender identity. Two young people (one male/one female) identified as homosexual during the interviews.

as the most commonly used social media sites by these young people, and our analysis is anchored in these mainstream social media sites as a field. Furthermore, interviews often developed into discussions of the relationship between the 'digital' space of social media and 'physical' relationships within the field of schooling.

Echoing the lack of diversity of the areas in which the research was conducted, the young people interviewed were predominantly white ($n = 67$, black $n = 1$, Asian $n = 2$). A hybrid approach of inductive and deductive coding was used to thematically analyse the interview transcripts (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Coding was conducted by the first author. These themes developed in relation to data-driven ideas or linked to theory-driven themes based on our Bourdieusian framework. Once key themes and quotes were used, these were ordered into hierarchical or linked themes to reflect the complexities of gendered identities for young people. For instance, a theme reflecting the 'flow of capital between fields' emerged from young people exploring the link between social media and their school experiences. Another theme concerning popularity was theoretically linked to social and symbolic capital using our Bourdieusian framework. Table 1 below displays the definition and exemplar quotes for each code. In the following results and discussion section, the dominant theme discussed refers to the potential for capital to flow between the 'digital' space of social media and the 'physical' field of schooling (and broader social peer networks). The second theme refers to the way in which, through this flow of capital, gender norms which reflect traditional and often stereotypical representations of binary notions of masculinity and femininity, are reproduced. Whilst we are primarily focusing on how gender is constructed and performed by young people, the use of three demographically different schools allows an appreciation of how one's classed habitus may be an influencing factor: significant instances of class differences will be highlighted where appropriate.

Table 1: Overview of codes used during analysis

Code	Definition	Exemplar quotes
Flow of capital between fields	The link between the physical field of schooling and the digital field of social media. The value and usage of capital in each field.	"I feel like it's still, I'm not sure, it's hard to explain, I feel like it is real, like just like us walking around, only it's in a different way, it's over technology" (Lucy) "…some people might think they'd rather be perfect on social media because it's easier that way, easier than in real life…you can control it more on social media, you can control who your friends are, but in real life you can't control who you're going to talk to or what they're going to say. (Jake)
Popularity on and through social media	The way in which young people's social status and popularity is linked to their identity and image on social media.	"I think social media for young children growing up, I think it can be quite important because it's like a competition to see how many followers you can get, or how many likes you can get on a post, or whatever it is…it's viewed as a competition and from then on you are kind of put in a hierarchy of popularity" (Gary) "…the more popular people post more about what they're doing and then they'll get more likes and followers" (Nick) "Like depending on how many likes you get on social media determines where you are in the social, like the popularity hierarchy, it's like the more likes you get the better you're seen as a person" (Philip)
Reproduction of gender norms	The way in which a stereotypical and traditional gender binary is normalised on social media.	"…the stereotype that women think and feel like they have to be attractive on social media, I don't think that's fair" (Connor) "I think it comes like from being masculine, like you wouldn't be seen to be masculine if all you put up were pictures of yourself. It'd be different if someone put a picture of themselves in the gym to them like in their house. If someone put a picture of them in the gym, then the popular people would think he must be masculine, so that's a good thing, he'd get some respect for that" (Ethan) "so girls will show off their, like new handbag. Like the boys I follow on Instagram tend to post pictures of them with the rugby lads, like team photos or them actually playing sports (Claire)
Rules of gender	The 'unwritten' and non-conscious gender rules that underpin how gender is constructed and managed on social media by young people.	"Like there are some people who try to promote their perfect life on social media and to make themselves seen in a certain way. So they probably conform to everyone else, and to what society kind of demands, so that society views them as being a "normal" person" (Patrick) "Like all them pictures [on social media] like saying "if you look like *this*, then you're not a real man" and stuff, so you want to be the opposite of that" (Stevie) "I think the media has a big part in it as well, like they create the image of perfect and the social media, like celebrities, so everyone knows what perfect is because of the media. It's like a need therefore to look or try to be perfect" (Alexa)

Results and Discussion

This section illustrates our empirical themes, highlighting how the Bourdieusian fields of schooling and social media, conceptualized as the 'physical' and the 'digital', interrelate for young people negotiating their gendered identities. Initially we outline the flow of capital between these fields before considering how reproduction of the gendered identity can occur on two levels – a reproduction of broader gendered norms and 'rules' coupled with a reproduction of the self to align one's identity between the 'physical' and 'digital' worlds.

       The flow of capital between fields.

Whilst Bourdieu highlighted that each field is characterized by its own struggles for legitimacy, and that '[t]he same practices may receive opposite meanings and values in different fields' (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 87), our data illustrates how the 'rules' of gender that young people follow are consistent between the physical field of schooling and the digital field of social media. Social media sites provide a platform for the reproduction of the physical body online; and this reproduction is underpinned by unwritten gender rules that operate through the habitus.

       Reproduction of the physical body on social media.

Highlighting how gender is rewarded across different fields, Chambers (2005, p. 332) argues that 'all fields embody some gender rules, and some rules apply in all fields'. Therefore, gender norms hold significance in the formation of young people's identities, and stereotypical and binary representations of gender are viewed as 'most' legitimate (Bourdieu, 1984). For instance, Claire (School 3) summarizes a common belief, that, 'girls will show off their new handbag [on social media], but the boys I follow on Instagram post pictures mainly

of them with the rugby lads, like team photos, or of them actually playing sport'. This demonstrates the different identities which are valued on social media (particularly image based social media) for young men and women, which mirror 'physical' behaviours rewarded in the field of schooling with regards to gender. The importance of the body on social media is emphasised by Chloe (School 2), '…with social media, you can't put your personality out there so easily, so instead you use your body... people are attracted to stereotypically attractive people.' Thus, the emphasis on the body highlights how gendered expectations of appearance carry significance, and the prevalence of images on various social media sites, not only blurs the public and the private, but allows for presentations of the self (Lasén & Gómez Cruz, 2009).

For masculine identities, sporting prowess and a sense of being active and sociable were characteristics promoted on social media. These characteristics are commonly associated with hegemonic and dominant representations of masculinity (Connell, 2007). The wider project from which this data originates centred heavily on sport as a 'field' in young people's lives; therefore, many quotations draw on the symbolic significance of sport in the construction of gendered identities. Thus, the importance of a sporting identity, coupled with the associated physicality and athletic body, is explained by Ethan (School 3):

> [If I put a photo on social media] it's of the rugby team, like if we win a tournament. I wouldn't put a selfie or anything like that on…I think that you wouldn't be seen to be masculine if all you put up were pictures of yourself. It would be different if someone put a picture of themselves in the gym compared to a picture of them in their house. If someone put a picture of them in the gym, then the popular people would think that he must be masculine, so that's a good thing, he'd get respect for that.

This quotation illustrates the significance for young people in conforming to the gender rules which apply to them. By gaining 'respect', which, using Bourdieusian principles, reflects social and symbolic capital, the normative image of a 'successful' male body as sporty is reproduced (Chambers, 2005). The classed elements to the role of sport is suggested by this

quotation, in that the elite (English) private school collective habitus values rugby (union), whereas young men from the other two state schools regarded football as the dominant sport for demonstrating masculine prowess (Bourdieu, 1984): when asked what he posts on social media, Ricky (School 1) replied, 'like my new [football] boots, something like that'. Class therefore intersects the rules of gender which operate in both the 'digital' and 'physical' worlds, but, nevertheless, the dominance of sport in the production of a valued gendered male identity is crucial.

In contrast, for young women, engagement in social media typically involved reproducing dominant notions of emphasized femininity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), illustrated by Claire in the earlier quotation. This involved the presentation of a body which mirrors stereotypical 'rules' of attractiveness and heterosexual desirability. By promoting one's feminine body, many young women appear to seek validation through their appearance:

> …a lot of girls post pictures of their figure…they'll post a picture of their figure so that they can show that they've got a leg gap…they'll crop out their face so that it's all about their figure, and I think that's to impress other people. (Jarda, School 2)

> There's a lot of photoshopping that goes on. So, a girl who thinks that they're not attractive might put a lot of filters on, it's not lying as such, it's more like manipulating the truth of how you look to get more comments and more self-validation from people. (Ellie, School 2)

These quotations also highlight that within digital spaces, young women can face more criticism than men, via presentations of their body (Albury, 2015); a sentiment reinforced by Connor (School 2), that, 'the stereotype that women think and feel like they have to be attractive on social media, I don't think that's fair'.

The underpinning rules of gender that are reproduced on social media.

The 'rules' of gender which operate across both the 'physical' and 'digital' fields mirror conventional images of masculinity and femininity. These definitions of what

constitutes a 'successful' gendered body have power and influence because the ideal legitimate body is created through 'the sexual characteristics that each social class assigns to it' (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 72). Consequently, the nuanced classed differences in gender 'rules' highlight what constitutes 'successful', and thus are rewarded accordingly through the accrual of capital, which, on social media, operates through 'likes', 'followers' and 'friends' (boyd, 2008; Schwarz, 2010). To this extent, young people's evaluation of the culture of 'likes' is explained by Dylan (School 2), when asked what would it mean for a photo to receive no likes, he replied: 'well, you would be a bit of a failure'.

Young people know what is expected of their gendered identities through these 'rules' of a 'successful' body. Therefore, the flow of capital between different fields is possible because the same 'game', with the same 'rules' is being played in both fields. The importance of social media to how young people construct their identities is illustrated by Lucy (School 2), 'I feel like [social media] is still, it's hard to explain, but I feel like it is real, like just us walking around, only it's in a different way, it's over technology'. Through linking a 'physical' behaviour, such as walking, to the digital space of social media, Lucy is replicating movement and behaviour between the physical and digital fields. Lucy's 'walking' analogy is also perhaps more than metaphorical, her digital identity is kept in motion by the navigation required to be present in the digital world – reading others posts, posting careful images and texts, 'tagging' and 'liking'.

Throughout the interviews, it was evident that social media offers young people the opportunity to exercise greater agency over the presentation of their gendered identity. Participants principally discussed Instagram and Facebook as dominant social media sites, functioning as examples of the role of highly visual social media as important in the construction of gendered identities for young people (Marengo, Longobardi, Fabris & Settani, 2018). Importantly, these social media sites are based in the individual's self-claimed

name - differing from pseudonymous sites (e.g. fan-fiction communities or chat rooms): congruence between identities is increasingly required to 'prove' one's legitimacy (Manago et al., 2008). Via the deliberate use of social media techniques (e.g. the edit or filter; Davis & Weinstein, 2017; Gómez Cruz & Meyer, 2012; Schwarz, 2010; Yau & Reich, 2018), young people can demonstrate more 'control' over how they present themselves for public viewing and legitimization:

> I think some people might think they'd rather be perfect on social media because it's easier that way, easier than in real life. Because you can control it more on social media, you can control who your friends are, but in real life you can't control who you're going to talk to or what they're going to say. (Jake, School 2)

> In ['real'] life, sometimes things happen that you can't control, like things might happen too fast or too slow, but on social media, you're in charge and can control what happens. (Shaun, School 3)

Social media arguably provides a space for many young people to exercise greater 'control' over their lives, which contrasts to a lack of agency and independence in the physical world (boyd 2014; Yang & Brown, 2016).

More specifically, some young people demonstrated being able to 'control' how they present their digital gendered identities to maximize the potential flow of capital between fields. Bourdieu (1985a, p. 27) argued that '[t]he work of representation…[is how agents] impose their view of the world or the view of their own position in this world – their social identity'. This applies to young people's presentation of themselves online as they project 'their own position in this world'. Consequently, young people knowingly adapt their behaviours to maximize the accrual of 'likes' and 'followers', and therefore capital (Gómez Cruz & Meyer, 2012). For instance:

> …you have a whole body image, then you have some set poses to make you look better. If it's a full body picture, I put one foot in front of the other because if you just stand neutral you look a bit weird. (Caroline, School 3)

> …people work out tactics for getting more likes, so people even put on their Snapchat that people should go and like something they've put on Instagram. (Max, School 2)

> I wouldn't put my photo on in the morning, I'd put it on in the evening … I know that everyone is on [social media] then, so they can all like it. (Pippa, School 3)

The coherent presentation of one's identity is possible through following these self-presentation 'rules'. In following these 'rules', and applying them to their gendered identities, the strategic management of gender is possible on social media (Adkins, 2003; Yau & Reich, 2018). Linking to Butler's (1990, p. 191) notion of gender as a 'stylised repetition of acts', Caroline is aware of how to stand; Max has knowledge of the methods for gaining likes; Pippa knows when her peers are more likely to see her posts. Overall, there is an awareness of how social media 'works', and what gendered identities are rewarded. These experiences support previous research which has explored the strategic use of social media to present a 'perfect' image of the self to an assumed audience (Davis & Weinstein, 2017; Yau & Reich, 2018). As the next section will argue, the congruence between 'physical' and 'digital' identities must be preserved, ensuring young people present a coherent sense of self to others.

A flow of capital is possible through an awareness that capital gained in 'digital' fields translates to young people's interactions in 'physical' fields. 'Digital' capital, through the aforementioned 'likes', 'followers' and 'friends' does not exist in isolation. Social status and popularity within the 'physical' field of schooling is linked to a young person's online social media profile. This demonstrates empirically that capital is realized in multiple fields (Bourdieu, 1984). All interviews identified that importance of receiving 'likes', and the link between social media, capital and popularity is exemplified in this conversation with Jo (School 1):

> Interviewer: Why do people edit their photos?
> Jo: To get more 'likes' probably, and to get more attention.

Interviewer: And what would more attention mean for them?

Jo: More 'likes', more compliments, probably a higher status in school.

The capital accrued on social media is directly applicable to 'physical' social hierarchies and popularity for young people, which illustrates Bourdieu's (1985b) concern that individuals are distributed in social space in accordance with capital. This is reiterated by Philip:

> …depending on how many 'likes' you get on social media determines where you are in the social, like the popularity hierarchy. The more 'likes' you get, then the better you're seen as a person. Helen [another interviewee] gets like 400 'likes' on her photos…the people who get 20-30 'likes' aren't seen as anywhere near as big of a deal. (Phillip, School 1)

Social status and popularity hold significance for young people (Ferguson & Ryan, 2019; Read et al., 2011; Wright, 2017). Therefore, the flow of capital between the fields of schooling and social media is a significant consideration for how young people manage and negotiate their identities. Social media does not exist as an isolated field, and instead, offers the potential for young people to confirm and consolidate their gendered identities.

This section has discussed the 'rules' of gender which operate in both the 'physical' and 'digital' fields. Many young people reproduce dominant expectations of masculinity and femininity to accrue capital on social media which often translates into social status and popularity in 'real life'. The flow of capital between the fields of social media and schooling demonstrates the importance of young people getting their gender 'right' (Butler, 1990, p. 190). The following section considers how reproduction occurs in the nexus of the 'digital' and 'physical' fields, reproducing both gender norms and the self to create a consistent and coherent gendered identity.

The reproduction of gender.

The interconnected nature of fields, capital and gender means that for many young people, behaviours on mainstream social media platforms reproduce dominant norms of acceptable

gendered identities. Social media plays an important role in hierarchically positioning young people in their social fields. Therefore, a congruence is required between the 'physical' and the 'digital' self, reducing the potential for young people to experiment with their gendered identities.

Reproduction of gender norms and the binary of acceptable gendered identities.

As previously outlined, the gendered identities and bodies which are rewarded on social media typically reflect binary definitions of masculinity and femininity (van Oosten, et al., 2017; Kapidzic and Herring 2011, 2015; Ringrose, 2011; Döring, et al., 2015). To this extent, young people expressed feeling compelled to present a version of themselves which matches this binary: 'you have the general body types which are posted on social media and the media in general, so a picture which follows what is socially accepted as the right body type is going to be a good picture' (Chloe, School 2). The expectation to reproduce dominant representations of gender limits the potential for young people to challenge these binary norms on social media. Despite two interviewees identifying as gender fluid, there were no instances where young people identified using social media to explicitly challenge the dominant gender binary. As a result, traditional gender norms were often reproduced, solidifying the heterosexual matrix (Butler, 1990; Cook & Hasmath, 2014). Through the allocation of capital to masculinity which demonstrates sporting prowess, and femininity depicting attractiveness and heterosexuality, there is an implicit expectation that one's online self mirrors binary definitions of gender (Bourdieu, 2001). As Stevie (School 1) highlights, 'all them pictures on Instagram like "if you look like this, then you're *not a real man*" and stuff, so you want to be the opposite of that' (his emphasis). Implicit in this quotation is the belief that prevalent media images glorifying male masculinity represent how a 'real man' should look, which conditions young men to reproduce these images. Furthermore, during a

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discussion about gender norms influencing young people's behaviours, Patrick (School 2) explains: '...people try to promote their perfect life on social media and make themselves seen in a certain way. So, they conform to everyone else, and to what society demands, so that society views them as being a "normal" person'. Social media elevates the importance of image through a focus on visual representation. The prolific use of digital images – from the mundane to the self-portrait – vastly contribute to the 'shaping of the bodies and subjectivities' (Lasén & Gómez Cruz, 2009, p. 206). Therefore, physical and digital fields are not mutually exclusive.

Moreover, in our interviews, social media reproduces dominant ideologies of mainstream gendered identities:

> … you look at people you idolize in the media, so you might want a slick back [hair style] like David Beckham, but you might just like it because you've seen it more and you like it. But then compare that to something that a LGBT person might wear, like a Mohawk, you don't see that as much so you don't like it. It's not shown as much, so it's subconscious [reproduction of dominant norms] because if you see it, you want it. (Ricky, School 1)

This demonstrates how dominant gender 'norms' are reproduced and reaffirmed as 'normal'. To this extent, whilst Ricky's quotation suggests that greater visibility of non-conventional gendered identities may increase their acceptance and social value, the reproduction of what is viewed as the legitimate cultural arbitrary (Bourdieu, 2001) persists precisely because the dominant remains unchallenged; Ricky makes a clear distinction between the image of normative heterosexuality and the incongruous Other.

Consequently, these young people rarely spoke of options to challenge the binary gender norms which permeate how young people understand 'legitimate' gendered identities. For Bourdieu, one's habitus can be described as a 'forced choice' (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 173). Thus, if young people are not experiencing alternative identities and bodies on social media, the reproduction of dominant gender 'rules' is largely perpetuated. This is illustrated in our

interviews, where many young women spoke of the influence that celebrities on social media exert on their expected behaviours:

> …all the big celebrities now, I feel like Kim Kardashian is really feminine, Beyoncé is really feminine, there aren't really any celebrities who are challenging that and being more masculine. (Jo, School 1)

> …social media can be seen to be working positively in a way to break down old-fashioned beliefs about LGBT stuff…but I think definitely there's also that side of social media, like the constant pressure of Kim Kardashian, and then you see all your friends dressing that way as a result. (Jarda, School 2)

Both Jarda and Jo hint at the reproduction of dominant notions of acceptable femininity, aligned with the hyper-feminine images associated with style icons of Beyoncé and Kim Kardashian. However, there is also an awareness that social media has the potential to break down 'old-fashioned beliefs', producing content which is more fluid and diverse (Seargeant & Tagg, 2014). Yet the lived experiences of many of these young people indicate that the potential of social media to offer a space for resistance is limited. This is illustrated by Alexa, who is aware of the gender 'rules', and how the wider media can create the socially desired body:

> I think the media has a big part in it, they create the image of perfect, and then social media, celebrities, everyone knows what perfect is because of them. It's like then a need to look or try to be perfect. (Alexa, School 1)

Whilst previous research has demonstrated the possible role of social media in experimenting and engaging with marginalised or non-majority identities (Weber & Mitchell, 2008), our interviews did not show this possibility. The two self-identified non-binary interviewees, rather than discussing a different experience of constructing their gendered identities on social media, further perpetuated the requirement to present a coherent and intelligible (heteronormative) gendered identity. For instance, Sam identified that 'being accepted [in both physical and digital fields] is all anyone really wants…it's like you're trying to keep everyone else happy'. In linking to the accrual of capital and the flow between fields, the

reproduction of idealized versions of masculinity and femininity are valued, and thus non-traditional identities continue to be marginalized in young people's social fields.

Reproduction of the gendered self.

The previous section considered the way in which gendered norms and 'rules' are reproduced, whereas in this section we argue that the gendered self is also reproduced across the fields of 'physical' schooling and 'digital' social media. It has previously been identified that social media can act as a vehicle for self-expression and experimentation (Buckingham, 2008); however, the flow of capital between these two fields indicates the requirement for young people to represent a coherent and consistent identity. For these young people opportunities to experiment are reduced.

In relation to the formation of one's identity for young people, identity confusion is related to a failure to create a coherent sense of self (Davis, 2014); thus, consistency across fields appears crucial for how young people can accrue capital. There is a requirement for young people to present an authentic gendered identity in both fields:

> When I go to town and stuff, I'll see people I know, like I know a lot of people so I'm bound to see at least one person I know. And if I don't look good or I'm wearing something bad or my hair's tatty, then they might think that I look nothing like my photos on Facebook. And then when it comes to settling down with someone when I get into college, then no one will be interested in me because I don't look like my photos. (Helen, School 1)

> Like if people edit it their posts to make them skinnier, then [some] people go too far and they make themselves look completely different to what they're actually like (Heidi, School 3)

> …it's a false reality, say you look at a girl in a photo and you think "oh she's unbelievable", and then you see her in real life, and you think she's good looking but doesn't look like what she does in photos. That's a common thing to see, a girl in a photo and then see her in real life when she doesn't look the same. (Ricky, School 1)

> …if you edit your photos loads, people are going to realize [they're edited],
> and it's pointless doing that because when people see you in real life they're
> going to think that you don't look anything like you do. (Eddie, School 1)

For these young people, presenting a gendered identity which is consistent across fields is important to the accrual of capital, reminiscent of Davis' (2014) argument that self-consistency is synonymous with authenticity for young people's identities. For Helen, the aim of 'settling down' in a heterosexual relationship holds significance and further emphasizes the perception that displays of 'femininity…[is] a code word for heterosexuality' (Griffin, 1998, p. 68). Both Helen and Ricky focus on the acceptable appearance of young women, arguably suggesting there is greater expectations upon 'girls' and feminine appearance, providing more evidence that young people portray themselves according to stereotypical (heterosexual) gender norms (Manago et al., 2008). Moreover, acceptable femininity is largely judged by appearance and women are expected to work hard to maintain this (Bartky, 1997). The feedback and concern regarding authenticity of identities online, as these quotes suggest, supports the conclusions of Davis (2014) in highlighting the way in which online and offline identities are intertwined.

The above quotations demonstrate a general trend in how these young people experience certain types of social media, the consistent and conforming reproduction of the self limits opportunities for young people to explore non-conventional identities. The hierarchy of popularity and the accrual of capital suggests that many young people reproduce conventional images of masculinity and femininity which are the same whether they are participating in the 'physical' field of schooling, or the 'digital' field of social media.

In relation to class, three of the above quotations were expressed by young people from School 1 – the least affluent state school. In a similar vein to how status and popularity is linked between the 'physical' and 'digital' fields, the importance of a congruent identity appears more significant for young people with a more working class habitus. With less

cultural, economic and social capital available, using social media and demonstrating one's proximity to the culturally valued gendered 'rules' arguably holds greater significance. The associated benefits of peer status, validation, and the potential of a future boyfriend (as for Helen) indicate the importance of presenting an identity which is both idealized, and consistent, in order to appear authentic.

Conclusion

We began this article with the perspective that social media can be viewed as a 'youth-centric space' (boyd, 2014, p. 19), a place that operates outside traditional adult boundaries and surveillance. We explored how capital flowed (or not) between the two fields of schooling and social media, and how this influenced young people's identities. Through a Bourdieusian reading of our data, we argue that, in this instance, the majority of young people aim for a consistent gendered identity, between the 'physical' and 'digital' worlds. Crucially, these fields are not isolated, with the flow of capital critical to the management of a young person's identity, and any subsequent popularity. For young people, popularity is accrued in digital spaces through 'tagging', which is translated physically to a higher status in school. Popularity is already highly significant for young people (Ferguson & Ryan, 2019; Metcalfe, 2018; Read et al., 2011; Wright, 2017), and social media reinforces this with its immediate feedback through 'likes' and 'followers'. Moreover, it is the focus on the image that results in particular attention being drawn to the body.

To this extent, we suggest that a young person's popularity is partly maintained by the negotiation of gendered bodies and a gendered identity. Moreover, for many young people, the replication of stereotypical binary gender is the norm and aids the accrual of capital. This capital flows between the 'physical' and 'digital' fields, influencing both fields and permitting status in either field. For young men, this may involve posting photos of sports

and of team bonding, for women it can be standing in the 'correct' way that accentuates the 'feminine' body. For both sexes, there is management of their appearance and of the visual self. By extension, there is management of the tangible self.

Thus, whilst it is clear from our data that young people are afforded more 'control' over their digital identities, surveillance is still very much present – notably not from adults, but from peers and the self. Arguably the vast use of social media by young people, coupled with the immediacy of feedback through 'likes' and 'comments' based on a focus on the image, means that surveillance in this field is more extreme. We suggest this heightens gendered norms, through the management and subjectivity of the gendered body. Thus, rather than social media being a place for identity exploration, on the whole, the 'digital' world mirrors society by adding to the production of binary and stereotypical genders, which young people struggle (or do not wish to) to move outside of. Whilst a Bourdieusian reading may suggest this is a 'forced choice' (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 173), to some extent these positions are actively taken on board. For many young people, maintenance to a gendered norm can be a willing comfort, yet for others it can be an ordeal.

Our work builds on and agrees with the work of Buckingham (2008) and boyd (2014) who suggest that gendered identities are heightened online. We suggest we add a novel perspective to this site of analysis, by using empirical research to draw out the importance of the flow of identities and capital between the two fields – schooling and social media. Where appropriate, we have drawn some inferences in relation to classed nuances in our analysis. Therefore, our results suggest that it is important when considering gender that attention is paid to instances of intersectional variance. Furthermore, we suggest that the role of classed expectations is an important area that warrants more research, particularly in relation to social media. Social media is not the equalizer that many hoped it would be (boyd, 2014), and our

data suggests it can aid the accrual of capital but mostly that which is already evident in society.

In relation to future research, for the two state schools (1 and 2) we worked with, there is some suggestion that there is space for resistance to these binary gender norms for young people. However, our data did not find significant instances to substantiate this; as such, there is a need for further research to seek out such deviations. We also suggest that there is a need to carry out further research in wider geographical areas, our data in this article is limited to three schools in the North East of England, which could impact on our argument. A further limitation is the selection of the sample through volunteering. Whilst there are good reasons for young people's active participation in research (David et al., 2001), we have no evidence to suggest that data from participants who readily volunteer will match those who are reluctant to be interviewed. Finally, since there is a complex relationship between gender, race and class (Macdonald, Abbott, Knez, & Nelson, 2009), our predominantly white sample means that claims cannot be made about how gender, capital and social media may vary dependent on racialized dynamics.

Instead our analysis leaves us with the knowledge that students are self-aware, yet caught in their own reproduction of gendered identities. With limited other ways of gaining social capital, arguably young people find themselves a 'willing' part of the gendered status quo (habitus). Tagging, presentation and participation in the gendered 'game' of social media – 'it's just the thing you do' (Max, School 2).

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