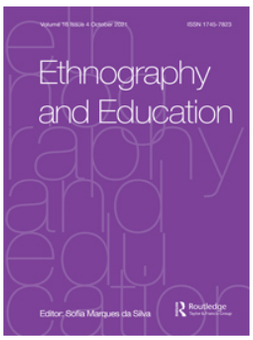

Ethnography and Education

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/reae20

Playing gender(s): the re/construction of a suspect 'gender identity' through play

Sofia Brito, Nuno Santos Carneiro & Conceição Nogueira

To cite this article: Sofia Brito, Nuno Santos Carneiro & Conceição Nogueira (2021) Playing gender(s): the re/construction of a suspect 'gender identity' through play, Ethnography and Education, 16:4, 384-401, DOI: 10.1080/17457823.2021.1922927

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/17457823.2021.1922927

ETHNOGRAPHY AND EDUCATION
2021, VOL. 16, NO. 4, 384–401
https://doi.org/10.1080/17457823.2021.1922927

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Playing gender(s): the re/construction of a suspect 'gender identity' through play

Sofia Brito [a], Nuno Santos Carneiro [b] and Conceição Nogueira [a]

[a]Centro de Psicologia da Universidade do Porto, Faculdade de Psicologia e de Ciências da Educação da Universidade do Porto, Porto, Portugal; [b]Instituto Superior de Serviço Social do Porto, Porto, Portugal

ABSTRACT

The present work intends to analyse how pre-school aged children experience the re/construction of a 'gender identity' and the processes that create it as an essential, factual, and unchangeable reality – therefore, suspect. Given the growing importance of 'gender identity development' in child development literature, as well as the arising voices of 'gender non-conforming' childhoods, this theme seems particularly relevant when faced with the limitations imposed by macrosocial discourses of cisheteronormativity. Using grounded theory and ethnography, the re/construction processes were observed in a mixed-age kindergarten classroom in Porto and analysed through the feminist lens of gender performativity. It was possible to observe the following dimensions: clothing and accessories as performative marks of gender; beauty and its role in constructing femininities; play as a regulatory fiction, that is both shaped by and constructs gender differences; gender borders and how they can be reinstated, negotiated or defied.

KEYWORDS

Early childhood education; child development; gender; gender performativity; grounded theory; ethnography

Introduction

Children are perceived, in a heteronormative society, as asexual and undifferentiated individuals, in what regards a pre-assumption of 'a gender identity'. They are considered to be in a 'pre-identitary' phase, preparing to come of age within an identity that has already been assigned according to their anatomy. This biology is translated into a label through arbitrary criteria: it's sex (Fausto-Sterling 2000), which in turn matches a gender and certain gender roles – all of which are conceptualised as binary. This system is usually known as 'cisheteronormativity': it dictates a compulsory alignment between sex – a construction of anatomy and biology –, gender – including gender roles and expressions – and sexual orientation. It determines the types and patterns of possible relationships, assuming monogamous heterosexual relationships are the 'normal default', considering the partners' sex can be assured by their chromosomes and genitalia (Warner 1991; Halberstam 2005; Jeppesen 2016).

However, children develop and explore the world through these lenses, imagining, performing, and expressing themselves already within the boundaries of gender

CONTACT Sofia Brito sofiabrito@fpce.up.pt; Nuno Santos Carneiro nunoscarneiro@gmail.com

binarism. Their everyday lives are shaped by social stereotypes, which promote a rigid conceptualisation of these categories, as they absorb and make sense of the world (Coyle, Fulcher, and Trübutschek 2016; Halim 2016). As Christopher Richards (2011) puts it, it is as if the voice of others, that personify the dominant culture and ideologies, are incorporated into the child's own words or play. The relation between children and adults is not untouched by social discourses (Anderson 2014; Jeppesen 2016; Menzies and Santoro 2018) – just as the construction of knowledge is not neutral, but rather sustained by power dynamics, reproducing social classes and maintaining dominant groups (Bernstein 2000; Payne and Smith 2012). According to Carina Hjelmér (2020, 156), cultural norms 'appear to show self-evident strength and are not easy to transform for an individual', which means 'free choice play', without proper framing and involvement by the adult, may be a reproduction of the dominant social norms. Furthermore, children's gender non-conforming expressions and performances can be invisibilised and oppressed, upholding cisheteronormativity as 'natural development'.

Thus, child development literature, focused on a teleological and universal description (Mussen et al. 1988), has supported itself on the idea that acquiring a 'stable gender identity' is a benchmark for healthy development (Rodrigues 2003; Schaffer 2004; Papalia, Olds, and Feldman 2009). These discourses have produced gender as an essentialist identity, a 'reification' – a 'regulatory fiction', as described by Butler (1990, 2004).

This affects the regulatory logics of the educational systems and their agents, and other contexts in which children grow and develop (Anderson 2014; Arnot 2003; Jeppesen 2016; Menzies and Santoro 2018; Hjelmér 2020). The regulation of behaviours can be disguised under the explicit idea of 'mental health' and 'psychological adjustment' since the main discourse around gender issues pathologises them – DSM-5's 'gender dysphoria' serves as example (APA 2013). It precludes possible experiences of gender exploration and play.

Queer theory functions as a working point of view to deconstruct this system, questioning the rigidity through which genders and sexualities are presented, normalised and naturalised (Warner 1991; Oliveira, Costa, and Carneiro 2014). Children, like adults, don't merely act by conscient choice: it's the succession of performances that creates gender as an attribute, constructing the performativity of a multitude of possible 'femininities' and 'masculinities' (Pereira 2012). This illusory 'reality', or 'regulatory fiction', creates intrinsic power inequalities for the binary 'gender identities' and for age-based relations.

New gazes towards fluidity or gender non-conformity propose expressions and performances as ways to widen children's experiences beyond the restrictive limits of the gender binary. By not restricting their possibilities of experiencing and being, their exploration of themselves tends to be positive, then promoting their well-being. In this paradigm, concepts such as Diane Ehrensaft's creative gender (2011, 2016), 'the gender committed child' or 'gender alphabetization' (Green and Friedman 2015) arise and propose gender exploration as a positive experience. This conceptualisation states there need not be an imposition of the 'correct' way to be, but rather a consistent teaching that gender is open to interpretation and questioning, can be explored and re/created (Green and Friedman 2015) – which requires framing and involvement from teachers and other caretakers (Hjelmér 2020). This is a radical cut with the view of children as naïve, asexual and consequently, incapable of making decisions regarding their bodies

and expressions. Gender exploration can become a tool of differentiation, self-awareness and personal narrative construction – in a proactive, self-determined manner.

In Portugal, the study of the performative dimension of gender is relatively recent: Pereira (2012) cites works by Araújo and collaborators (2002) and Oliveira and Nogueira (2009) in the decade of the 2000s. Most notably, Manuela Ferreira (2002, 2004) has developed an ethnography with 18 children in a kindergarten classroom, in which one of the goals was to explore the instrumentalization of gender knowledge in the social relationships of power between peers. Maria do Mar Pereira (2012) also highlights how the social sciences in Portugal require more work to address not the static configurations of attributes, but rather to see the phenomenon of difference and similarity as frontiers that are negotiated daily, in the lived-in contexts where people encounter each other.

To study daily experiences and interactions, to understand how boundaries are defined, redefined and negotiated, it is necessary to be within the contexts and observe – or rather, to do ethnography. This is also the main proposition of gender performativity theory, which conceptualises gender as a reiteration of certain acts, gestures, speeches, narratives, ways of talking, movements and ways of presenting the body – the performances (Butler 1990). There is an inherent multiplicity to these, to how they are experienced and live, and to how subjectivity itself is formed (Moore 2005).

The present study intends then to add to these discussions, resorting to queer theory, namely performativity, as a framework to challenge that children 'have' a gender identity, and to observe how they construct these identities as essential realities. The studies that exist in the Portuguese preschool context are still few, particularly ones that do not focus on differences based on the axis of sex/gender as structural and constantly present, but rather explore the processes through which masculinities and femininities are construed, negotiated, performed or erased (Pereira 2012). As such, the present research goals are to understand children's experiences regarding gender expression and performance, along with the meanings created around them (Goal 1), and the processes through which gender identities are created as immutable truths with which children identify (Goal 2).

Method

Participants and research setting

The study took place in an educational setting, a kindergarten in Porto, centre to one of the two metropolitan areas in Portugal. The school's board chose a mixed age classroom (3-5 years-old) for the study. The class was constituted by 24 children, 14 of which identified as boys and 10 as girls. In terms of age, 7 were 3 years-old, 12 were 4 years-old, and 5 were 5 years-old. One of these children, a 4-year-old girl, was transferred into the class during the school year.

It was observed that the classroom upholds a prosocial moral code, promoted by the caretaking adults. 'Being friends' is often the main spoken goal for the children – and when, for some reason, they transgress these norms, they are 'placed talking'. Their self-determination and involvement in the decision-making processes was an important point in the school's educational project. Children participated in a weekly assembly to discuss problems arisen during the week, in a discussion intended to be democratic (the

adults may participate but are intended to assume a peer-like role; despite this, the discussion can be sometimes guided by the adult).

The configuration of the room itself is quite versatile: although there are several play areas, they are flexible and sometimes dismantled to make space for displays of larger class projects (for example, a veterinary clinic created within the room). The activities include singing, dancing and artistic expression, activities in which children seem to participate rather equally. Storytelling, dramatic reading, and its registration in drawing – whether individually or collectively – are also frequent activity. Otherwise, children's most frequent activity is free play. Despite that, the routines are detailed and fixed, much due to the high ratio of children to adults (25:2 or 25:1).

Regarding gender, it is due to note the school doesn't support gender-coded colours: the bibs are the same colour for all children, green, and materials or projects aren't colour-coded either. The bathrooms for preschool are also unsegregated and children are usually taken there by an adult but can circulate freely. About the school's official documents, a documental analysis of the annual activities plan, the internal regulation and the educational project showed gender is not directly mentioned. The latter two documents mention assuring equality of opportunities as a pedagogical goal, as well as the development of expression and communication. The school's methodology is said to be oriented towards a civic education, insuring the respect of individual, social, and cultural characteristics.

As the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of the University of Porto (FPCE-UP) had already established a cooperation protocol with the school regarding investigation, the setting was chosen due to its proximity and availability. The informed consent of parents and professionals for participation in the study was insured directly by the school board, after official authorisation within the established protocol. It was also reinstated through informal conversations with both children and several professionals. Nonetheless, the investigator tried to respect explicit and implicit consent and boundaries, by withdrawing from situations in which discomfort, vulnerability, or simply a wish to stop participating was, somehow, manifested – either verbally or by physical retraction from the children or other participants.

Methodology and data collection

As previously mentioned, the present work took a qualitative approach, given its focus on processes and constructed meanings. Ethnography tends to view the research topic, ontologically, as impacted by other factors (Whitehead 2005), and the findings as shared meanings created intersubjectively between the researcher and participants – that is, symbolic interactionism (Dahlke, Hall, and Phinney 2015). The investigator can approach the participants' subjective point of view, which is simultaneously part of the observational setting and a reflection of human experiences as a collective (Mills and Morton 2013). Grounded theory, on the other hand, creates a solid foundation for data analysis, allowing the research process to adjust continuously to the requests, characteristics and needs of the setting, as fieldwork takes place (Charmaz 2006; Bryant and Charmaz 2012).

This methodology makes it possible to step into the daily contexts in an exploratory manner – not only listening but also observing, given the importance of 'tacit knowledge'

behind gender norms (Richards 2011). Through fieldwork, one can explore how gender performativity creates the *illusion* that genders are innate, compulsory realities (Pereira 2012). Using this framework, it's possible to re-analyse the observed experiences of children and start new dialogues about questions that have been silenced, making way for children's authenticity and self-determination (Pereira 2012; Jeppesen 2016).

As such, participant observation was the main technique used to collect data, coupled with informal questioning, conversations, and interviews. As mentioned, documental analysis was also used, regarding the institution's internal regulation, the annual activities plan and the educational project. These were analysed in advance, to better understand the school's stance on gender issues – from which no particular conclusions were drawn. Drawings made by the children were also collected and used to support the analysis. The fieldwork took place for 119 contact hours in total, usually one day (±7h30) per week (varying the days, to ensure diversity of routines), over the course of 8 months.

The investigator, who was 22 years-old at the time, was introduced as such to the children. She stated she was there to learn from them and to understand their school life better. There was an initial curiosity that quickly faded, as the children were very used to having preschool education interns in class, who tended to be around proximal age. This was likely aided by the investigator's own performativity: she tended towards feminine expressions and performances, particularly gender role expectations for caretaking. This might have made the initial steps of the relationship with the children easier, but not the following, as she quickly realised they expected from her a similar role than that of the other adults (regulation and mediation). This required carefully negotiating the role (both entering the play and stepping back when necessary). It also elicited certain responses, intending assertions of femininity or masculinity, which undoubtedly would have been different faced with other performances.

The regularity of attendance allowed the investigator to identify several events (specific or recurrent) in relation to a specific attention to 'gender' – however important, subtle, direct or indirect it might seem. The main tool for data collection was an observation journal, with quick field notes taken in place and further elaborated following the observation. This method also contributed to memo writing along the observation period, following the principles of grounded theory. A total of 795 events was obtained through the segmentation of the journal's 205 pages into unities of analysis. Theoretical sensitivity based on the theoretical framework already mentioned – that is, an awareness of the subject that allows the researcher to perceive the concepts embedded in data (Charmaz 2006) – guided the identification of these events, allowing for a simultaneous process of both collecting and coding and analysing data, referred to as theoretical sampling. Systematic reflexivity was also used to ponder the investigator's role with the research setting and its agents, in order to further understand particular subjective aspects of the approach and how it could influence the research (Charmaz 2006; Bryant and Charmaz 2012; Dahlke, Hall, and Phinney 2015).

During this stage, the investigator questioned the data in order to find the underlying processes of the observed interactions and experiences. This means posing questions such as 'what is happening here? what is the main process?'; 'what is the goal behind this action?'; 'how does this interaction impact social relations or the context?'; 'what is the child/adult attempting to assert or dissimulate?'; 'what beliefs are implicit within

these actions (particularly regarding gender)?'; 'how does this symbolize gender?'; 'how does this question gender?'; etc. The unities of analysis obtained from the events were coded according to the underlying concepts and processes – allowing them to emerge from the data, as proposed by grounded theory (Charmaz 2006).

The analysis process followed three stages (Charmaz 2006; Pinto 2014): open – identification of the underlying concepts (e.g. normalisation of violence; self-determination; masculinity construction, etc.); axial – identification of the main categories and subcategories which organise the data (e.g. affection and care; power negotiations; tabu); selective – selection of core categories for theory construction (performative marks of gender; beauty and constructing femininities; play as a regulatory fiction; gender borders). This process occurs through constant comparison between the already performed analysis and the gathered data. Memo writing was also used to solidify the analysis (Charmaz 2006; Bryant and Charmaz 2012). Data collection stopped when new data did not add new information to the analysis – theorical saturation (Charmaz 2006).

Results and discussion

Through fieldwork, it was possible to analyse how children are confronted by social discourses, influences and pressures (Arnot 2000; Bernstein 2000): they create and reproduce performances within a macrosocial framework of what is (not) allowed – that is, gender performativity (Butler 1990, 2004; Pereira 2012). Their discourses can underline gender borders or fade attributed differences, or they can even use relational dynamics to meet their desires (Pereira 2012). As Markström and Halldén (2008, 122) state, 'children adopt strategies and make pragmatic use of resources to resist the institutional discourse and gain control'.

Over the several observations in the classroom, it was possible to identify some important processes that construct gender as an essential identity dimension in this age. As already stated, theoretical sensitivity based on queer theory allowed the investigator to question the occurring events and gender's relation to them, leading to theoretical purposive sampling. Thus, the main dimensions emerged from the data, constructing a grounded theory focused on the expression and re/construction of a 'gender identity'. In this work, we will approach the following dimensions: clothing and accessories as performative marks of gender; beauty and its role in constructing 'femininities'; play as regulatory fiction, that is both shaped by and constructs gender differences; gender borders and how they can be reinstated, negotiated or defied.

Clothing and accessories as performative marks of gender

Butler (1990) discusses the materiality of gender, defending it does not *exist*: it *becomes* through cultural processes. Performativity consists of certain repeated acts, gestures, and ways of presenting the body – certain *expressions*, within a given cultural context. In that sense, clothing is a form of *expression*, intrinsically linked to the culture around it. It transmits group-belonging – specially, regarding gender (Richards 2011). This category

englobes the observed patterns of expression through clothes and accessories, and how they create and convey gender.

Many events took place during the observation, one of which was a daily occurrence: there was a distinct style for boys' and girls' wear. It is particularly interesting to consider it was not a formal distinction imposed by the school, but rather a form of apparent self-expression. However, it is important to consider the mediation of this expression within these ages: the children do not dress by themselves – a caretaker is usually present to mediate their expression. This was then communicated by the body, the clothes worn, the way they moved and present themselves. All these marks highlighted the binary group to which they were made to belong – becoming performative marks of gender.

It was interesting to notice how the only boy who did not wear his hair short tended to be confused with a girl on several occasions. But unlike girls, who tended to wear several hair accessories, when a hairpin was used to keep his hair from falling into his eyes, it ended up getting lost along the day. As such, the border for apparent gender can be marked through the hair length or the use of hair accessories – there is no one border: it is negotiated and pushed back and forth, according to situational context (Butler 2004; Pereira 2012).

The most prominent difference, however, were skirts and dresses: girls wore them, even when causing some discomfort, while boys cannot choose this, having to exclusively wear either pants or shorts. This is such a striking difference that one of the

Figure 1. Drawing made by a 4-year-old girl, representing feminine figures as wearing skirts.

girls always drew feminine figures in a skirt (cf. Picture 1). Such a tendency is seen by authors such as Rodrigues (2003) as a benchmark for gender development: the acquisition of 'gender stability' as a cognitive concept – symbolised by fixated binary gender roles Figure 1.

Another specificity of these binary styles relates to the *distribution of clothes' colours* on a genderised and binary basis: girls mostly wore pink, stretching to purples and reds, whereas boys wore many dark colours, such as blues, greens, greys and browns, and some lively ones, such as red or yellow. This was observed even though all children, institutionally, wore green bibs. These could be personalised, allowing the child to resist the institutional discourse by demonstrating individuation (Markström and Halldén 2008). However, individuation is in itself a performance (Butler 1990, 2004) and is also inscribed with gender: details such as patches or other accessories were only observed to be worn by girls. Here follows an example:

[It's the after-lunch recess, so the children are in the playground. One of the 4-year-old girls has a small Minnie patch on her bib. She comes close and I ask her about the patch.]
A: 'Mommy wanted to put it there'
Investigator (I): 'And what did you think of it?'
A: 'A good idea.'
I: 'Why?'
A: 'Because it's cute.'

Fieldnote 1. Individuation of an institutional imposition mediated by the caretaking adult: [A.] and the Minnie in the bib.

It was also noticeable how these *accessories* seemed to inspire a sense of pride. Several girls, for instance, drew attention to their clothes, highlighting the sparkles or drawings on it (butterflies, hearts, dolls …), or, occasionally, some less 'feminised' features, such as having pockets or wheelies. They complemented the adults' clothing, comparing them to their own, thus demonstrating how they function as models (Papalia, Olds, and Feldman 2009; Schaffer 2004).

[We're in the recess in the interior playground. Two 4 year-old girls engage in conversation with me.]
[C.] tells me her favourite colour is pink. She shows me how her clothes have sparkles. [M.] shows me she also has tights, but hers don't have sparkles.

Fieldnote 2. Display of gender-normative accessories and clothing with a sense of pride.

Nonetheless, the use of accessories might cause some discomfort, for example, at nap time, since they added an extra step to the preparations, or at play time, given that they restricted movement. An occurrence that demonstrates this took place when a 5-year-old had to constantly stop her play to pull up her tights, keeping her from play that demanded more movement.

Toys brought from home also represent a power dynamic (Foucault [1979], 1984; Markström and Halldén 2008; Bernstein 2000): they both instil a status and allow the sharing of home lives. They are also a performance and are genderised (Butler 1990, 2004): girls brought many stuffed animals and stylised dolls or purses; boys brought balls and cars. Thus, toys that are more gender appropriate are also a greater reason for pride (to quote a 4-year-old girl: 'I have a pink bicycle!'). It's interesting to see that

when these, or their clothes, are not so gender typical, it tends to be perceived by some of the caregivers as 'carelessness' by the 'mother'.

[It's one of the recesses in the interior playground. Two of the 5-year-old girls and a 4-year-old boy are gathered around a table.]
In the playground, there are many stickers scattered around the table. Ga. And Gu. see M.'s collection, which includes stickers of football players, the world cup and little stylised dolls and animals […]. I ask Gu. at which ones is he looking, and he immediately points to the football ones. I ask if he only collects those and not the others, to which he replies he doesn't. Ga. intervenes and says she collects both, 'what's the harm?!'. I ask if she collects a lot and she says she does; that every time she sees a collection she says 'grandma, can I go buy a pack?' – in a very firm way.

Fieldnote 3. Gender-normative and gender-trespassing choices regarding toys: the naturalisation of 'gender identity'.

It is interesting how, in this example, the boy's categorical answer displays the naturalisation of the processes that construct these themes as 'appropriate' for 'each gender', underlining how they are strongly genderised (Butler 1990). The girl's defiant answer, however, demonstrates how girl's incursion into territories considered 'masculine' can be allowed and even appreciated, whereas the opposite is not necessarily true – given that masculinities are more valued than femininities (Rodrigues 2003; Amâncio 2004).

Beauty and the construction of femininities

Deeply intertwined with gender performance, is another category of the events observed: beauty and its relation to the construction of femininities. Many events depicted how beauty is an ideal constructed through the training of docile bodies (Foucault [1979], 1984) – that is, how they are curated to fit the standards of beauty and 'feminise' their appearance, while, at the same time, invisibilising the process through which they *become*, rather than *are*, feminine (Butler 1990; Pereira 2012). A 'stage' is created, in which beauty is performed and becomes an 'intrinsic value' of femininity. One of these events is described below.

[Most of the class is in the playground. Me and the assistant are headed there.]
We pass by [M.], who went to get her black glasses with a purple bowtie integrated in the frame. Outside, [the assistant] tells me she asked her if she needed glasses now, to which she replied they were 'not for seeing, they are for beauty!'. In the afternoon circle, [the teacher] asks if they don't hurt her. She says they don't, but she can't wear them for long, because then they will be bad for her. [The teacher] says '[she] thought so', and to put them on her head, for 'brain myopia', laughing.

Fieldnote 4. The paradox regarding the importance of beauty for the construction of femininities.

This exemplifies the importance of beauty in expressing femininity, which is consistent with Pereira's findings in her school ethnography (2012): girls' appearances are constantly monitored and equitable with the amount of respect they are due; however, efforts and concerns towards appearance are considered exaggerated and ridiculed. A transitional moment exemplified this important paradox.

[Some of the children are seated, and some are coming inside the classroom to sit for circle time. Me and the teacher are sitting in the circle as well.]
[…] without any cue from any of the children, [the teacher] says G. is beautiful, really cute […]. She sings 'this girl is

beautiful', to which G. covers her ears. Then, she asks the whole group to look at her and agree on how beautiful she is. [The teacher] starts telling all the girls, one by one, that they are beautiful (skipping over the boys) and inciting the whole circle to look and agree.

Fieldnote 5. Beauty as adding inherent value to femininity: 'the beauty circle'.

The teacher even makes a joke with one of the girls, asking her if she is 'ugly' and then laughing and stating, 'of course not!'. This is clearly intended as positive interaction but plays out in a paradoxical manner: only the girls are mentioned, not the boys, subliminally implying that beauty is an essential characteristic for girls and girlhood (being 'ugly' is so construed as 'unfeminine' and, therefore, 'impossible' that being so is laughable). The interaction helps to establish this as a regulatory principle, considering the power balance hierarchically established (Arnot 2003; Bernstein 2000).

Play as regulatory fiction

Considering the context in which it takes place, the bulk of observed events are related to play: play is central to children's lives and it is their main activity (Papalia, Olds, and Feldman 2009). It is through play that they both reproduce and resist social discourses and challenge and/or construct their worldviews (Markström and Halldén 2008; Hjelmér 2020).

This is clear with observations of free time *spontaneous play*: most boys tend to choose activities related to vehicles, movement or velocity and physical activity, whereas girls tend to play families or house, manual or performing arts, tongue twisters and hand games, also getting more involved in conversations. The way in which they play can also construct differences: girls tend to interact more, resort more to talk, whereas boy tend to play in a more parallel manner. Likewise, even though children often play with the same toys (legos, blocks, tires, etc.) and in the same spaces (playground, playhouse, etc.), the narratives they build around play aren't always similar – they tend to choose topics that seem to be more gender-conforming (for example, boys say they are building spaceships and girls talk about pools or cribs). The themes *for playdough and free drawings* are similar, but can be coloured in different ways: boys tend to choose more violent or 'disgusting' versions (crawl animals, monsters, blood), and girls tend to dress up the drawings with details that are more 'cute' or 'homely' (cupcakes, butterflies, hearts).

These observations meet what is found in literature (Rodrigues 2003; Schaffer 2004; Papalia, Olds, and Feldman 2009), but they resist an oversimplified analysis that attributes these tendencies to 'innate' differences. On the other hand, analysing it in a wider social context acknowledges social expectations, models and discourses (Arnot 2003; Bernstein 2000; Butler 1990; Markström and Halldén 2008; Pereira 2012) and is consistent with the children's own verbalisations about their influences: slightly older pears – cousins or siblings –, parents and other caretakers (Buchbinder et al. 2006; Hjelmér 2020), or the media. Not only is play influenced and shaped by the mainstream discourses, but it also constructs differences: for instance, given their choices on play, girls tend to talk more, whereas boys tend to play in a more parallel manner. This means the choices for play are shaped, but also their outcomes: the differences are, thus, created, and attributed to 'innate predisposition' (Mussen et al. 1988; Schaffer 2004) – leading to 'regulatory fiction' (Butler 1990, 2004).

This social discourse manifests its influence when, in transitional moments, spontaneous games take place and children create teams according to gender – even if the game is individual.

[The class is headed to the canteen for snack time. Me and the assistant are in the corridor with the children.] [The assistant] counts them, saying who is 'out' of the game, physically going to the opposite wall. When it is just the boys, they notice and point it out, saying that boys won. M. shouts 'the boys, go boys, there's more boys'. [The assistant] steps in and says boys are not the best, because girls are stronger. He replies, saying boys have more muscle.

Fieldnote 6. Creation of a gender significance in a spontaneous game.

This spontaneity highlights the salience of the gender-binary for group membership, identity and social belonging – considering, as a mixed-age group, they were also constantly divided by age –, as Bem proposed (1974; Rodrigues 2003). They also resort to different *narratives for victory achievement*, with boys focusing on the idea that they are 'the strongest' – associating masculinity with strength, a common narrative for masculinities that allows for femininities to be constructed in opposition (Amâncio 2004).

Why is this particular group belonging so central to children's play? A single reason cannot be defined, but the processes through which it is constructed as such may be made explicit. Narratives and naming the concept seem to be very important to establish it, considering children, particularly younger ones, feel compelled to name their own, or other people's gender ['you're a girl'; '[the artist] is a boy']. This is in accordance with literature that highlights the importance of naming-practices in the child's self-concept construction (Kim and Lee 2011; Tualaulelei 2020). Not only does it contribute to a narrative of self, but it also permits categorisation (Mussen et al. 1988; Schaffer 2004). It creates an exercise, by applying the categories, in a way that children can confirm if the concept is being well learnt. This, in turn, allows Papalia and colleagues' 'gender identity' (2009) to appear a stable, *real* concept, passable to be acquired (Butler 1990, 2004).

Because of this construction of 'gender identity' as an essentialism, misgendering is considered an *insult*, and it produces shame and anger. It was observed to be used in this way, intending to degrade the other person.

1. [It's the Portuguese holiday of Carnival, and everyone, including teachers, assistants and interns, is dressed up in some way.]
2. M. and V. are 'messing' with [an intern], saying that she is 'ugly' and a 'boy', because she has a tie and a 'pipi' (a bowtie).

Fieldnote 7. Use of misgendering as an insult.

And while connection with the 'opposite gender' is shamed, 'other gender' pear rejection and association with 'same gender' children help maintain gender segregation (Schaffer 2004), upholding an apparent division in preferred play. As already stated, this rigidity towards gender reifies it as an essential attribute to 'each group' (Pereira 2012), highlighting group belonging (Rodrigues 2003).

Negotiating borders and building alternatives

The arbitrary lines that are put in place between roles and expressions considered appropriated for each gender can be seen as gender borders (Pereira 2012). *Marking and reinstating gender borders* is a dynamic that was observed to underline many daily

interactions – be them play, social exchanges, functional activities, etc. –, maintaining an apparent division 'between' genders (Butler 1990).

For instance, the choice of less gender-conforming toys is frequently barred. Some examples took place when a boy refused to borrow his model car to a girl; or when a 4-wheeler bike was available at the playground, but the boys kept passing it among them. Another very clear example is football – which takes place in a proper field, thus creating a restricted space with limited access.

[It's recess time in the exterior playground. Children come outside as they finish their snacks inside the canteen.] The girls are playing with D.'s [4-year-old boy] ball, until he wants it back. As he and other boys want to play, [the girls] are not included in the game. I suggest they all play, but they ignore it. The girls find another ball to play.

Fieldnote 8. Reinstating gender borders in shared play, creating a gender geography in the playground.

This apparent restriction occurs between older and younger boys (Pereira 2012), as well as towards girls. As Epstein (2001) puts it, this creates a 'gender geography' of the playground, creating physical boundaries that help reify gender as a divisive identity. There is also an implicit hierarchy of power, which is reinforced with gender borders reinstation (Payne and Smith 2012).

However, *space resignification* (Pereira 2012) is also a possibility for these children's exploratory efforts: for instance, a group of boys played house (which is a space highly linked to the 'feminine'), but used it as a campsite, saying they were there to 'steal food' and using the utensils to attack the 'intruder' (the investigator). Another group used the outdoor playhouse as a hideout for a pursuit 'make-believe', in which the telephone was a multipurpose weapon for different imagined 'powers'. Thus, the themes of pursuit, thrill and violence were added to the possibilities of usage of a highly 'feminised' space, merely linked to the domestic sphere – diversifying narratives and possibilities of use. But this is not mandatory for boys to be able to play in this space: it was common to find some of them playing mostly with the kitchen and food, but also assuming caretaking roles (with dolls or stuffed animals): feeding, changing diapers or carrying the playthings – although these roles were less common.

Exploration also involves the *reimagination of toys and play*, through the search of alternative uses for them. This may imply, however, a greater risk: in this example, a group of boys built a barricade with play furniture and the outside playhouse. Once it is built, they hide behind it and announce it's the 'boys' bus' and is restricted access ('no girls!') – thus, genderising the play (Butler 1990, 2004). This type of play, as well as other risky behaviours, tend to be preferred by boys – and particularly, more gender-conforming boys. Risky behaviour – defiant, transgressive and even aggressive (fighting, throwing objects, etc.) – is usually forbidden in this kindergarten, as is common in educational institutions (Richards 2011). This signifies it as a way of curbing obedience, creating a mystique of dissent around it (Galman 2015), as it allows children to regain control over the institutionalised context of preschool and adult authority (Arnot 2003; Markström and Halldén 2008). Girls seem to adhere less to these types of play, hence also being less labelled as 'badly behaved' – even though they also participate in competitive interaction and aggressive behaviour. The girls

who seem to be more involved in this behaviour tend to be seen as 'tomboys' (Coyle, Fulcher, and Trübutschek 2016).

Pereira (2012) also finds that gender borders can be faded to suit *desires or needs* but highlighted in other contexts.

> In the afternoon recess, *P.* shouts 'C. is a boy!'. I go to him […] and ask why. He shows me a little Spiderman figurine and laughs, repeating the line. The girls holding C.'s bag, containing her toys, don't find it funny. M. answers 'she has a brother!' […].

Fieldnote 9. Reinstating gender borders by regulating access to gender-normative toys.

By implying the toy belongs to the child's brother, M. appears to attempt to defend her friend, thus demonstrating the initial comment is intended as an attack to the child's femininity. However, this speech also legitimises the restriction of access to a sphere considered to be masculine. It naturalises toy segregation by gender – the girl who came to the other's defence verbalises just this later: 'it's normal [that they share very little toys], because her brother has boy's toys'. In another incident, a boy who is playing with dolls wearing pink dresses spontaneously points out, when the investigator first asks what they are playing, that 'the toys aren't [his]'. In this way, he exonerates himself from a transgressive property, and legitimises, once more, the restriction of access to such toys only via a 'legitimate group member' (Amâncio 2004).

As such, *gender non-conformity* was also evident during the observation: gender conforming appearances do not imply children will choose certain activities – everything is negotiable (Foucault [1979] 1984; Butler 2004; Pereira 2012). It was common to see girls playing and exploring the use of tires and legos or centring their make-believe themes around action stories or less expected professions (cops or spies). For instance, a girl dressed in pink, with a bowtie in her hair, plays by 'throwing stuff' while discussing football. She also plays with tires and action dolls, as well as cheerfully plays 'make-believe moms and dads' or exhibits her nail polish collection. Another girl sits on a tire, her skirt around her, and states 'I am a princess, and this is my kingdom'. It is not the *king's* kingdom, but her own: she imagines herself a princess with power, creating a role that suits her wants and desires without opposing them, but integrating them and negotiating her own agency (Markström and Halldén 2008; Pereira 2012).

That this non-conformity exists is observable, but not always regarded in the caretakers or even children's narratives (Pereira 2012). Playdough colour, for example, was initially negotiated, given that pink was the new colour. However, the apparent 'naturalness' of the pink-blue divide by 'gender' ended up being the main explanation used by the children when this sort of distribution happened. This erased other occurrences in which boys played with pink playdough and girls with the blue – 'because of their favourite football club'. Mussen and collaborators (1988) stated that gender non-conformity – using originally the concept of 'inconsistencies' – was devalued by children, in order to create a 'stable' categorisation of gender; Pereira (2012) goes further and adds that these categories are created as essential realities by discourses that erase both differences within genders and similarities between them. Non-conformity is then erased, in order to maintain a narrative of an illusory 'gender'.

The *erasure and invisibilisation of gender re/construction processes* thus lead to a belief that they are innate and teleological within development. A key moment for understanding children's perception of gender differences arises unexpectedly, when a book that children choose to explore in their free time shows a drawing of 'a boy and a girl'.

Children's explanations of these differences focus on the presumed correspondence between sex and gender ('he's a boy because he has a willie') and the erasure of atypical gender expressions that do not fit the norms.

1. [I am with two or three children in the library corner, one of them V., a 4-year-old boy. We are looking at a book that explains sex and supposed differences in the logic of sexual dimorphism. It has illustrations of 'women' and 'men'.]
2. V.: 'She's a girl because she has long hair.'
3. I: 'What about this one?'
4. V.: 'She's a woman.'
5. I: 'But she has short hair.'
6. V. shrugs.

Fieldnote 10. Identification of gender and ambiguous norms.

This demonstrates the operation of cisheteronormativity on children's conceptualisation of gender alongside with the ways through which they construct the very differences that lead to categorisation (Butler 1990; Warner 1991).

Conclusion

As described, several observations were made surrounding gender and its construction. The way gender intertwines with children's day-to-day life, and particularly play, can be subtle, if not invisible, to the untrained eye. As previously stated, the context intended to promote equality by allowing children to all wear the same bibs and use the same bathrooms. However, gender is not only interwoven into social fabric in such noticeable ways: it is in the subtle negotiations for toys, in the inconspicuous comments of others, in the insidious ways in which children are allowed to exist. As Bernstein states (1977), 'education cannot compensate for society' – or at least, for all its extent. Carina Hjelmér (2020) puts it perhaps more clearly: free choice does not necessarily equate with a complete lack of involvement from the adult or rely on individualism. Given how social norms seem to be strong and pervasive, resisting them is a collective process, in which the teacher should also take part.

Gender differences are often proposed as innate, stable and permanent – which also happened in this context. The same justification was applied to children who do not conform, in some way, to societal expectations. This idealisation of identity stability matches what is found in developmental literature: an essentialist description of development (Mussen et al. 1988; Schaffer 2004; Papalia, Olds, and Feldman 2009). This is the process through which differences are *naturalised*: they become essential truths; they are reified (Butler 1990). The processes that create those differences are, in turn, erased and invisibilised, making sure the outcomes corroborate the expected 'scripts' (Foucault [1979] 1984).

This work resorted to queer theory to question these essentialisms and observe the hidden and naturalised processes that allow gender to be constructed as an essential and stable dimension of identity and personality: the use of clothing and accessories as performative marks of gender; the role of beauty in constructing femininities; play and how it can both be shaped by social norms and shape outcomes; and the negotiation of gender borders. By observing children at such a young age, it was possible to analyse not only the first years of institutionalised socialisation – and thus, discourse –, but also the acquisition of the concept of gender' and how they first apply it to themselves and others. The processes mentioned above were, then, brought to light, exemplifying how children construct a 'suspect gender identity'.

The qualitative methodology, combining ethnography and grounded theory, allowed daily interactions and processes to arise on their own, then permitting to analyse the meanings constructed for them (Charmaz 2006). Located in the Portuguese context, this work contributed with a gender performative analysis focused on preschool aged children – allowing their own choices and performances, however normative or non-normative, to have visibility. Gender performative analysis is often critiqued as focusing on individual agency, rather than macrosocial issues (Pereira 2012; J. Anglin, personal communication, February 27, 2018). However, considering Judith Butler's work in *Undoing Gender* (2004), it also acknowledged how performances do not rely solely on self-will, but rather the complex interplay that takes place in context, considering social norms and its several agents (parents and primary caretakers, school staff, the children themselves …). Performances exist within and compose *performativity* – or what is given as *possible* or *livable* for these children (Butler 2004; Pereira 2012; Hjelmér 2020).

Another characteristic of this type of work is that the conclusions are not generalisable to other contexts, nor do they imply any form of causal explanation – they ponder processes that cannot be separated from the context in which they take place. Consequentially, it is suggested by this article's authors that other methodological approaches are considered in future investigations, allowing to explore quantitative analysis or causal relations. There is also a prevalent need for works that focus on macrosocial issues relating to gender within the Portuguese school space – a recommendation that Pereira (2012) highlights, mentioning Vale de Almeida's work. Analysing systematic influences on the students' expressions and experiences is important, not only focusing 'outside' influences, such as the media or transversal social discourses, but also the impact of the schooling institutions themselves and their configurations on students' narratives and constructions of their 'suspect identities'.

As this work observes, the discourses adopted by the caring adults, close peers, media outlets or cultural products, all frame a child's construction of the possibilities of existence (Bernstein 2000; Hjelmér 2020). Gender is then inscribed in their bodies, their behaviours, their forms of expression, as well as the spaces around them. It becomes a concept that both permeates and lays the foundation for their worlds, leaving scarce space for alternatives. Children develop, as Maria do Mar Pereira states, and as this work illustrates, 'a continued work of marking, protecting and negotiating symbolic and geographic gender frontiers' (2012, 112).

Nonetheless, and as exposed, daily life is also branded by social discourse based on cisheteronormativity, leading to a conceptual rigidity and a defined hierarchy regarding binary gender categories (Payne and Smith 2012; Coyle, Fulcher, and Trübutschek 2016). As Carina Hjelmér (2020) states, the schooling adults tend to view free choice as individual and possible only when they do not 'interfere', and differences as *natural*. However, transgressing or confronting social norms is difficult and complex, and perhaps too big of a responsibility for young children – as the author also mentions. As such the political, educational and pedagogical agendas cannot dismiss themselves from their part to achieve a school space that allows for the relativisation of these binary categories (Bernstein 1977; Rönnlund 2015). Caretakers and school staff can only promote equality when they *frame* children's play and activities (Bernstein 2000), which demands planning and adequate support from their institutions (Hjelmér 2020). These should assume more concrete and preventive actions, that

promote the needed competences for a healthy exploration of gender(s) that is integrated in this concrete social context.

In sum, this work proposes schools to not remain passive towards gender diversity – that is, the apparent non-reproduction of stereotypes, that are still reproduced in veiled forms –, but rather to conceive actions and interventions that allow children to explore and create their own genders, in their own terms, determining what is comfortable, defiant or expressive of their own experiences. Schools are being challenged not merely to prevent or combat gender inequalities, but to create and become safe, open spaces, with less and less vertical hierarchies (Rönnlund 2015), in which children can fully express themselves as they want and need to; above all, schools must allow and celebrate the infinite possibilities for children to express their human potential.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

ORCID

Sofia Brito http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1616-5286

References

Amâncio, Lígia, eds. 2004. *Aprender a ser homem: Construindo masculinidades*. Lisboa: Livros Horizonte.

Anderson, Shannon. 2014. *Navigating the Heteronormative Public Education System: Lesbian and Gay Educators' Experiences in Educational Leadership*. PhD diss., Arizona State University.

APA (American Psychiatric Association). 2013. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. 5th ed. Washington, DC: Author.

Araújo, Helena C. 2002. A Identidade do Centro de Investigação e Intervenção Educativas Através da Linha de Género e Educação numa Perspectiva Pluridisciplinar [The Centre for Research and Intervention in Education's Identity Through the Gender and Education Line in a Pluridisciplinar Perspective]. Porto: CIIE: policopiado.

Arnot, Madeleine. 2000. "Gender Relations and Schooling in the New Century: Conflicts and Challenges." *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* 30 (3): 293–302. doi:10.1080/713657472.

Arnot, Madeleine. 2003. Gender and Education for All: The Leap to Equality Gender, Education and Citizenship. Paper commissioned for the *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2003/4, The Leap to Equality*.

Bem, Sandra L. 1974. "The Measurement of Psychological Androgyny." *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 42 (2): 155–162. doi:10.1037/h0036215.

Bernstein, Basil. 1977. "Education Cannot Compensate for Society." In *Vol. 2 of Sociologia da Educação: A construção das práticas educativas* [Sociology of Education: The Construction of Educational Practices], edited by S. Stoer, and S. Grácio, 19–31. Lisboa: Horizonte.

Bernstein, Basil. 2000. *Pedagogy, Symbolic Control, and Identity*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

Bryant, Antony, and Katherine Charmaz. 2012. "Grounded Theory and Psychological Research." In *APA Handbook of Research Methods in Psychology: Vol. 2. Research Designs*, edited by H. Cooper, 39–56. doi:10.1037/13620-003.

Buchbinder, Mara, Jeffrey Longhofer, Barrett Thomas, Peter Lawson, and Jerry Floersch. 2006. "Ethnographic Approaches to Child Care Research: A Review of the Literature." *Journal of Early Childhood Research* 4 (1): 45–63. doi:10.1177/1476718X06059789.

Butler, Judith. 1990. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. London: Routledge.
Butler, Judith. 2004. *Undoing Gender*. London: Routledge.
Charmaz, Katherine. 2006. *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis*. Wiltshire: SAGE.
Coyle, Emily F., Megan Fulcher, and Darinka Trübutschek. 2016. "Sissies, Mama's Boys, and Tomboys: Is Children's Gender Nonconformity More Acceptable When Nonconforming Traits are Positive?" *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 4: 1827–1838. doi:10.1007/s10508-016-0695-5.
Dahlke, Sherry, Wendy Hall, and Alison Phinney. 2015. "Maximizing Theorical Contributions of Participant Observation While Managing Challenges." *Qualitative Health Research* 25 (8): 1–6. doi:10.1177/1049732325578636.
Ehrensaft, Diane. 2011. *Gender Born, Gender Made: Raising Healthy Gender Nonconforming Children*. New York, NY: Experiment LLC.
Ehrensaft, Diane, and Norman Spack. 2016. *The Gender Creative Child: Pathways for Nurturing and Supporting Children Who Live Outside Gender Boxes*. New York, NY: Workman.
Epstein, Debbie. 2001. "'Boyz' Own Stories: Masculinities and Sexualities in Schools." In *What About the Boys? Issues of Masculinity in Schools*, edited by W. Martino and B. Meyenn, 113–128. Buckingham: Open University Press.
Fausto-Sterling, Anne. 2000. *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
Ferreira, Manuela. 2002. "O Trabalho de Fronteira nas Relações entre Géneros em Espaços de 'Brincar ao Faz-de-Conta'." *Ex-aequo* 7: 113–128.
Ferreira, Manuela. 2004. *"A gente gosta é de brincar com os outros meninos!": As relações sociais entre crianças num Jardim de Infância* ["What we Like is to Play with the Other Children!": Social Relations between Children in a Kindergarten]. Porto: Edições Afrontamento. ISBN 972-36-0740-9.
Foucault, Michel. [1979] 1984. *Microfísica do Poder [Power Microphysics]*. 4th ed. Translated by R. Machado. Rio de Janeiro: Edições Graal.
Galman, Sally C. 2015. "Mischief-making of One Kind/and Another: Unruliness and Resistance in Rural Preschoolers' Free Play." *Ethnography and Education* 10 (3): 310–324. doi:10.1080/17457823.2015.1050684.
Green, Fiona J., and May Friedman2015. *Buscando el final del arcoíris: Una exploración de las prácticas de crianza desde la fluidez de género* [Chasing Rainbows: Exploring Gender Fluid Parenting Practices]. Barcelona: Edicions Bellaterra.
Halberstam, Jack. 2005. *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*. New York: University Press.
Halim, May L. 2016. "Princesses and Superheroes: Social-Cognitive Influences on Early Gender Rigidity." *Child Development Perspectives* 10 (13): 155–160. doi:10.1111/cdep.12176.
Hjelmér, Carina. 2020. "Free Play, Free Choices? – Influence and Construction of Gender in Preschools in Different Local Contexts." *Education Inquiry* 11 (2): 144–158. doi:10.1080/20004508.2020.1724585.
Jeppesen, Sandra. 2016. "Heteronormativity." In *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Lgbtq Studies*, edited by A. Goldberg, 493–496. doi:10.4135/9781483371283.n183.
Kim, Jinhee, and Kyunghwa Lee. 2011. ""What's Your Name?": Names, Naming Practices, and Contextualized Selves of Young Korean American Children." *Journal of Research in Childhood Education* 25 (3): 211–227. doi:10.1080/02568543.2011.579854.
Markström, Anne-Marie, and Gunilla Halldén. 2008. "Children's Strategies for Agency in Preschool." *Children & Society* 23 (2): 112–122. doi:10.1111/j.1099-0860.2008.00161.x.
Menzies, Fiona G., and Ninetta Santoro. 2018. "'Doing' Gender in a Rural Scottish Secondary School: an Ethnographic Study of Classroom Interaction." *Ethnography and Education* 13 (4): 428–441. doi:10.1080/17457823.2017.1351386.
Mills, David, and Missy Morton. 2013. *Ethnography in Education*. New York, NY: SAGE.
Moore, Fiona. 2005. One of the Gals who's one of the Guys: Men, Masculinity and Drag. Alison Shaw. Oxford: Berg.

Mussen, Paul H., John J. Conger, Jerome Kagan, and Aletha C. Huston. 1988. *Desenvolvimento e personalidade da criança* [Development and Child Personality]. 2nd ed. São Paulo: Editora HARBRA.

Oliveira, João M., Carlos G. Costa, and Nuno S. Carneiro. 2014. "Problematizando a Humanidade: para uma psicologia crítica feminista queer [Problematizing Humanity: Towards a Critical Queer Feminist Psychology]." *Annual Review of Critical Psychology* 11: 59–77. https://discourseunit.com/annual-review/11-2014/.

Oliveira, João M., and Conceição Nogueira. 2009. "Introdução: um lugar feminista queer e o prazer da confusão de fronteiras." Ex aequo 20: 9–12.

Papalia, Diane E., Sally W. Olds, and Ruth D. Feldman. 2009. *O mundo da criança – da infância à adolescência* [The World of the Child – from Childhood to Adolescence]. 11th ed. São Paulo: McGraw-Hill Interamericana do Brasil.

Payne, Elizabethe, and Melissa Smith. 2012. "Rethinking Safe Schools Approaches for LGBTQ Students: Changing the Questions We Ask." *Multicultural Perspectives* 14 (4): 187–193. doi:10.1080/15210960.2012.725293.

Pereira, Maria do Mar. 2012. *Fazendo género no recreio: A negociação do género no espaço escolar* [Doing Gender in the Playground: Gender negotiation in the school space]. Lisboa: Imprensa de Ciências Sociais.

Pinto, Marcelo R. 2014. "Articulando a etnografia e a grounded theory na pesquisa do consumidor [Articulating Ethnography and Grounded Theory in Consumer's Research]." *Revista Eletrônica de Administração* 78 (2): 397–424. doi:10.1590/1413-2311023201342135.

Richards, Christopher. 2011. "In the Thick of It: Interpreting Children's Play." *Ethnography and Education* 6 (3): 309–324.

Rodrigues, Paula. 2003. *Questões de género na infância: Marcas da identidade*. Lisboa: Instituto Piaget.

Rönnlund, Maria. 2015. "Schoolyard Stories: Processes of Gender Identity in a 'Children's Place'." *Childhood* 22 (1): 85–100. doi:10.1177/0907568213512693.

Schaffer, Rudolph. 2004. *Introducing Child Psychology*. Cornwall: Blackwell.

Tualaulelei, Eseta. 2020. "Agency and Power in Classroom Names and Naming Practices." *Ethnography and Education*, 1–13. doi:10.1080/17457823.2020.1716262.

Warner, Michael. 1991. "Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory." *Social Text* 29: 3–17.

Whitehead, Tony L. 2005. Basic Classical Ethnographic Research Methods: Secondary Data Analysis, Fieldwork, Observation/Participant Observation, and Informal and Semi-structured Interviewing. *EICCARS Working Paper*. University of Maryland, CuSAG.