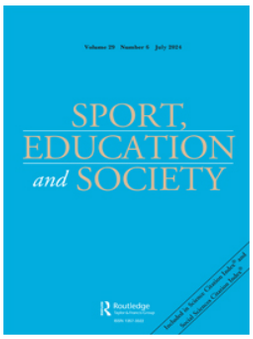

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'The good, the bad and the ugly': primary school children's visual representations and interpretations of PE teacher embodiments

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ABSTRACT

Physicality has been, and still is, an important part of the embodied identity of many physical education (PE) teachers. PE teachers' understanding and representation of their bodies influence both their teaching and act as role models for their students. PE is therefore an important site for exploring how ideals of the body shape both understandings and practices within this school subject. In this study we employed participatory visual methodologies in the form of participant-produced drawings to explore primary school children's experiences of PE teacher bodies and subjectivities. By drawing on poststructural and Foucauldian understandings of the body, we in this paper explore the construction and embodiment of PE teacher bodies as inextricably linked to students' understandings and experiences of this school subject. The findings demonstrate how dominant discourses of fitness, health, sport and even consumerism shape expectations around PE teacher bodies. They also draw attention to how those bodies enable and restrict certain educational purposes and practices. We argue that the ongoing reproduction and perpetuation of idealized PE teacher bodies is responsible for (re)producing meanings around the normal versus the abnormal PE teacher body with significant impact on students' bodily understandings and experiences in PE. We conclude by reasserting the need to challenge how dominant discourses of PE teacher bodies has the cumulative effect of restricting the possibilities for a multiplicity of bodies and physicalities to co-exist in PE.

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Introduction

The field of Physical Education (PE) for long considered the body solely from a biological and medical perspective and was primarily concerned with the 'work' *on* the body (Kirk, 1990). Indeed, physicality has been and still is an important part of the embodied identity of many PE teachers (Parkinson & Burrows, 2020; Tinning, 2010). González-Calvo et al. (2021), for instance, suggests that the professional identities and subjectivities of (pre-service) PE teachers draw more strongly upon notions of their fit, athletic sport-performing, fit and athletic selves than on the ideas of being an educator as recently embodied by the self-proclaimed 'nation's PE teacher' Joe in the UK during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic (Guardian, 2020).

In order to understand PE teacher subjectivities, the role that the PE teacher's body plays can be seen as crucial, since the body is integral to how identities are perceived, performed and lived

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(Foucault, 1980), the 'very "stuff" of subjectivity' (Grosz, 2020, p. ix). That is, if corporeality is 'the material condition of subjectivity' (Grosz, 2020, p. 105), then it is vital to understand not only PE teachers' bodily attributes, but also their 'embodied subjectivity' (Grosz, 2020, p. 22). The centrality of the body to PE practices (Berg & Lahelma, 2010; Paechter, 2003), such as the process of getting changed and the visibility of the body during PE classes (Kirk, 2010; O'Donovan & Kirk, 2007; Wellard, 2009) means that PE is an important site for exploring how ideals of the body shape both understandings and practices within this school subject (Azzarito, 2009a). From this perspective, PE teacher bodies can be seen to do pedagogical work (Tinning & Glasby, 2002) and, in turn, this 'work' *of* the body, impacts on other people's bodies including their students (Kelly et al., 2019; Varea, 2018).

There is now an increasing amount of literature that discuss the body in PE from a socio-cultural perspective and how different constructions of the body shape practices (e.g. Barker et al., 2021; McGannon et al., 2018). This includes, for example, how PE teachers' understanding of their bodies may influence their teaching (Wrench & Garrett, 2015) and how PE teachers are usually considered as role models for students (Webb & Quennerstedt, 2010). Some research found that PE teachers have narrow views of what it is to be healthy and fit (Wrench & Garrett, 2015) and their perceptions have been influenced by socio-historic and cultural environments (González-Calvo et al., 2021). Messages about the body produced in fitness, health, sport and mass-media contexts pervade individuals' lives (Varea et al., 2019) and being fit, slim, athletic and healthy is highly valued and emphasized as a core aspect of privileged subjectivities in PE (González-Calvo et al., 2019; Varea et al., 2019; Varea & Underwood, 2016). Dominant aesthetic discourses often influence individuals' ways of acting, being and thinking in everyday life (Azzarito & Katzew, 2010). Such discourses also reinforce constructions of 'good' and 'bad', (Burrows & Wright, 2007), ideal 'masculine' and 'feminine' (Azzarito, 2009a, 2009b), and 'healthy' or 'health hazardous' bodies (Gard & Wright, 2005).

Dominant ideals of the body may create damaging effects on people's health (e.g. stigmatizing fat people, and being overly sensitive to one's weight and body appearance) including children and young people. For instance, biomedical and scientific knowledge has been mediated and given meaning through PE, allowing teachers to promote PE practices whose objective is to encourage students to make healthy choices regarding what they eat, the exercise they do and what their bodies should look like (Landi et al., 2016). However, this assumes that students have the ability to make the right choices about healthy lifestyles that will reduce the risk of disease and ultimately that they are solely responsible for their own physical and mental well-being. These dominant discourses of neoliberalism, risk, the body, and 'healthism' (Crawford, 1980), which privileges individualistic notions of health and the assumption that sport = fitness = health, (re)construct narrow/limited identities which simultaneously privileges and marginalizes ways of becoming/being 'healthy'. Fitzpatrick and Tinning (2014) argued that the pervasiveness of such discourses in PE and health education can promote a fear of ill-health and the need for self-surveillance and individual responsibility, and as such risk becomes a form of health fascism and, therefore, there is a need to be more cognisant of this potential and its consequences for young people. When PE teachers adopt and embody these discourses, students risk learning implicitly that lean, fit bodies are healthy, *good* bodies (Wrench & Garrett, 2015). Powell and Fitzpatrick (2015) further showed how discourses of obesity and body pedagogies shape primary school children's perceptions of a fit and non-fat body as signifying an ideal corporeal appearance. Based on these findings, they importantly argue that teachers need to adopt 'critical body pedagogies' which involves reflecting 'on their own body as pedagogy' (Powell & Fitzpatrick, 2015, p. 480).

In this study, we delve into the perceptions that young Spanish primary school children (ages 10–12) have about ideal PE teacher bodies and subjectivities. We do this because we believe that there is an ongoing need to understand how children's views about education, healthy bodies, and PE teachers are managed, organized, and understood in the contexts they interact with (Rich, 2011). In taking heed of Azzarito and Katzew's (2010) call for the inclusion of research methods, specifically

visual methodologies, which 'enable young people to "speak" meaningfully about their experiences and ways of knowing about the body in physical activity contexts' (p. 155), we in this study employed participatory visual methodologies in the form of participant-produced drawings to explore primary school children's experiences of PE teacher bodies and subjectivities. The aim of this paper is thus to better understand how discourses of PE teacher bodies, as seen through children's perspective, shape their understandings and learning expectations in this school subject. In particular, by drawing on poststructural and Foucauldian understandings of the body (Foucault, 1996), we in this paper explore the construction and embodiment of PE teacher bodies as inextricably linked to students' understanding and experiences of this school subject. We argue that the ongoing reproduction and perpetuation of idealized PE teacher bodies is responsible for (re)producing meanings around the normal versus the abnormal PE teacher body with significant impact on students' bodily understandings and experiences in PE. We conclude by reasserting the need to challenge how dominant discourses of PE teacher bodies has the cumulative effect of restricting the possibilities for a multiplicity of bodies and physicalities to co-exist in PE.

Discourses of the body and self in PE

Ideals of the body has always been a central issue within PE largely because of the centrality of bodies within the school subject (Barker et al., 2022). According to Foucault (1979), the body is a central aspect of how individuals are monitored and regulated in neoliberal societies. Poststructuralism, by its nature, raises questions about how the *self* is constituted and how power-knowledge relations change not only across time and space, but also according to different cultural, political and social contexts (Markula & Pringle, 2006). For example, physical spaces act as places where people are monitored and from which new normalizing practices emerge (Evans et al., 2008). In the context of this paper, the 'young, slim, and healthy body' is closely intertwined with the *normal* body (Richardson & Locks, 2014), legitimizing certain tendencies and tastes (Herman & Chomsky, 2002).

Texts and images produced by the (social/mass) media reinforce dominant discourses of health and fitness, contributing to an exacerbated gaze towards bodies (González-Calvo et al., 2021, 2022; Varea et al., 2019). These discourses legitimate certain tendencies and practices under 'manufactured consent' (Herman & Chomsky, 2002), resulting in a feeling of emptiness that can only be filled with more consumption. This type of control results in an aggravated compulsive consumption of goods and services provided by multinational companies which impose homogeneity as a new form of surveillance (Fernández-Balboa, 2017). This also occurs within the neoliberal context of apparent autonomy and free choice, where consumer culture is obsessed with the highly visible body (Featherstone, 2010).

Discourses are practices that systematically (con)form the objects of which they speak (Foucault, 1972). Therefore, any discourse about the body plays an important role in (re)producing subjectivities and knowledge, as it embodies meanings and social relationships. As people unavoidably engage with diverse discourses, they become subjects of (as well as advocates for) particular positions. This is what Foucault terms as 'discursive practice' and 'subject position' (Foucault, 1996) while claiming that discourses are an instruments of power that, in due time, become 'regimes of truth' that transmit particular and peculiar societal/cultural values (Foucault, 1980). As such, for Foucault, these regimes of truth are a form of disciplinary power that imposes homogeneity through the normalization of dominant discourses, rather than through direct oppression. The discipline body is therefore produced through practices of (self-)surveillance whose main concern is acting and being according to 'the norm' (Markula & Pringle, 2006).

Although all teachers' work and their identities are, indeed, embodied, it has been suggested that PE teachers operate in a context of 'magnified embodiment' because of the centrality of the body in their field (Webb & Quennerstedt, 2010). Foucault (1990) understanding of ethics as the techniques by which individuals construct themselves as valuable subjects according to a particular code of

living allow for an examination of prevailing 'good-living' principles and practices within particular sociohistorical contexts (McCuaig & Quennerstedt, 2018). These ethic principles, in turn, require individuals to act upon themselves (i.e. monitor, test, improve and transform their own conduct) and, in so doing, construct a particular type of *self* according to the perceived predominant needs of such contexts. From this perspective, the field of PE defines which types of bodies are to be constructed and surveilled (Azzarito, 2007; Webb et al., 2008). In PE, the ideal of a toned, athletic body is then generalized as if it were attainable for anyone willing to put in the required amount of effort and work (Edwards et al., 2016; Ramme et al., 2016). These discourses of the body, for instance, impels men to be athletic and muscular (Edwards et al., 2014); whereas, what matters most for women is achieving thinness and, more recently, an athletic-yet-'feminine' body (McMahon & Barker-Ruchti, 2017; McMahon et al., 2012). Previous studies that have identified how gendered and sexualized bodies come to matter in PE has, for instance, highlighted how heteronormative assumptions related to particular masculine and feminine ideals are embodied in and through the discursive practices of PE, which simultaneously enable/limit gendered identities and bodies (Larsson et al., 2009, 2011). Discourses of PE can therefore be seen not only to produce social practices and relations, but also gendered meanings, subjects and subjectivities. Different types of gendered identities are in this way produced or 'made available' to students in PE (Kirk, 2002).

Studies have also pointed out that these discourses of the body and self are experienced in sometimes contradictory ways by PE teachers (Wrench & Garrett, 2015). It is the students themselves, and society in general, who in most cases construct expectations in relation to the ideal body for the PE teacher, giving them a responsibility as the standard of what is expected, which students look to and try to imitate (Barker et al., 2021; McCuaig & Quennerstedt, 2018). Studies indicate that there are greater distortions in the conception of the healthy or fit body and in the area of eating disorders among pre-service PE teachers than among the rest of the population (Evans et al., 2008; González-Calvo et al., 2018, 2020).

Having an athletic and muscular body provides PE teachers with a greater moral authority and credibility (Bleich et al., 2012; Puhl et al., 2013). However, if your body does not reflect the physical ideals, the PE teacher can be heavily discriminated against (McClure Brenchley & Quinn, 2016). This system of beliefs (Schommer-Aikins, 2002) can therefore explain the close relation between the high value given to bodily appearances by PE teachers and being regarded as better professionals. Such a system of beliefs also reinforce constructions of 'good' and 'bad' bodies (Burrows & Wright, 2007) and, according to other scholars (Evans & Rich, 2011; González-Calvo et al., 2020; Webb & Quennerstedt, 2010), this 'norm' of a slim and fit body may have created damaging effects on student's health (e.g. on the one hand, stigmatizing fat students; and, on the other hand, being overly sensitive to one's own weight and body appearance).

At the same time, children and young people often see no sense in doing physical exercise for health reasons, since they are at an age when for most health is not an issue. Thus, understanding PE as a means of promoting and improving health makes them see it as something irrelevant, something that lacks spontaneity, fun and autonomy, since the subject is oriented to something uniform, disciplined, regulated. It is ironic that physical exercise, often considered as one of the most pleasant human forms, is the centre of an ideology too close to the idea of correction and not so much to the idea of improving and enhancing one's life (Evans & Davies, 2004). These dominant aesthetic beliefs affect, in very narrow terms, individuals' (and teachers) ways of acting, being, and thinking in everyday life (Barker et al., 2021; González-Calvo et al., 2020).

Barker et al. (2021), for instance, recently examined how corporeal expectations shape PE teachers' understandings of content, pedagogy, and the purposes of PE. They linked prevailing body ideals to biomedical conceptions of health which foreground exercise, eating and weight, and a pathogenic reduction of risk and a certain educational purpose in PE, which is to educate citizens for healthy lives through participation in sport. To conclude they argue PE teachers need to 'critically scrutinize their positions as role models of health in terms of the politics and morals that these positions entail as they decide what to bring to the educational situation' (Barker et al., 2021, p. 14). Building on this work,

the aim of this study was to explore the students' perceptions of PE teacher bodies and subjectivities and how these articulate with their understanding of the role and purpose of PE. In the following section, we discuss the methodology used to generate the data we later report on in this paper.

Methodology

Research participants

Participants in this study were 25 primary school students (14 boys and 11 girls, ages 11–12) attending a public school in small-medium sized town in Spain. The town is close to the city of Valladolid and has a growing population that is approaching 25,000 inhabitants. The community is characterized by being a municipality in constant growth, with a development of its infrastructure that is in line with its growing number of inhabitants.

Ethical approval was obtained from the university and parents approved their children's drawings and comments to be included in this study. Only children of parents who returned signed consent forms were invited to participate in the study, and in this case, all children whose parents returned signed consent forms were invited and did participate. All children were asked, prior to beginning the focus groups, if they would like to take part in the researchers' project. Pseudonyms have been used throughout the paper to ensure participants' anonymity.

Data collection

Children between 8–12 years comprise a specific developmental stage called `middle childhood' (Bhagat & Howard, 2018). Although there is variation due to individual, cultural, social, economic, and geographic differences, most children between 8–12 years share characteristics such as being able to classify, serialize, predict, and generalize; increasingly aware of social, cultural, and physical differences; self-aware and self-critical; and aware of their own appearance (Bhagat & Howard, 2018; Salkind, 2004).

In this study, participant-produced drawings were used for data collection. Research using visual methods can also be empowering to children as images are central to their culture and everyday lives; visual methods may actually help address the power imbalance between children and adults in research (Stirling & Yamada-Rice, 2015). We used participant-produced drawings in this study because they are a way to tap quickly into the emotional lives of participants (Vince, 1995; Vince & Broussine, 1996), inviting children to visualize their ideas (Nyberg, 2019; Robb et al., 2021). Graphical representations such as drawings have the capacity to surface unspoken thoughts and feelings. 'Drawings offer a different kind of glimpse into human sense-making than written or spoken texts do, because they can express that which is not easily put into words: the ineffable, the elusive, the not-yet-thought-through, the subconscious' (Weber & Mitchell, 1995, p. 34). A pretext (such as a drawing) is a stimulus that can be used to motivate, set a scene and build emotion (O'Neill, 1995). Hence, in this study, the meanings conveyed by the drawing were also explored further during follow-up focus group interviews with the participating school children.

Drawings were completed by all the students ($n = 25$) during one of their PE lessons. The only prompt given to the children was: 'If you had to imagine a PE teacher whom you consider appropriate or less appropriate, how would you draw him or her?' The schoolchildren were then given 30 min to draw their pictures. Subsequently, five focus groups were conducted with all participants (5 students per focus group) in one of their PE classes (lasting up to 50 min), based on the data from the drawings. In this way, the experiences and opinions of all the participants could be shared, as a way of learning for others, encouraging a reflective debate and checking whether the ideas were recurrent or complementary. The focus groups were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The focus groups were carried out in Spanish and translated into English language in this paper.

Although questions were used to guide the dialogue, the focus group interactions were largely conversational in style (Hedrick et al., 2009) where the lead author acted as an 'active listener',

seeking further details where relevant (Smith, 2010) and guiding the conversation. In addition to explaining their drawings, the children were asked some other questions such as: *What do you like or dislike about your PE classes? What do you think you should you learn and do in PE? What do you like or dislike most about your PE teacher? What does a good or bad PE teacher look like? What learning do you consider most valuable in PE lessons? What differences do you find between PE lessons and lessons in other subjects? Have you experienced negative situations in PE classes? What PE activities make you feel more confident or more insecure?*

Data analysis

In order to analyse the data, the participant-produced drawings and responses from the focus groups were firstly organized and categorized through the qualitative data analysis software Atlas.ti. (8.4. version). Once the data had been organized and categorized we then engaged in a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which involves the identification, analysis, and presentation of themes within data to go beyond common-sense accounts. A theme was defined as something that 'captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82).

Some of the themes that emerged from the analysis of the drawings and the focus groups, were: (1) Feelings of discomfort and well-being around PE: Pleasure, fun, motivation, feelings of motor incompetence, boredom; (2) Emotional imprint left by PE and/or the PE teacher: Positive and/or negative aspects of the teacher, memories of the lessons; (3) Learnings: Enjoyment, appreciation of physical exercise, hygiene habits, appropriate/inappropriate body canons; and (4) Rigour with rules/teacher's lack of concern for students: Teachers who punish, threaten, and do not care about students. Initially, this led to the identification of the main themes. Then, the researchers undertook a second round of analysis through a process of constant comparison of the texts in order to establish credible and reliable sub-themes in each category (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009). After this second round of analysis, the researchers considered that the themes could be grouped into two broad categories, as presented below.

The analysis of the themes then involved going from an analysis at a 'semantic level' to a 'latent level' (Braun & Clarke, 2006), where we attempted to understand how these themes, in relation to the students' perceptions of PE teacher bodies and subjectivities, ended up with their form and meaning. To do so, we in this way also used thematic analysis as a form of Foucauldian analysis of discourse. Gee et al. (1992) articulate discourse analysis as any study that 'may be concerned with any part of the human experience touched on or constituted by discourse' (p. 228). Our Foucauldian discourse analysis in particular focused on Foucault's (1991) view of the body' as a contingent effect of power rather than a given fact of nature, 'the inscribed surface of events' and as 'totally imprinted by history' (Shilling, 2012, p. 203). In our analysis of the children's representations and interpretations of PE we thus drew on Foucauldian understandings of the body to examine how the ensemble of 'more or less regulated, deliberate and finalized ways of doing things' (Foucault, 1988, p. 17) engendered particular PE bodies and subjectivities. Informed by the previous research discussed earlier and our theoretical framework, it was in particular two sets of contrasting discourses that were evident in the students' perceptions: discourses of 'good' and 'healthy' bodies *vis-à-vis* 'bad' and 'unhealthy' bodies. In the following section, based on the results of our thematic and discourse analysis, we therefore present the findings under two different headings: (i) The PE teacher I would like – 'Good' and 'Healthy' PE teacher bodies, and (ii) 'The PE teacher I wouldn't like' – 'Bad' and 'Unhealthy' PE teacher bodies.

Results

The two finding sections demonstrate how dominant discourses of fitness, health, sport, gender and even consumerism shape expectations around ideal PE teacher bodies. The students' visual

representations and interpretations also draw attention to how those bodies enable and restrict certain educational purposes and practices in PE.

The PE teacher I would like – 'good' and 'healthy' PE teacher bodies

In the view of the students, a slender, strong, beautiful, and healthy body becomes an essential, yet taken for granted, factor in the construction of the professional identity of PE teachers (Barker et al., 2021; Hill & Azzarito, 2012). When the students were asked to describe the type of PE teacher they would like, the words or phrases 'healthy', 'slim', 'muscular', 'tall', and 'with an active life' appeared frequently:

> She has to be nice, beautiful and kind, with long hair, well dressed, slim. […]. (Clara, 11 years old)

> She is tall, slim and enjoys sports. (Camila, 11 years old)

> He has to be super strong, eat very healthy, and run very fast. (Pablo, 11 years old)

These participating students' ideas of professionalism were linked to dominant discourses of appearance, thinness and muscularity. In this sense, consumer culture plays a persuasive role in society, contributing to the idealization and normalization of slim, fit, toned and youthful bodies (Varea & Tinning, 2016). Particularly noteworthy is the case of some students (all male), who consider that a good PE teacher is characterized by wearing sportswear of well-known brands:

> Very muscular, tall, and handsome. Must wear Adidas and Nike branded clothing. (Manuel, 11 years old)

> With short hair, nice and branded sportswear, muscular. (Mario, 11 years old)

From this perspective, the effects of consumerism are linked to neoliberal and market influences in our society (Featherstone, 2010, 2014), which emphasize certain clothing brands and idealize/normalize particular body types. These discourses also seem to have influenced these students' perceptions of what constitutes 'good' PE teacher embodiments (young, athletic, healthy bodies). On the other hand, the students believed that there needs to be a cohesion between what PE teachers teach and their personal credibility. All participants considered that teaching of PE calls for capable, skilled, energetic and healthy people. When asked to draw a picture of a PE teacher they would like, the gendered nature of ideal bodies is evident (e.g. Azzarito, 2009b; Larsson et al., 2009, 2011), with many students' pictures including slim and idealized women, and muscular men doing some kind of strength-based sport (Figures 1–3).

The students have the general assumption that PE teachers need to be role models for them. In this vein, they sometimes portray PE teachers as if they were superheroes or sports stars (Figure 4).

In the focus group, focusing on interpreting and reflecting on the drawings, the students were asked why they consider that good PE teachers have to be slim, athletic, and muscular:

Students 11 years old:	[taking for granted that the researcher is asking an obvious question] To teach PE class it has to be like this, someone muscular, someone thin, it's not going to be someone fat, is it?
Researcher:	Why not, couldn't someone fat be a good PE teacher, have all your PE teachers been muscular, tall, thin … ?
Students:	Most of them have been thin and tall. Last year we had a teacher who was fatter and we didn't like his classes, we didn't like what we did with him.
Researcher:	Is that because he was fat?
Students:	With other teachers, it hasn't happened to us, but we liked him less, we felt that he was a different PE teacher than others we have had. He was not healthy.
Researcher:	So, is it essential for the PE teacher to be athletic, slim, physically fit?
Students:	Yes, if you are not fit you cannot be a PE teacher. You have to run a lot, have a lot of strength, be very flexible, […].

It seems that the students have internalized the body canons that PE teachers have to represent, to the point that the only one of them who has not been thin/athletic is considered 'a bad teacher', an 'unhealthy teacher'. They define the good PE teacher almost in terms of a 'superhuman'.

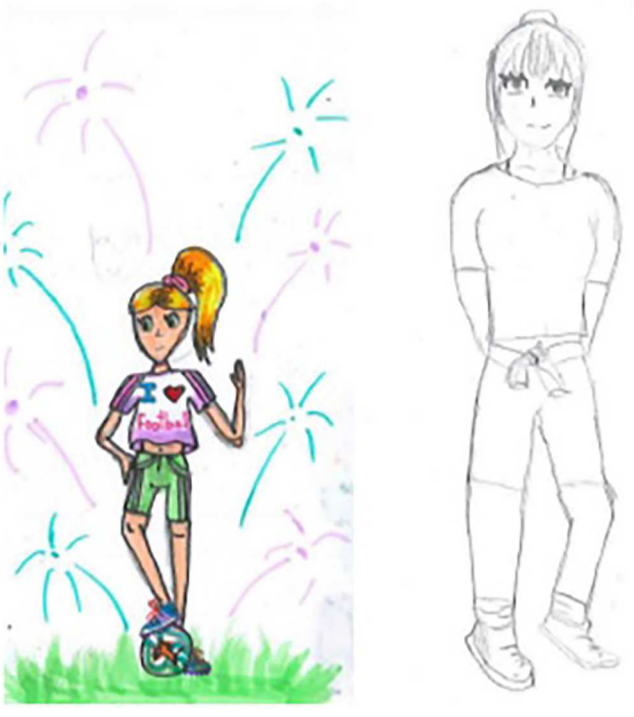

Figure 1. Ángela (12 years old)/Greta (11 years old).

The students' visual representations and interpretations as associated with the 'good' PE teacher also draw attention to the embodiment of desirable teacher dispositions. In this vein, students talk about factors encouraging the creation of safe spaces in the classroom (Kirk, 2020). Most of the drawings highlight teaching and learning in ways that render PE as an inclusive, fair and equitable embodied experience for young people (Standal, 2015). The participating students represent the good PE teacher as happy, smiling, satisfied with their work, caring, and close to their students (Figure 5).

From this perspective, it is necessary that PE teachers demonstrate caring teaching, and that students notice when they do (Mordal Moen et al., 2020). Based on the students' perceptions, it is clear that good PE teachers are those who never get angry and who are always concerned about their student's well-being. Students pay attention to the ways the teachers speak, the tone of the voice, gestures, facial expressions, and other emotional reactions (Jung & Choi, 2016). Understanding the importance of the teacher being a person who is approachable, empathetic, and satisfied with his or her work, we asked the students if it is pertinent that they also master their subject and are good at everything they teach. As a student (Boy, 12 years old) said,

> PE is not an important educational subject. I see PE as a less relevant subject than others, such as Mathematics or Spanish Language. […] PE is a kind of a leisure area, a 'free time' in which students can choose the activity we like the most.

On the one hand these results give further evidence of how the educational nature of PE is often relegated to the background (e.g. González-Calvo & Fernández-Balboa, 2018) but on the other hand it reaffirms the important role of relationships building, caring teaching (Mordal Moen et al., 2020) and affective pedagogies in PE (Teraoka & Kirk, 2022).

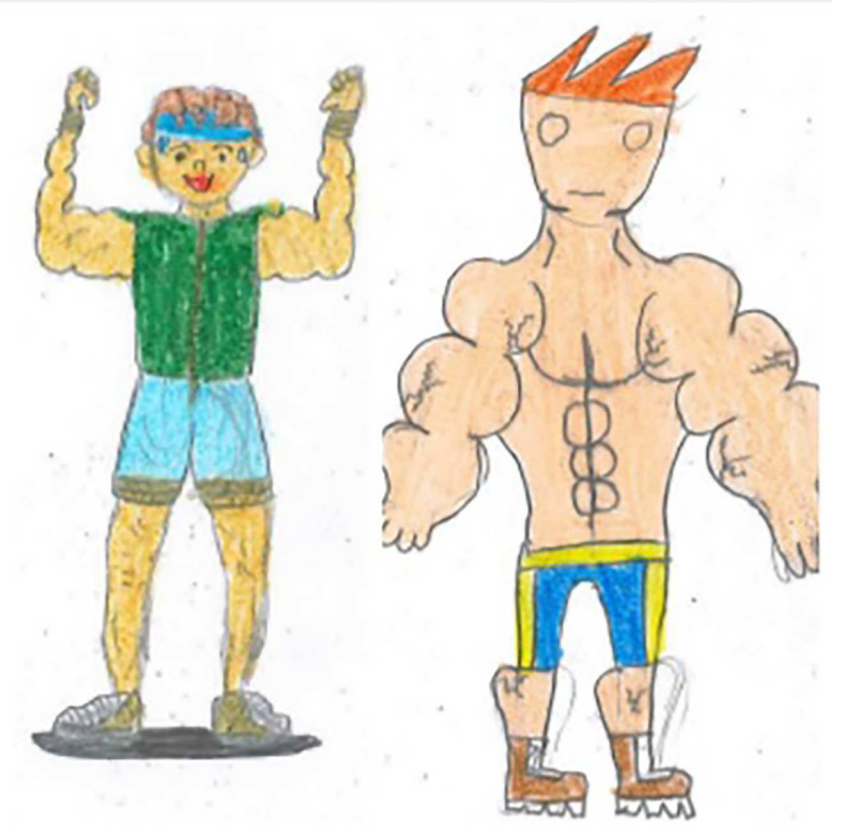

Figure 2. Pablo (11 years old)/Bruno (11 years old).

'The PE teacher I wouldn't like' – 'bad' and 'unhealthy' PE teacher bodies

The teacher's bodily appearance seems to be a crucial aspect for the participating students because it functions as a powerful tool to demonstrate the teacher's credibility. In this vein, some students describe the 'bad PE teacher' in terms of fatness and old age. They believe that PE teachers have

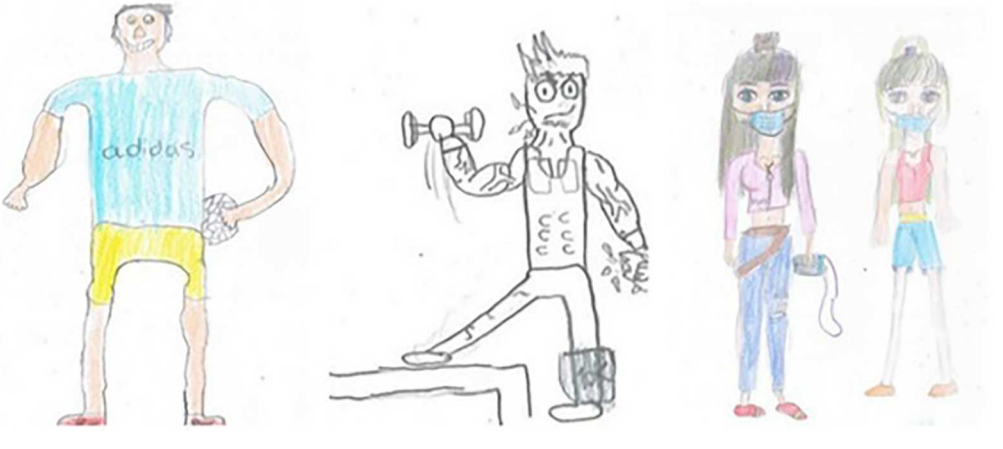

Figure 3. Teo (11 years old)/Jorge (11 years old)/Clara (11 years old).

Figure 4. Martín (11 years old)/Gonzalo (12 years old)/Daniel (12 years old).

to avoid these characteristics because they do not constitute the ideal characterization of a PE professional. Participants, therefore, valued more highly certain types of bodies than others (i.e. athletic-looking, healthy, young, and skilful bodies). In this way, the dominant discourses about the 'ideal' body act as sites of regulation to normalize both their own body and the body of others (Foucault, 1980). Some of the students said the following:

> I would not like her to be old […]. She won't be able to exercise, she won't be able to move, she won't be able to explain games and activities to us … (Emma, 12 years old).

> Fat, old, poor hygiene, unwilling to exercise (Sofía, 11 years old).

> Fat, because if he's fat he won't be able to show anything. (Gonzalo, 12 years old)

These participants reflect the need, for PE teachers, to behave and look appropriately. Poor physical health, for instance, is synonymous with not being able to be a good PE teacher. On the contrary, as demonstrated in the previous section, a good PE teacher has to be in good shape and do lots of exercise, something they consider incompatible with having a physical disability:

Figure 5. Marina (12 years old)/Clara (11 years old)/Camila (11 years old).

If the teacher has a limp, muscle pains, or cannot move well, he can't be a good teacher. (Manuel, 11 years old)

With health problems, problems to move, if you have to move with crutches or wheelchair […]. The PE teacher has to be able to move perfectly. (Anna, 12 years old)

The functionality discourse seemed to play a significant role in most participant's representations and interpretations. Students tend to think that PE teachers need to be able to demonstrate a skill in order to teach it effectively, an ability that, in most cases, will decrease as one ages. Although there is a plethora of research that has criticized this ideology (e.g. Kirk, 2006; Webb et al., 2008; Webb & Quennerstedt, 2010), the fact is that these students are convinced that PE teachers have to be able to demonstrate physical ability. In their drawings, students condemn aging and 'sloppy' bodies (Laliberte-Rudman, 2015) (Figures 6 and 7). During the focus group, students explained that some bodies are more 'valuable' than others, which for some students have resulted in feelings of shame, embarrassment and discontent. Students understand that some corporeal characteristics prevent PE teachers from having good physical abilities and, consequently, from being a good teacher:

Students 12 years old:	Because it has to be someone active, young, healthy, who can do the activities he/she tells us to do […]. If the teacher tells us to do climbing exercises, or juggling, or riding a unicycle, and he is not able to do it, he is not a good teacher.
Researcher:	But then, would it be enough that he is a person capable of doing what he asks you to do, regardless of whether he is more or less thin, more or less muscular?
Students (12 years old):	In PE they always tell us that we have to exercise, eat healthy, not smoke … If the PE teacher is fat, or does not eat healthy, does not exercise, […], he is not a good example for us.
Researcher:	The ideas you have about the ideal and non-ideal body of the PE teacher, where do they come from?

Figure 6. Bruno (11 years old)/Lucas (12 years old).

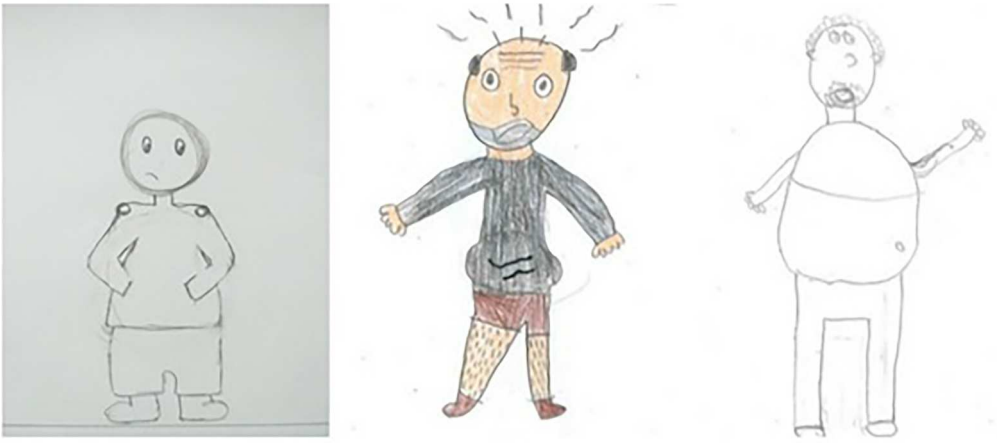

Figure 7. Martín (11 years old)/Emma (12 years old)/Enzo (12 years old).

Students (12 years old):	All athletes are young and slim, no one is old, fat or unathletic.
Researcher:	But a PE teacher is not an athlete, they are different things, what do you think?
Students (12 years old):	PE is doing sports and leading a healthy life. The teachers we have had have always been like that, young and slim. […] People who are old, fat, who don't take care of themselves, who are not in good shape, could not be PE teachers.
Researcher:	And these ideas about PE and the ideal and non-ideal teacher, do they correspond to the PE classes you receive at school?
Students (12 years old):	[…] They tell us a lot about avoiding obesity, not smoking, doing a lot of physical exercise, eating healthy, taking care of personal hygiene, not taking drugs […]. Those are the rules they tell us we have to follow, so it is logical that those are the rules that the PE teachers have to follow.

These quotes indicate that the participants in this study placed importance upon discourses centred on ideas related to appearance (namely, slender and youthful looks) and the skilled body, corroborating, also, that the development of PE teachers' professional identity is linked to the practice of fitness, sport and health activities (e.g. Azzarito et al., 2017; Drummond, 2010; Featherstone, 2014; Garret & Wrench, 2012; Varea & Pang, 2018). The teachers' credibility is based then, not only on having a good physical condition and/or a slender or athletic body, but also on embodying the curricular contents they teach and being good role models (in terms of having a healthy, youthful and able-to-physically-perform body) for their students.

Furthermore, the students' visual representation and interpretations highlight other embodiments of the 'bad' PE teacher. For instance, in several of the drawings, the bad teacher is represented as someone who scolds or punishes students, or as someone who prefers to pay more attention to other matters (e.g. the cell phone) than to his or her students:

The students agree that it is important that PE activities take into account their emotions, interests and previous knowledge. Also, as one of the students pointed out,

> the teacher has to try to be there for us, to encourage us, to care about us […]. If the teacher is not attentive to what is going on, if he/she doesn't care about their students, it is difficult for us to care about the subject. (Enzo, 12 years old)

The students also talk about how there are situations in PE that generate fear and anxiety for them (Figure 8):

Researcher:	Have you had any negative experiences in PE classes?

Figure 8. Ángela (12 years old)/Manuel (11 years old)/Aitana (12 years old)/Andrés (11 years old).

Carlos:	Sometimes I preferred not to have PE classes, I would have preferred any other subject except PE … I have had classes in which the teacher scolded us a lot and gave us very difficult exercises that I was not able to do.
Researcher:	What did these difficult activities consist of?
Carlos:	Running, or playing a sport that we were not very good at […].

From the students' perspective, PE lessons tend to focus on the acquisition of certain skills that they do not find meaningful and/or too difficult, which leads to stagnation and disinterest in the subject. When students do not get to experience situations in which they can feel competent and achieve success it can result in them developing feelings of motor incompetence and frustration with physical activities. As such, providing opportunities for young people to enjoy and learn physical skills remains an important task for PE teachers, in particular, when it comes to creating a learning environment in which no student feels ridiculed, judged or disrespected by others (Kirk, 2020).

Discussion and conclusions

The purpose of this paper was to explore students' perception of PE teacher bodies and subjectivities. Based on the students' visual representations and interpretations, it is evident that their idea of the ideal PE teacher is centred on physical appearance and, more specifically, on characteristics such as slimness, fitness, physical dexterity and masculine/feminine bodies. Slender, fit, skilful and gender idealized teacher bodies acquire from the students' perspective, value and prestige within PE practice. Thus, beliefs and stereotypes about the importance of physicality for PE teachers (Parkinson & Burrows, 2020; Tinning, 2010) has also heavily influenced these students' perceptions of ideal bodies. As one student in this study said, 'PE teachers can't deviate too much from body ideals. The PE teacher has to be our role model, someone we want to be like […]. We are more motivated by an

athletic, muscular, very agile teacher than by one who is the opposite' (Jorge). In addition, the students' perceptions presented above reflect pervasive Western market discourses (González-Calvo et al., 2022), which, in turn, reinforce exclusive and counterproductive ethics of power formation and professional knowledge (Foucault, 1972, 1980). For example, some students in this study can be seen to have been 'manipulated' (Herman & Chomsky, 2002) by consumerist, elitist messages into believing that a 'good' PE teacher is one who wears certain sporting brands. This PE teacher ideal, closely tied to the increasingly globalized consumer oriented ideals of a youthful, strong, healthy body (Bordo, 2003; Fernández-Balboa & González-Calvo, 2017), is subsequently embodied by individuals such as PE teachers through power relations and the 'economy of visibility' (Malson, 1998, p. 172). In this regard, the PE teacher constructs and embodies cultural and educational meaning according to the conventional ideas of society (Garrett, 2004) as currently associated with discourses of neoliberalism and consumerism (Featherstone, 2010, 2014). Consumer culture is additionally strongly linked to dominant discourses of gender that construct images of desirable masculine and feminine bodies (Azzarito, 2009b) that people then strive to live up to, such as the athletic and muscular male body (Edwards et al., 2014) and the thin but athletic female body (McMahon & Barker-Ruchti, 2017; McMahon et al., 2012). PE teachers' embodiment of these discourses, as demonstrated by the above findings, also shape the students' learning and understanding of such body ideals in PE practice (Foucault, 1972).

Furthermore, these students believe that PE teachers must make healthy choices about what they eat, how much exercise they do and what they look like (from a physical, body image point of view). This discourse of 'healthism' (Crawford, 1980) assumes that PE teachers (and by extension their students) have the ability to make the right choices about healthy lifestyles that will reduce the risk of disease, while also assuming that they alone are responsible for their physical and mental well-being. The consequence of this healthism discourse is that those PE teachers who are not able or unwilling to fulfil certain bodily requirements are at risk of being stigmatized and considered 'intruders' within the profession (Fernández-Balboa & González-Calvo, 2018). If teachers do not fit within the bodily configurations that are expected of them they may suffer from certain stress or even an identity crisis due to them not adhering to what is commonly understood as the hallmark of their identity (González-Calvo et al., 2021).

The students' visual representations and interpretations further demonstrate how they consider physical appearance to be a reference when it comes to encouraging them to follow appropriate and healthy habits; hence the need for teachers to teach by example. As Barker et al. (2021) recently argued, 'the idea that teachers may or may not have to look fit and athletic to be healthy role models is understood as a political and moral act of judgement involving what to bring to the educational situation' (p. 5). The credibility of teachers is therefore based not only on having a good physical condition and/or an athletic body image, but also on being a 'healthy' role model for the students. These notions suggest that students share a common understanding of the body ideals of PE teachers that is socially determined and clearly embedded in dominant social values (Kirk, 2020). Mainly through advertising and (social/mass) media, society constructs an ideal body image as related to thinness, athletic and supposedly healthy bodies, the cult of youth and the use of certain commercial brands, which exert a strict control over identity and body construction (Foucault, 1980) but also conditions professional practice (González-Calvo et al., 2021). As a result, the body ideals of PE teachers, and consequently the body ideals of young people, risk becoming a problematic entity, embedded in dominant cultural discourses which, in turn, are increasingly institutionalized through interpersonal relationships, consumer culture and media socialization environments (Whitson, 1990). In this sense, PE seems to be a field that continues to produce and legitimize particular body ideals, discourses and ethics that, in turn, become the means for regulating both teacher and student bodies (Foucault, 1980, 1996).

Finally, this study provides further evidence of the social nature of teaching (Zembylas, 2003), considering students' emotions are dependent on the nature of the relationships established with their teachers and other social experiences. In this sense, caring teaching is inevitably built on

developing good relationships (Mordal Moen et al., 2020). In this paper, the students' visual representations and interpretations of PE teacher bodies have drawn attention to the importance of building trust, understanding and working towards equity in the classroom, allowing every student to feel happy, successful and proud of what/who they are. An important extension of this study would be to examine how pedagogical and curricular PE practices can address the reconceptualization of an 'ideal body' and how PE lessons can be used as an opportunity for critical body pedagogies (Powell & Fitzpatrick, 2015) which involves students critically analysing ideals of the body as shaped by dominant discourses and (social/mass) media. It is therefore essential also that both present and prospective PE teachers are given the chance to critically examine these dominant body discourses (Evans & Rich, 2011) while reflecting on the effects of these on themselves, their identities and their practices (Fernández-Balboa, 2009).

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