(No) Touching Discourse in Indian PE

A study on the physical interactions between PE teachers and their students in the Indian state of Kerala

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Abstract
This study was conducted in the Indian state Kerala, among 15 physical education (PE) teachers. The aim of this study was to investigate intergenerational touch in the daily work of Indian PE teachers, and more precisely whether or not the teachers thought intergenerational touch was an issue and what their views on this subject were. The data was generated through semi-structured interviews with teachers from Keralan primary, secondary and upper-secondary schools. Collected data was analysed by using Michel Foucault’s theoretical concepts of discourse, power/knowledge, bio-power, governmentality, normalisation and panopticism. The study identifies a number of different discourses, in which physical interaction emerged as a dilemma for Indian PE teachers. Two of the most distinct ones were, what we refer to as, the “no touch”- and “risk”-discourses. Based on the findings of this study we conclude that the gender of the PE teacher plays a crucial role in whether a teacher choose to physically interact with their students or not. Societal norms have a great influence on PE teachers’ actions concerning intergenerational touch, which in this context cohere around no touch.

Key words: Physical Education, intergenerational touch, physical interaction, no touch, Foucault, discourse, moral panic, gender, Kerala, India
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Tack!

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1. Introduction
This study explores the social norms regarding intergenerational touching as part of the PE subject in a developing country, namely India. Touch is, in most sports, a central part of coaching. This is also the case in Physical Education (PE) where bodies are in movement and interacting with each other. Hence, instructing and correcting body movements are related to touch. In western sports culture, this has been considered a natural part of coaching and teaching. However, over the last couple of decades, touch has become a heavily debated topic because of the increasing attention on incidents of sexual abuse in sport related contexts. The sexualisation of touch has created a dilemma for coaches and teachers – it has become risky business to touch (Fletcher, 2013; Öhman, 2016; Öhman & Grundberg-Sandell, 2015).

In school settings, touch is a matter of physical interaction between teacher(s) and student(s). As such, it is more specifically a matter of intergenerational touch. In PE lessons, touch is often used to instruct or to correct students’ movements, but also to encourage students, to get them to pay attention or to comfort them (Quennerstedt & Öhman, 2015). It could be anything from a high-five, spotting in gymnastics to first aid. As this study takes place solely in a school setting, the concepts of physical interaction, touch, intergenerational touch and physical contact are hence used as largely synonymous. The study investigates how the dilemma regarding intergenerational touch is affecting the PE teachers’ working practice. On a similar note, “culture” and “society” will also be treated as overlapping concepts.

There is an ongoing debate in western countries, such as the UK, Australia and Sweden on whether to physically interact with the students or not (Fletcher, 2013; Scott, 2012; Öhman & Grundberg-Sandell, 2015). As a result of the debate, policy documents have been written with the aim to protect children from harm, and to guide adults working with children on how to (not) touch. However, current literature tends to focus solely on western contexts, and therefore risks to exclude the developing world from this discussion. That is why this study set out to examine these issues in a developing country, India.

Only in recent years has PE become a compulsory subject in India. There is an existing syllabus for PE, but since it is not fully implemented in all schools there is no guide on how to assess and grade students. Because of this, PE in India has a diverse tradition on what and how to teach PE. The degree to which physical interaction is considered a necessity for the subject therefore varies. Our focus is on the issue of (no) “touching” in Indian PE, and
more specifically in the state of Kerala, and how this is perceived by the PE teachers. By addressing this issue, we hope to contribute with new insights and knowledge on the matter of intergenerational touch that can inform PE practices both in western and non-western contexts.

1.1 Aim and research questions

The aim of our study is to examine if and how wider concerns around abuse and child protection that circulate in society influence teachers’ professional work in Indian school PE. More specifically, the focus of this study will be to provide an understanding of how discourses of (no) touch are interpreted and enacted in PE practice. The study is guided by the following research questions:

- What are the discourses related to (no) touch in Kerala school PE?
- How are the PE teachers influenced by these discourses in their teaching practice?
2. Background

This chapter will start with an introduction of India. It will later on discuss the general education and school system in India, and further the importance of Physical Education in the state of Kerala. The final sub-category is concerning child rights and a common punishment in Indian school.

2.1 The culture and living conditions in India

India was a British colony from the 1700’ and gained independence year 1947 (Rhines Cheney, Brown Ruzzi & Muralidharan, 2006). The country is the largest democracy in the world and it is regulated as a federal system of 28 states (Mukundan & Bray, 2004). The study of intergenerational touch has as mentioned above only been conducted in industrialised countries and western contexts. This study will therefore focus on a poor and developing country - India. India differs from a western country, not only economically but also culturally and religiously.

It is a large gap between the rich and the poor in India. For example one clear gap is that 71 percent of the rural households do not have a toilet facility (Parikh, Parikh, & Laxmi, 2005). Another evident gap is health care, where there is no solution for the poor to get access to medical aid (Parikh & Radhakrishna, 2005). A cause for medical aid among the poor is the unclean and contaminated drinking water. According to Parikh, Parikh, & Laxmi (2005) the source of drinking water for 76 percent of the population is tanks, wells, ponds, canals, rivers, lakes et cetera. India also has a high percentage of malnourished children. The malnutrition for children under the age of four years is 53.4 percent, and the stunted children among poor in rural areas are 57.1 percent and 49.6 percent in urban areas (Rahandkrishna & Ray, 2005).

All major world religions are represented in India, but the vast majority of the population, approximately 80 percent associate themselves with Hinduism (Landguiden, 2014). Society’s perceptions of men and women differ much in social norms in many parts of India, there are norms set for women as feminine behaviour, such as taking care of the household, or mobility outward, women could go to school or workplace by themselves but not elsewhere. It is also not common for women to choose their own partner in marriage (Mukhopadhyay, 2003).
2.2 Education and school system in India

Rhines Cheney, Brown Ruzzi and Muralidharan (2005) point out the fact that India has the second largest education system in the world, after China. Nevertheless, the illiteracy among the population is significantly high, not to mention the gap between male and female illiteracy. Males’ illiteracy is 25 percent and 46 percent for females, though the amount of illiterate differs depending on state. The state of Kerala has only 10 percent of illiteracy, while the state of Bihar has 61 percent.

Children between six and fourteen years old have a mandatory school attendance. According to Rhines Cheney, Brown Ruzzi and Muralidharan (2005) the focus has been on having a compulsory school attendance than rather on the quality of students learning. However, it is estimated that only 70 percent of children between the age of six and fourteen that actually attend school. Further, a great number of students making it through middle school and continue to higher education are from either a high-level caste or middle/upper class family (Rhines Cheney, Brown Ruzzi & Muralidharan, 2006).

Schools in India are divided into three categories: government schools, private schools with financial aid from the government and private schools without any external aid. Government schools are managed by the government of each state. Attending a government school or private school with government aid is free for all students, while the unaided schools collect admission fees from the students’ families. All schools follow one out of three possible curricula: State, Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) and Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (ICSE) (General Education Department, Govt. of Kerala, 2014; Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations, 2016; Central Board of Secondary Education, 2016). Government schools and privately funded schools must follow the working curriculum, while the privately (non-government aided) schools may choose from any of the three curricula above.

According to The Rights of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 attending school from the age of six to the age of fourteen years is compulsory in all of India (Ministry of law and justice, 2009). After the compulsory years of schooling, additional standards can be attended which gives students eligibility for college/university studies.

As mentioned earlier, India used to be a British colony, which explains why the country follows the British school structure. Primary school consists of children from the age of six to eight and grades 1-5, and middle school children are between the age of eleven and fourteen in grades 6-8 (Rhines Cheney, Brown Ruzzi & Muralidharan, 2006). The school
system in the state Kerala does not follow the exact same school structure as other states in India. According to Mukundan and Bray (2004) the structure differs in the sense that the compulsory years are divided into three levels called “standards”, lower primary consists of I – IV standards, upper primary are V – VII standards and VIII – X standards are lower secondary. This study, will focus on the state of Kerala and their syllabus. When state or government school is mentioned, Kerala is the state referred to.

2.3 Syllabus for physical education
In order to obtain an understanding of the Indian school system in general, this study requires an understanding of the context in which the PE teachers are active, we consulted individuals with expert knowledge about the area since few official documents exist. Mainly one expert, Arun, (pseudonym) was consulted for this purpose. Arun had many years of experience as a government employed PE-teacher and who was also involved in developing the Kerala state curriculum for Health and Physical Education. The official documents regarding PE do not specify how long PE has been a mandatory subject; such information was provided by experts.

The Kerala state PE syllabus has existed for merely three years (Arun, 2016). In some schools, PE is not even offered due to a lack of qualified teachers. Therefore, the syllabus has not yet been implemented in all government schools. Another reason why the syllabus has not yet been fully implemented is that the subject is not as highly prioritised as the more theoretical subjects, such as Mathematics and Science.

The low priority of PE among the school subjects could be explained by the fact that the students are not assessed and graded in PE. “The parents won’t say it is important if you say so. But if you give marks then they will think it is important” (Arun, 2016). A grading system for PE has been introduced but it is still used in an experimental way. In many cases PE is mainly used as a way of identifying students with excellent skills in different sports, rather than giving all students broad knowledge of health and physical activities.

The states in India are not obligated to follow the national syllabus, and according to Rhines Cheney, Brown Ruzzi & Muralidharan (2006) the National Council of Educational Research and Training developed a state’s syllabus. CBSE and ICSE schools follow the national syllabus for PE. Both the national syllabus and Kerala state syllabus focus on the students’ skills in different games, and have specified what each standard should involve.
For the Kerala state syllabus, a textbook for each standard is given, where teachers and students are informed about what the PE lessons should cover (State Council of Educational Research and Training, 2016a). All schools who follow the state syllabus in Kerala are given the same textbooks, these books include both a practical and theoretical basis. In addition to the textbooks, teachers are given a “teacher’s handbook” for each standard. The handbook is an extra support for the teacher, and clarifies further what should be taught during PE (State Council of Educational Research and Training, 2016b; Arun, 2016).

2.4 Child rights

Beside the syllabus, there are other documents that teachers in Kerala need to abide to in their teaching practice. There are policy documents to protect children in schools but no specific documents that regulate how PE-teachers should act in their profession. The documents that exist focus on creating a safe environment for all children in schools. Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights (DCPCR) states that: “As part of the framework for child protection, each institution shall have a standard and uniform Child Protection Policy applicable to all persons employed by the institution as well as those who visit the institution from time to time. This policy shall take a child rights based approach” (2014, p.21). Furthermore, the commission states that “The policies should ensure that all persons are committed to the prevention of child abuse” (DDPCR, 2014, p.21).

A study by the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) shows that, corporal punishment in Indian schools is still very common. “Physical abuse in schools, also referred to as ‘Corporal punishment’, is the deliberate infliction of pain intended to change a person's behaviour or to punish him/her” (MWCD, 2007, p.51). However, as the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) states, there is no law that specifies what corporal punishment actually involves. There are also other rules that state children’s right to safety in schools, such as the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, (Ministry of law and justice, 2009) which prohibits both physical punishment and mental harassment. However, research carried out by MWCD’s (2007) shows that 57.48 percent of children in Kerala answered that they have experienced corporal punishment in schools.
3. Previous research

This chapter reviews previous research on intergenerational touch in sports and PE. The review (mainly) focuses on western countries, since no research on the subject has been conducted in India. Previous research on the subject has put much emphasis on the dilemma that PE teachers are facing as a result of the growing no touch discourse. No touch discourse has affected the way PE teachers and coaches operate since touch often tend to be viewed in sexual terms than rather in a way of supporting students in their practice. A moral panic seems to have spread among PE teachers worldwide, this has further led to a no touch zone in the school subject of PE, and teachers are at risk of being accused or misunderstood if touching a student.

3.1 (No) touch

In the context of sports and physical education, physical interactions are usually necessary for the very activity to take place. Sports can be understood as a context where touch is essential for both coaches as well as the sportsmen and sports-women (or in this case both the teachers and students). The attitude towards touch has become more complicated due to incidents of sexual abuse (Johansson, 2012). Garratt, Piper and Taylor (2013) shed light on cases where active sportspersons later have revealed that their previous coach(es) had abused them sexually. Öhman and Grundberg-Sandell (2015) similarly discuss cases where such incidents have occurred. Johansson (2012) reports that 26 of the 477 participants in her study, answered that they had been sexually harassed or assaulted. Two out of the 26 participants were under the age of 12 when the assault occurred, eight of them were at the age between 13 and 17. As a result of incidents like the ones mentioned above, different Child protection policies have been developed.

A number of studies suggest that PE teachers are becoming increasingly cautious when touching students (Piper, Garratt & Taylor, 2012; Fletcher, 2013; Scott, 2013; Öhman & Quennerstedt, 2015; Öhman, 2016 and Öhman & Grundberg-Sandell, 2015). This leads to a discussion of reduced trust to professionals (Piper, Taylor & Garratt, 2012; Piper, Powell & Smith, 2006). Coaches and teachers feel that they are not trusted to be alone with young people. Furthermore, Piper, Taylor & Garratt (2012) are questioning the fact that it is only those working with children and young adults are in focus and assumed to act of immorality.
As pointed out by Öhman and Quennerstedt (2015) and Scott (2013) physical touch is more central in some sports than others. For example, in spotting in gymnastics, a hands-on touch is crucial in order to prevent injuries, whilst other sports are manageable without the hands-on touch (Scott, 2013). In order to physically interact with children, trust is required, which Andrzejewski and Davis (2007) emphasise. Building trust between teachers and children is important for the learning environment.

Some researchers suggest teachers may view child protection policy more as a rule than a guideline and therefore tend to avoid any form of physical contact with their students (Fletcher, 2013). According to Piper, Garratt and Taylor (2012), society focuses on bad things and what is considered not appropriate rather than on the good things. Fletcher explains this in the following way: “A situation that would previously have gone unquestioned is now overtly (de)legitimised by discursive and practical intervention, the intensity of which implies that intergenerational abuse is an expectation rather than an exception” (Fletcher, 2013:701). As a result, teachers in schools have even been reluctant in providing first aid to students in fear of overstepping the “rules” of intergenerational touch (Fletcher, 2013).

3.2 Moral panic

One issue that is evident from previous research is the presence of what many researchers refer to as a kind of moral panic (Fletcher, 2013; Öhman, 2016; Öhman & Grundberg-Sandell, 2015). More particularly, this is a moral panic over sexual harm to children (Scott, 2013). Piper, Garratt and Taylor (2013) describe the consequences of moral panic as follows:

In the present case, the experience of many sports coaches and PE teachers, and the way in which their activities have been affected, suggests that the effects of this moral panic on a risk averse society have been particularly intense. (592)

In accordance with Öhman and Grundberg-Sandell (2015), this moral panic has appeared for several reasons, one being the policy documents regulating how to (not) touch children. Andersson, Öhman and Garrison (2016) describe teaching as a caring profession, but there is a paradox in this profession, whether to touch students and compromise their own safety or follow the rules and compromise the students’ safety. The growing fear of being reported results in a change of PE teacher’s daily conduct (Fletcher, 2013). In order to “protect”
themselves, teachers avoid problematic situations rather than facing them (Fletcher, 2013; Öhman, 2016; Öhman & Grundberg-Sandell, 2015). Öhman (2016) shows that teachers are cautious, especially males teachers, when passing changing rooms, some teachers even say they would rather let students fight each other unsupervised than entering the dressing room. Similar findings have been reported by Scott (2013), who emphasises that male teachers are discouraged from touching students. Why moral panic is affecting male teachers more than female teachers is explained by Piper, Powell and Smith (2006), who state that males who choose to work with children are often assumed to be perpetrators by the public.

Öhman and Quennerstedt (2015) point out a second aspect of the no touch problem, some PE teachers tend to avoid (touchy) situations, because they fear how the touching will be perceived by students and peers. Similar aspects are described by Fletcher who states that society often has suspicious attitudes towards teachers (and other personnel who work with children), the teachers are “[…] consistently required to justify their intentions and legitimate themselves” (Fletcher, 2016: 698). Moral panic can be interpreted as a consequence of no touch discourse, where teachers are vulnerable and exposed to false allegations (Piper, Taylor & Garratt, 2012). Researches above show that moral panic is an existing issue, but it affects male teachers more than female teachers. Therefore, male teachers feel that they have to be more cautious when physically interacting with the students (Öhman, 2016).

3.3 Child protection

There are many documents for both teachers and coaches about how and when touching should (and should not) occur. Öhman and Quennerstedt (2015: 1) state that; “[a] child protection discourse has been recognised in many countries[…].” Scott (2013) similarly mentions different sport organizations where guidelines regarding physical interaction are stated. For example; The New South Wales Department of Education and Trainings requires teachers to explicitly ask for permission before touching students. An important document in the UK that provides guidelines and training programs on preventing young adults and child abuse is the Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU) referred to by Garratt, Piper and Taylor (2013). These authors express that “[…] such a high profile and tightly focused approach can risk obscuring and diminishing the problem […]” (the problem being the large number of physical abuse) (Piper, Garratt & Taylor, 2013:585). Öhman and Quennerstedt (2015) state, that the Child Protection Tool Kit promotes a no touch policy. The tool kit further proclaims
that when physical contact is unavoidable there should always be another adult present.

Öhman and Quennerstedt (2015) critically discuss how the documents have affected the teachers’ approach regarding touching students. They claim that touch is, “[...] a natural way of communicating [...] and a beneficial learning environment for PE [...]” (Öhman & Quennerstedt, 2015:10). But on the other hand, if a teacher cares too much for the students the teacher may fail to care for him/herself, and if the teacher cares too much for him/herself, he/she may fail as teacher (Andersson, Öhman and Garrison, 2016). Öhman and Quennerstedt (2015) argue that even though the child rights documents are supposed to protect children, some parts of it may even have the opposite effect. For example, the right to education risks being lost when touching is prohibited in PE, since all children should have the right to grow into their full potential.

According to Garratt, Piper and Taylor (2013), existing documents that are developed to protect children also risk becoming problematic for teachers. As Scott (2013) claims, these documents may lead to an increasingly suspicious attitude towards teachers, among the public, which has led to anxiety and confusion among personnel in school environment, and not least PE teachers (Garratt, Piper & Taylor, 2013; Scott, 2013).

3.4 Strategies

As a result of the “no touch” situation and moral panic in PE, many teachers have created different sets of strategies to avoid any misinterpretations among the students or other teachers when touching a student (Öhman, 2016). An interview study by Öhman (2016) showed that some teachers’ strategy was to always choose a student of same gender when demonstrating a certain skill or exercise. Teachers describe how they clench their fist when touching a student (Öhman, 2016), with the explanation that this could never be misinterpreted for a caress. Some teachers use humour to desexualise physical interaction with students, while others try to not make a “big deal” of touch, in order to make it as natural as possible.

Seeking for permission before touching a student is a strategy that is recommended by the Australian Sport Commission (Scott, 2013). Öhman explains that “[b]oth female and male teachers, regardless of their teaching experience, think that it is important to tell students that they will touch them in some of the activities and often do this before or at the beginning of a lesson, so that they have witnesses and the students’ permission” (Öhman, 2016:9). Öhman’s research also showed that when teachers need to use
touch for demonstration, they often picked the student with least revealing clothes. Öhman (2016) concludes that there are reasons to be concerned by the fact that physical interaction often becomes a matter of sexuality and that touch is seen in sexual terms.
4. Theoretical framework

Several previous studies concerning physical touch between children and adults in educational settings are inspired by Foucault’s work on dominating discourses, power relations, governmentality and panopticism (Piper, Garratt & Taylor, 2013; Fletcher, 2013; Öhman, 2016). While there are other theoretical points of departure such as children’s rights perspective (Öhman & Quennerstedt, 2015) and discussion about the paradox of caring (Andersson, Öhman & Garrison, 2016), the Foucauldian approach is used in a majority of previous studies.

Like most of the previous literature on touch in educational setting, the theoretical approach of this study draws on the conceptual framework developed by Foucault (Foucault, 1972; 1978; 1980; 1991). Through Foucault’s theoretical lens, power/knowledge and governmentality are at large extend viewed as communicative practices. By using Foucault’s theories to identify various discourses in the PE teachers’ responses, we are able to interpret and analyse the data accordingly. The data in this study is analysed and discussed in relation to the Foucauldian concepts: discourse; power/knowledge; governmentality and bio-power; normalisation and panopticism.

4.1 Discourses

Foucault’s body of theory allows for critical reflection on the connection between dominating discourses and the production of realities, especially in terms of asking what types of actions that are promoted/sanctioned by these realities. That is, a way of approaching the socio-political consequences of the discourses under analysis. This study focuses on the discourses that govern bodies, physical communication, and power among teachers in PE. Discourse is understood as language usage that not only describes but also constitutes reality (Foucault, 1972). It is not only how and when words are used that is of importance. The use of language also has to do with when words are not used. Foucault explains this in the following way:

"The manifest discourse, therefore, is really no more than the repressive presence of what it does not say; and this 'not-said' is a hollow that undermines from within all that is said" (1972:25). Since it is difficult to analyse the language that is not used, this study will only focus and analyse what is actually said. For the particular aim of this study, discourse analysis (see section on Data Analysis below) is used to identify social rules and structures that might affect PE-teachers’ daily conduct.
In accordance with Foucault (1972), discourses are social, cultural and historical rules and structures that become visible through language. Language is seen as a collective way of structuring and constituting reality, rather than merely reflecting reality itself (Foucault, 1972). Furthermore, Foucault claims that language always structures our way of thinking about things. One may not even be conscious of how discourses limits one’s thinking and acting. Statements and rules that affect an understanding and language around a certain subject are also what one might call a discourse. Through the language and statements regarding a specific topic, one can expose what is acceptable and what is not in a given setting.

Discourses create both opportunities and restrictions for people’s actions (Foucault, 1972). This theory is vital to be able to discover different patterns in the interviews is this theory therefore vital to our study. By detecting different patterns in the participants’ answers and later analysing how different language is and is not used, we can identify discourses. The social relations and hidden rules that govern a community are sometimes difficult to identify for those active within it. An outsider learning the culture is often in a better position to identify truths taken for granted or preconceptions governing a community.

4.2 Power/knowledge

By using Foucault’s theory of power and knowledge (1980) to analyse people's actions, it is possible for us to see how people in a society are “schooled” into specific discourses and why people act in certain ways. From a Foucauldian perspective, power is considered as a relationship between humans and not as something that can be “possessed”. “In reality, power means relations, a more-or-less organised, hierarchical, co-ordinated cluster of relations.” (Foucault, 1980: 198). Power is not only related to class, or in India's case; cast, power is also to be seen as a relation between society and the knowledge. As mentioned earlier, this study will focus on detecting different discourses and analyse how these discourses affect PE teachers in their teaching practice. The concepts of power and knowledge are important to this study, in order to understand the different discourses on intergenerational touch in Kerala.

According to Foucault (1980) power and knowledge is always co-existing, in other words, one cannot exist without the other. Within power lies the image of reality which a society believes to be the truth. The truth is for a society a knowledge to live by. Knowledge is limited by power, since power gives us a knowledge of what is true. Knowledge in turn, affects the power systems by creating “truths” about the society. At the same time, power
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affects the view on knowledge, and truth and knowledge create discourses. Foucault describes
the relation between knowledge and discourse in the following way: “Knowledge is that of
which one can speak in a discursive practice, and which is specified by that fact: the domain
constituted that the different objects that will or will not acquire scientific status[...]

(Foucault, 1972:182). One kind of power relation that Foucault (1978) describes is the power
over bodies, which he terms bio-power.

4.3 Governmentality and bio-power

One technique of control and power is to make sure that those who are controlled want to
follow the rules, Foucault (1991) calls this ‘governmentality’. By ensuring that people feel
that they are responsible for their own actions and behaviour (and health), they will want to
contribute to a better society (Gerdin, 2014). This technique of social control is also discussed
by Fletcher (2013), who understands governmentality as “[...] subtly exercised by dominant
societal elements under the auspices of the modern operation of power” (699). Nobody wants
to stand out in a negative sense or act outside the norms, since that is considered as something
bad. Norms in a society are important to follow for people living in it, no one wants to act
against the norms. Drawing on Öhman (2016), this study uses the concept of governmentality
to understand how it shapes the actions of PE teachers, since they want to act in obedience to
what is considered right by society.

Governmentality is often used to understand control on a societal level, but the
managing of bodies of the population, for example to control the births, death, reproduction,
and illnesses of a population, Foucault calls bio-power (1978). In this study, bio-power
mainly focuses on PE-teachers’ actions of their bodies, why they act the way that they do in
relation to intergenerational touch. To further interpret our findings, we examine how the PE-
teachers’ actions (and language) can be understood in relation to power that controls their
bodies, bio-power.

Bio-power is a technology of power that manages people as a large group. “[...] an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugations of bodies and
the control of populations.” (Foucault, 1978:140). Furthermore, the body is seen as a
productive tool that should be disciplined and useful for a society. Bio-power can also be
constructed by norms and traditions within a society. Norms arise in a society as a
consequence of dominating discourse and/or how a norm in society create what can be
identified as a discourse. By using the concept of bio-power in relation to discourses in a
society, it is our intention to further understand how the norms of society affect power and knowledge in society. These norms and traditions are created through what Foucault (1980) calls “normalisation”.

4.4 Normalisation

Normalisation is a term that Foucault (1980) uses to describe how societal norms are created:

And I believe that in our own times power is exercised simultaneously through this right and these techniques and that these techniques and these discourses, to which the disciplines give rise invade the area of right so that the procedures of normalisation come to be ever more constantly engaged in the colonisation of those of law. (107)

In other words, when a society creates the settings for what is normal, it also determines what is deviant. Normalisation is an effective power tool, since it rewards and punishes individuals when they conform to, or deviate from, the ideal. To live by the ideal is to follow rules and regulations and in this case, norms of society. Punishment from the Indian school perspective in this study can example be, a teacher is reported or misinterpreted by students of immoral touch. This is according to Foucault the effectiveness of normalisation, due to the fact that it exerts maximum social control with minimum force (Taylor, 2009).

By using the concept of normalisation in this study, it is possible to further understand the PE-teachers’ view on what is the accepted way of acting as a teacher. This can lead to a better understanding of why certain discourses exist and how they operate, since norms and traditions from society tend to play an important role in creating discourses (Taylor, 2009). The norms that this study will take into account are the norms regarding touching in PE-lessons as well as the norms in society, moreover how these two are influenced by each other. Another effective instrument that is used upon society without force is the power of surveillance, and how citizens tend to follow the rules if they believe that they are being watched. This is described by Foucault (1995) as panopticism and will be presented below.
4.5 Panopticism

For this study, the concept of panopticism is used to further understand what causes the teachers to act in certain ways. Panopticism is, as defined by Foucault (1995), a mechanism of surveillance. It is not a matter of being monitored, it only has to be perceived as surveillance by the population. By constructing an environment where the citizens believe that they are under surveillance, citizens will be compelled to act “properly”. “The Panopticon is a marvellous machine which, whatever use one may wish to put it to, produces homogeneous effects of power.” (Foucault, 1995: 202). Since the citizens do not know whether they are being supervised or not, they will act as if they are and therefore follow rules by government. Hence, panopticism is an effective disciplinary tool to control society.

The concept of panopticism is a crucial element in understand teachers’ actions throughout this study. This theory will guide our explanation of the teachers’ actions and their relation to various forms of regulation and control. Widén (2010) explains panopticism as a form of hierarchical surveillance, an organised sanction and punishment to an individual’s actions and way of thinking. Furthermore, it is a productive and effective way of limiting an individual’s actions. A population will do anything to follow rules, especially when they feel that they are always being monitored, “[...] this is the utopia of the perfectly governed city” (Foucault, 1995:198). By investigating how panopticism is present in the context where the participants are active, it is possible to analyse what is causing (or forcing) the teachers’ actions.
5. Methodology

The following chapter discusses our methodological choices. We describe and motivate our general methodological approach, the data sources and the process through which data were collected and subsequently analysed. Finally, we discuss the ethical considerations that have guided the research process.

5.1 Choice of method

This study adopts a qualitative approach, since we are looking for the discourses concerning PE. We want to examine how the teachers feel and what their thoughts are regarding touch. By using a qualitative approach, we will be able to identify the discourses and later determine how the teachers are affected by these.

Our data consists of semi-structured interviews with PE teachers with a focus on intergenerational touch in school and teaching environments. Throughout the interviews, opportunities were given for follow-up questions, elaborations and clarifications (Larsson, 2005). By using semi-structured interviews, the teachers could answer in relations to their own thoughts and experiences as opposed to being completely structured by a form. According to Bryman (2011) open questions contribute to more informative and nuanced answers from the participants. Closed questions, as opposed to open ended ones, give more clarity in the answers, and thus decrease the risk of misunderstanding (Bryman, 2011).

Interviews were conducted with one PE-teacher at a time because a PE-teacher’s personal point of view was important for uncovering different discourses in PE-teachers’ answers. From Bryman’s point of view the answers from the participants might be affected by others if the study was conducted as focus group interviews (Bryman, 2011).

An interview guide (see appendix A) was developed for the interviews, which consisted of eight open questions. The questions all were related to physical interaction and the PE teachers’ work. They covered areas such as how often physical contact occurred, if they felt that they were allowed to touch students and when the teacher believed that touch was necessary. The questions also brought up topics regarding moral panic, fear of touching and avoidance-orientated procedures to avoid misinterpretations when physically interacting with students. We want to know the teachers’ point view regarding physical interaction between teachers and students and how they experience intergenerational touch within their schools. In accordance with Bryman’s (2011) recommendation, these questions were
presented in a way that gave the PE teachers the opportunity to describe their own experiences and thoughts. One question from the appendix (1) could lead to an answer to another question. Questions were therefore constructed as themes, and did thus not need to be asked in a specific order, which according to Trost (2010) tend to make the interviews more flexible.

5.2 Research setting and participants

In total 15 PE teachers participated in the study (5 women and 10 men). The work experience of the PE teachers ranged from 3 years to 27 years. The education level of the teachers varied much. All teachers were allowed to teach in the subject. The variation of education level depends on the education system in Kerala, it is not one specific course or programme that one needs to attend for being a teacher. The thing that they all had in common was their passion for sports and that they all at one point had been active athletes. Schools visited were located in both city and rural areas, and all forms of schools (state, aided and private) were represented. Rural areas differed from the city areas mainly in an economical matter, students in the rural areas were more affected by poverty than among the students in the city schools. The city areas also tend to be more secularised than the rural areas. The largest school had over 3000 students while the smallest school only had 400 students. At the majority of the schools, there was only one PE teacher for all students. This was even the case for the school with 3000 students.

Participants were required to be currently employed as PE teachers at state, aided- or private schools. The distribution of teachers working in the different school forms are; seven teachers at private schools, two at aided schools and six teachers at state schools. This study focus on the discourses in PE today, therefore it was of importance that the participants presently were working as PE teachers. In order to make our results compatible with previous research, the sample has been limited to PE-teachers who work in a mixed school. Mixed school is here referred to as, a school where boys and girls attend classes together.

The sampling method for this study has been contact person. These persons have been helping us to come in contact with PE teachers across Kerala, and they also helped to schedule the interviews. Contact persons have been a good method for us when collecting data from an unknown place. For all the teachers we interviewed, we were foreign strangers, and due to this we are grateful for the help we received from all our contact persons. Morgan
(1998) describes how the sampling procedure facilitates the data collection when studying an unfamiliar context, which was the matter in our case.

5.3 Translation and transcription

None of the participants were native English speakers, therefore a translator was required for many of the interviews, this role was usually taken by the English teacher at the school. The interview questions were asked in English, and due to the language barrier all questions had a simple structure.

The material used in this study, has been collected through recordings and note-taking. During some interviews recordings were not possible, because neither the teacher nor the management at the school wanted to be recorded. In these situations, note-taking was crucial for data collection.

The recorded interviews have been transcribed word by word, while the other interviews instead were supported by the notes.

5.4 Conducting the interviews

Some of the interviews, as mentioned above, were recorded. Trost (2010) claims that the beneficial factor of recording is that one can fully focus on the questions and answers, without having to take any notes. Furthermore, the recordings can be replayed many times over and make it possible to hear the interviewer’s intonations and choice of words. The recordings were transcribed for a later process including analysis and correct quoting. The transcribing has also been beneficial when interpreting what the participants have said, since we can return to the written version of the interviews and reflect upon the PE teachers’ answers (Trost, 2010). However, Trost (2010) stresses that one should carefully consider the use of direct quotes from spoken language to respect and protect the participants’ integrity. The readers should not be able to figure out who the participants are through their spoken words. Since spoken language is not used the same way as the written language, the quotes have therefore been edited to fit into a written context.

When conducting the interviews, we first introduced ourselves and gave a brief explanation about our teacher education in Sweden. We then presented the aim and topic of our study and explained the meaning of physical touch, clarifying that it could be anything from a high-five, spotting in gymnastics to first aid. After explaining what the interview would focus on, the ethical considerations were presented, and we asked for permission to
record the interview. The participants received the interview questions in paper form, in case they did not understand the oral speech. At the end of each interview we always asked the participant if there was anything else that he/she wanted to add.

The interview questions were divided into two themes and since we were two interviewers we always chose a theme each before the interviews. This was done to create a structure between us interviewers, since the interviews were semi-structured and we otherwise risked interrupting each other.

### 5.5 Data analysis

The data collected was analysed through a thematic analysis grounded in Foucault’s work on the notion of “bio-power, governmentality, power/knowledge and normalisation”. The aim was not only to try to understand the participants, but also to interpret their statements from the perspective of Foucauldian theorising.

To be able to distinguish which discourses are present in Indian PE, we had to analyse the language that was used by the teachers. Language does not necessarily have to be oral; it can also be in written form or expressed with gestures. By using discourse analysis, we wanted to find patterns in the participants’ use of language (Taylor, 2001). Nevertheless, even if all patterns can be analysed through different discourses there are limitations of all stories and interpretations, these limitations can be seen as historical, cultural, or a genre (Börjesson & Palmblad, 2013).

Since we did not know what patterns to look for or how different discourse could turn out it was hard to predict an outcome, or as Taylor states; “[t]he researcher is looking for patterns in the data but is not entirely sure what these will look like or what their significance will be” (Taylor, 2001:38). Taylor (2001) also describes how the data is affected by the researcher’s selections, which depends on the study's’ theoretical assumptions. For our study we have therefore chosen to analyse our data through the lens of earlier research, to detect possible language patterns similar or different to previous research.

### 5.6 Ethical Considerations

The first group we mainly came in contact with were the principals, whom we had to ask for permission before interviewing the school’s PE teachers. Before all the interviews the participants and the principals were informed both orally and in written form (appendix B), about the aim of our study and the ethical considerations. The teachers’ participation was
voluntary, they were informed that they did not have to answer all questions and could choose to stop at any time. With this approach the informed consent was considered (Vetenskapsrådet, 2002).

Regarding confidentiality, the data collected will not expose any of the PE teachers. The participants were informed that the data collected will only be used for research purposes (Vetenskapsrådet, 2002). However, the confidentiality could not be guaranteed due to the fact that there were more people in the room than the PE teacher. In some cases, we were placed in a public area where anyone could enter.

When conducting the interviews, information regarding the PE teachers’ gender, age, tenure, and grade taught were collected. Since the study does not contain the names of any teachers nor the names of any schools of the participants, Vetenskapsrådets (2002) ethical consideration regarding anonymity was fulfilled. The participants have been referred to as “Male teacher 1-10” and “Female teacher 1-5” in this study. To fulfil the ethical considerations, we have also given the expert consulted a pseudonym, by the name of “Arun”.
6. Results and Analysis

The following chapter will present the results of this study and further analyse them by using the Foucauldian theoretical concepts introduced in chapter three. The results and analysis will be presented in different themes, which can also be seen as the patterns identified in the interview data.

6.1 (No) touch discourse in India

The result from this study shows that the no touch attitude is present among the interviewed PE teachers. From the results, it is clear that the main reason for the no touch comes from public beliefs and norms in society rather than policy documents from different institutions. The teachers are aware of the public anxiety and how to act to be able to protect their safety regarding the risk of being misinterpreted when physically interacting with students. One of the teachers describes how he has to act cautious regarding touch.

Ya, my safety is also there and the public, and my school’s reputation and everything is there. So we need not touch in other way. We need to touch in the teaching purpose. (Male teacher 9)

This statement shows that the teacher is required to physically interact with students in the “right way”, according to society’s norms. The teacher state that he needs to touch in “the teaching purpose”. Evidently, he touches his students to be able to instruct and correct them, but because of the norms in society he is required to make sure that everybody understands that it is a touch in educational sense. First when this is understood by the students, the colleagues and society the touch is accepted. As a consequence of the norms, he is required to constantly be aware of his safety, not only for his own sake but also for the school’s reputation. Another teacher describes a similar experience regarding the social norms in the area where his school is located.

Here in this area we have a very orthodox tradition, girls sit on one side and boys sit on the other side. There is not a written rule saying that teachers are not allowed to touch girls but the society believes that it is bad to touch. That makes it hard for me to teach. (Male teacher 6)
According to the latter statement, the teacher claims that there are no documents or written rules of intergenerational touch for teachers to follow, but that the absence of touch in PE mainly seems to have its origin from old traditions in society. He feels that the norms and interference of society makes it hard for him to teach. Similar statements have been repeated by other teachers throughout this study, where they also claim that even if a touch is innocent it would still be interpreted as inappropriate by society.

Even though I have to make physical contact with the students, I have to keep the limit, because we are living in such a society. (Male teacher 3)

Another teacher describes a similar feeling regarding society’s view of physical interaction in the following statement:

Definitely public interference is bad, because in our country if I touch positively even if it is aware that the touch is positively in the rule says maybe it’s a part of a demonstration. So everyone is afraid to touch. (Male teacher 8)

Since intergenerational touch is a great matter for all PE teachers, but can easily be interpreted as a bad thing, then; “Every physical teacher has taken the precaution for our own safety” (Male teacher 1). Another teacher states; “This is the way of our society, we always need to be on the safe side” (Male teacher 3). Physical contact may seem to be a limited issue for many teachers, they are somehow restricted by norms in society, this is especially an issue for male teachers. However, some teachers claim that physical interaction is present during some (if not every) PE lesson, but no more than absolutely needed. When asked if they could estimate how many times touching occurred during lessons, this was usually the answer:

In a class, in a lesson maybe three or four times, 2-3 times that’s all. (Male teacher 7)

I use to usually [touch] in one period [lesson] like one or two times or three times maximum. (Female teacher 5)

So to give a good wrap over the students I will sometimes use physical contact. But not always. (Male teacher 3)
These quotes represent how many of the teachers answered the questions. Whether this is the actual number of touches it is hard to determine, but the perception among the teachers tends to be that they do not touch their students much. From the results, it is hard to know how much touching actually is required during each lesson. Since all lessons differ from each other depending on activity, the need for touching is therefore not the same for all lessons.

Even though most of the teachers say that they do not touch their students more than what is necessary, some of the teachers claim that it would be a problem if they would not be allowed to touch any students at all. These quotes show how the teachers act as a counter-power against the norms regarding touch in society:

I would quit my job, it would be too difficult to teach. It is not me, I cannot teach like this. (Male teacher 6)

I am the coach I can touch them on the court. That’s sportsmanship - then I can touch. (Male teacher 6)

These teachers touch the students even though it is problematic for them, since society does not fully accept the intergenerational touch. The latter quote explains that touch is sportsmanship, that this is not the same context as society in general, and therefore the societal rules do not apply. Statements below argue the importance of touch.

For small children and for the beginners, we have to do it with physical contact. (Female teacher 1)

The purpose of touch is mainly to amplify the instructions that are given verbally to connect with students. This reason is given by multiple of the teachers.

The emotional connection between the teacher and the student would not be there. (Male teacher 3)

The children would be feeling that they would be less care. (Female teacher 4)
Teacher and student will get a relation through that. When contacting, we get nice relation also. (Female teacher 5)

The teachers in previous quotes believe that physical contact is a way to build a good relationship between a teacher and a student. If the physical interaction is lost, so is the relationship. Touch is, (at least according to these teachers) an important way to build good relations. Without touch, there will not be any kind of connection between the students and the teachers. As female teacher 4 is saying, the children will feel that the teachers do not care if there is no physical interaction. A few of the teachers claim that physical contact is important concerning skill developments, and these skills cannot be taught properly if the physical contact is not allowed.

So if I cannot give the full asset or the full skill, who is the loser? I am not the loser the kid is the loser. (Male teacher 7)

This quote shows that the teacher is worried that if he cannot touch the students, the possibility of students’ proper skill learning would be lost, and he would not be able to give students the education that they have the right to.

Previous quotes can easily be interpreted as, that all teachers find touching a necessary part of PE. Nevertheless, this is not in agreement with our results, some of the teachers claim that they would not have a problem with this change. One common attitude is that if a rule is set from the government regarding not touching students, this will be followed without questioning the decision. One teacher answered the question what he thought would happen if a rule came that said the he was not allowed to touch any student by saying that:

If the system changes like that we have to follow the system. (Male teacher 9)

When the same question was asked to female teacher 5 she responded like this:

If there is a rule like that we have to obey that rule. So I will follow that (rule).
(Female teacher 5)

The following teacher would also follow the rule and not touch the students at all.
Definitely I would obey the rules and regulations. (Female teacher 2)

If the system changed and created a new rule setting a no touch zone in schools, the teachers would be follow and obey the rules. Teachers state that they do not believe in a no touch environment and the children would be the “losers” of such change. Even though students would be the ones losing, teachers would still obey because they do not wish to risk a bad reputation from touching a girl. Drawing from Foucauldian (1991) aspect of governmentality, one can detect how government and society are affecting the teachers. Government could create a new standard regarding what is right and wrong when it comes to touching students. The teachers know how the no touch environment will affect the children, but rather than fight for what they believe is right, they will likely choose to leave their jobs or go on teaching according to this new rule.

The majority of male participants say that there is a “rule” that they follow, which is why they do not touch female students. When we asked about the rule and if we can read and take part of it they all refer to the rule of society. It is not in written form; they all just know that a male should not touch a female in public. This can be interpreted as bio-power in Foucauldian sense, and can be detected in the participants’ answers. The teachers are not “allowed” to act, and thereby prohibited to use their bodies, in the way that they would like to. The norms are governing the teachers’ bodies and controlling how they act in different situations. Society’s norms regarding no touch is greater than teachers’ power in schools, and it affects PE teachers’ actions regarding intergenerational touch.

Most teachers wish to do right by society and do not want to deviate from the norms of physical interactions between the genders. To always act according to societal rules and regulations, protect the school’s reputation, do well by management, and contribute to greater good is what Foucault (1991) would refer to as a form of governmentality. The teachers’ loyalty towards the school management is a clear case of governmentality, they want to serve a greater good by satisfying the management’s wishes and make sure that their school maintain a good reputation. As mentioned earlier, children would be the ones losing if a rule of no touch at all would set in, but because of the governmentality teachers would obey the rules even though they know that the student would be affected negatively by the rule. This can further be interpreted as if the teachers are convinced that the government holds some form of truth regarding what is right and wrong. The teachers would therefore obey the
rule because they are responsible for their actions, and it would be too risky to diverge from the governmental path.

From the lack (or minimalistic amount) of touch presented above it is safe to say that the PE teachers in Kerala are affected by a no touch discourse. All teachers are deeply affected by the discourse even though it is least physical interactions between male teachers and female students. It is clear that there is a limit of intergenerational touch, not only across genders but also among same gender. The no touch discourse partly becomes visible through the description of how often the teachers do touch the students, but also from the answers regarding how society’s norms affect their work.

Because of the presence of governmentality, teachers are finding the situations involving touch rather difficult. As earlier mentioned, several of the teachers consider touch an important of PE. However, the teachers are still concerned over how and when it is appropriate to physically interact with the students. They are torn between whether they should help the students in the way that they believe is the easiest, or whether they should act as society (or government) believes that they should.

6.2 Moral panic - a matter of gender

The gender of the teacher plays a vital role, whether they are allowed to physically interact with all the students or not. None of the women, whom participated in the study expressed any worries concerning physical interaction with neither female nor male students. The answers given regarding physical touch between female teachers and all students are therefore similar to each other. The following quotes are representing the options regarding intergenerational touch between female teachers and students:

No, because I think that for a female teacher no, so I don’t feel that much of this problem. Because if a male is there then this type of anxiety from the public will be there. Or something from the inside the school, sometimes may arise.
(Female teacher 3)

No no, as lady teacher, we cannot have these problems, okay, in case of gents, and if the girls are having some problems they are afraid to touch them.
(Female teacher 5)
As she is a lady teacher and she could teach up to the higher secondary students it’s not a problem but if it is a male then he has to take a safety mission.

(Female teacher 1)

However, the majority of the male teachers expressed how they avoid touching girls. Male teachers are experiencing the moral panic regarding touch, much more than the female teachers. “Here (touching his stomach) touching is absolutely prohibited” (Male teacher 4). This can be interpreted as if the touch is seen as a sexual action, the teacher further explains that touching the stomach is strictly prohibited when physically interacting with a girl.

One teacher explained an incident that occurred during a sports meet, a competition between schools, and a girl from ninth standard fell 10 feet from him. Even though he was the teacher standing closest to the accident, he did not go directly to help her, because he was waiting for a female teacher. When we asked why he did not go and help the student he replied: “Because she was a girl, and because other people are watching” (Male teacher 1). Because he is a male teacher he was reluctant to help her, even though she is injured he waits for a female teacher to arrive. It is not him alone who feels like this in such situations. Another male teacher expressed: “If a girl needs help I help, but always bring a lady teacher” (Male teacher 4).

Male teachers appear to not touch students as much as female teachers. This is not because of any existing rule, but due to the norms in society. Male teachers are afraid of how their touch will be interpreted by society and causing misunderstanding, which will lead to bad reputation. Women also expressed their feeling on how different it would be for them if they were male teachers. “If he (meaning her husband) would be a PE teacher there would be a distance separate the girls, with boys no problem, with the girls very big problem” (Female teacher 4). Another teacher expressed: “Ya at time I would be afraid. Our culture is like that only” (Female teacher 5). From these statements, it stands clear the moral panic is affecting male teachers in a much more expanded way than what it affects the female staff.

Over all the physical interaction in PE does not tend to be frequently present. Both male and female teachers claim that they only use physical touch when it is necessary, and this is, according to most of the teachers, when a skill need to be corrected. Though it is mainly the female PE teachers who answers that they touch all students, attitudes like this also exist to some extent among the male staff. “Touching is a type of love. Touching is very necessary. Punishment-touch is not necessary. But touch by love is important” (Male teacher
4). When this is the case, the male teachers claim that they have created a trustful environment in their lessons, a topic that will be discussed further below (6.3 The public eye).

Even though it is the male teachers who are most affected by physical interactions between them and the students, it does not seem as if the female teachers do touch or encounter students more physically than the male teachers. This can also be understood in light of India not having a touching culture, so that both male and female teachers touch students as little as possible. Since males are more exposed to the danger of being misunderstood of immoral touch, the moral panic applies to the male teachers to a larger extent.

As for the female teachers, the matter is completely opposite, since there is no problematic issue regarding touch. The moral panic does not apply towards them; female teachers can physically interact with all students without being misunderstood. However, the discourse of touch as earlier mentioned, still tends to be that touch is not significantly present for neither male nor female teachers. The male teachers appear to put more at risk when they physically interact with female students, wherefore the moral panic applies more to male than to female teachers.

Foucault’s concept of discourse (1972), clearly inform these findings. From the results given moral panic is a matter of gender, which can be seen as a gender discourse. The great importance of how to act as teachers regarding gender, is the most distinct pattern in the answers among the interviewed PE teachers. Both male and female teachers agree that the (no) touching is a greater issue among the male teachers, than among the female teachers. Further the gender discourse is also affecting the students, depending of their gender they will be treated differently weather if they have a male teacher or not.

The previous quotes show a pattern of different rules depending on gender, and furthermore of a discourse presupposing a heterosexual discourse. The results can therefore also be interpreted as a heterosexual discourse, where male teachers are supposedly attracted to the female students. Which is why male teachers only physically interact with male students, since an interaction with female students would implicate sexual attractions to them. An obvious example of this is the quote from above where a teacher shared a story about a competition where a female student fell, and he stated that societal norms of not touching limited his actions from helping her. Norms from society is “controlling” how the male teachers act in their work, and the norms are thereby controlling the teachers’ bodies. This
“control” is resulting in a certain way of acting and usage of language, and therefore are teachers affected by the heterosexual discourse (Foucault, 1972).

From this heterosexual discourse, one could also assume that a similar attitude would be present among the female teachers and the male students. Evidently this is not the case, since the female teachers are “allowed” to touch all students. The reason for this is perhaps the motherly view of the female teachers from society. Male teachers are on the other hand viewed as potential perpetrators and the female students are viewed as possible victims, roles that society never ascribe to male students nor female teachers.

6.3 The public eye – source of the risk discourse

The study has been conducted in both city schools and rural schools, and according to the participants in the rural areas, it is stricter with physical interactions between teachers and students there than in city areas. However, the results show no differences in the answers between teacher in city schools or in rural schools. All schools visited during the interviews have an open outdoor PE yard, where everything happening during class is visible for the public eye.

*Interviewer*: Are you scared… is it hard for you because other people around might see you touch a girl and then go like oh why did he do like that?

*Teacher*: Ah, yeah, many times. I felt like that, but I use to talk with that girl. I could have communicated better, I know that but this is the restriction. Automatically this restriction will come, teacher is taking the class but their one eye is always on ground. What is actually happening, what we are doing.

*Interviewer*: So the PE is always in an open area?

*Teacher*: yes. And surrounded by classes, our ground.

*Interviewer*: Ah, so the other teacher can also misinterpret it?

*Teacher*: They are like a security cam. (Male teacher 8)

All male teachers have expressed that society always has an eye on them that implies more restricted interactions with female students. Not one of the female teachers stated that they had to be careful or to protect themselves from any misunderstandings between them and any of the students. Male teachers describe how they are affected by the norms in society when teaching. This male teacher describes the outcome of society’s gaze as problematic, especially regarding physical interaction between him and a female student.
Unfortunately, our tradition and customs in Kerala don’t allow me to do like that, but still my students know my mind and they will do according to, they will act according to that. Sometimes I will help if it is needed, sometimes I will help if an injury or something. And there will be a leader so I will ask the leader to do such thing. In case of boys I don’t have any problem at all, I will encourage them, I will touch them I will support them, even also, I will go and play around with them that is no problem at all. But in the case of girls it is very difficult, because of the customs, you might know. (Male teacher 8)

Another male teacher describes the importance of understanding society and the norms that is present, to be able to act “correctly” as this:

You have to read the public and learn the public, then you should go. Especially when you are touching with the girls, not with the boys, boys they don’t mind. Especially when you are touching with the girls. And I am not talking about the whole public, one or two and just been pinpointing like why this guy is touching the kid? (Male teacher 7)

As earlier mentioned, an action of a male or female teacher is not comparable though they do not have the same “rights”, or “public” eye upon them. Male teachers always have to justify their actions when touching girls. Some male teachers therefore choose to not physically interact with students at all to avoid complications or misunderstandings. Below are some voices who express how male teachers avoid intergenerational touch during their lessons.

Frankly, I never touch them (girls). If it is that I touch them positively the eyes around me won’t accept it like that, so I try to avoid it. I might even touch in a parental way but something's somewhere the restrictions are there to not do that. (Male teacher 8)

Yes, to take precaution, to avoid problems or trouble, trouble in the sense of complains from the parents or from outside. (Male teacher 1)

The teacher below explains why he is choosing to avoid physical interaction during his lessons.
**Teacher:** Because our job is not secure. If something is happening, who will give support to us? Who will give? We will do in proper way but the society is saying we are not doing like that. Society is saying another way.

**Interviewer:** So then you might risk to get kicked out?

**Teacher:** We are afraid of that.

**Interviewer:** Yes, so to protect your own safety by not touching?

**Teacher:** Yes, yes, yes. (Male teacher 7)

As mentioned earlier, these quotes exemplify a risk discourse among male PE teachers. They are afraid of being misinterpreted by society if they touch female students. Male teachers are more affected than female teachers concerning physical interaction with students and this discourse is therefore more applicable to male than female teachers. The risk of being diverged from the social context is too high, and therefore the teachers rather avoid touch in general. The fear is not only about being misunderstood or misinterpreted, but for some teachers it is also a risk of being unemployed. However, there are teachers saying that it is possible with physical interaction between male teachers and female students, because they have built up a trust between them over a longer period of time. More importantly, it takes time to build the trust between the teachers and the parents, which in this case can represent the society that is and has the norm of students and teachers not interacting physically. This is described by male teacher 9 below.

Earlier, when I first came in the school, the people doesn’t know me so then I slowly started teaching the lessons, teaching the skills. The first time they are very hesitative but once they understood that my touch is for this purpose, for teaching them the lesson, then it become not harmful. (Male teacher 9)

A similar answer was given by male teacher 6 who explained that:

During the first years I wasn’t touching the girls, but now the parents know that I am a good man and they trust me. Now they know that he is OK. (Male teacher 6)

Male teacher 7 explained that trust is an acquirement for him to touch his female students.
Teacher: Suppose you are my student, you are my athlete, suppose you are doing a 100 m, you have done like a hundred meter, and your muscle got a cramp or something and if I am with you for a long time you know me like for long time, it’s not a problem at all.

Interviewer: Mhm, because then there is trust between us?

Teacher: Trust for each other and even like everyone knows about that coach and that girl and their relation. He is a coach for her and there he can’t there is no time for him to call the doctor or somebody to help him because maybe she is supposed to start another heat or something. Then you can do a massage or something and all, it is not a problem at all. There is no problem. (Male teacher 7)

As can be interpreted from above, trust is of a great matter if teachers want to have a good relationship with students. According to the participants, trust is not something you just receive, it requires time and effort to build. Society has to accept a male teacher’s touch, trust building is important, not only between students and teachers but also between teachers and parents. Society will then accept a male teacher’s physical interaction with female students.

What teachers have done is created a normalisation, where there is a mutual understanding between teachers, students, parents, and society, which make physical interaction acceptable. In this chapter one can detect a consequence of normalisation according to Foucault’s (1980) use of the term. There are male teachers saying that they do touch female student without the risk of being reported or misunderstood of a bad touch, by first creating trust between all parties involved. Although, as mentioned above, it takes time to build this trust, it is a way for male teacher to be able to interact with all students.

The teachers’ fear, and more specifically their feeling of being under surveillance can be understood with Foucault’s concept of panopticism (1995). Male teacher 8 describes how the other teachers are constantly watching the PE yard and stating that “they are like a security cam”. This can be interpreted as a personal experience of panopticism. The (male) teachers are experiencing constant surveillance, and are therefore forced to act in accordance with the (perceived) expectation on them. This feeling is the reason why the panopticism is such an effective way of controlling the citizens (Foucault, 1995).

The public eye exerts power over the population, in the shape of surveillance. Teachers internalise what is perceived as proper and improper actions towards female students and avoid at all costs occasions that can give rise to misinterpretations from society. There are teachers who are afraid of losing their employments as a result of
misunderstandings between them and students or colleagues. Panopticism is visible through
the fact that all teachers want to do right, because they believe that they always are under
surveillance of the public eye. They risk losing their jobs if someone believes that they are not
acting according to the (informal) rules.

At the same time, our results suggest a more nuanced image of panopticism than
that normally described in western contexts. Keralan teachers do not experience the
surveillance of the public eye solely as a yoke, but mentions also the benefits of being
monitored. For instance, being watched guarantees not only that those who violate informal
rules will be caught, but also that those who abide will have witnesses if falsely accused. Such
a finding is both rare and a bit confounding, taking into account the often times negative
connotations of panopticism in western contexts. Let us therefore describe some examples in
more detail below.

6.4 (No) touching strategies

As a result of the moral panic in society, many of the male teachers have created different
techniques to avoid misinterpretation when it comes to touching students. The attitude from
society regarding intergenerational touch, as earlier mentioned, affects the male teachers to a
larger extent than it does the female teachers. The strategies mainly tend to have the purpose
of decreasing the physical interaction during lessons, rather to avoid the touch completely. In
other words: these strategies work as a consequence from the present discourses in the subject
of PE. More specifically the (male) teachers have constructed different strategies because of
the no touch- as well as the risk discourse. One way to avoid physical interaction is described
by one of the male teachers in the following way: “I am always helping the students but
through verbal contact instead of physical” (Male teacher 1). It seems as if the teachers who
are used to work under these circumstances have developed a skilful way of communication
with the students. Many of the teachers describe how they can use their verbal instructions to
make the students understand how they should perform a certain exercise. If the students (in
particularly the girls) do not understand the verbal introduction the teachers show on another
(male) student.

If it happens to a girl, I will first demonstrate how to do it on a boy and then, one of
the other girls in class will have to do it (demonstrate). (Male teacher 8)
In case of an emergency (if a female student gets hurt) there are different attitudes among the male teachers, regarding if touch is accepted or not. Some of the teachers claim that in emergency cases touch is needed, and it is not a risk of being misinterpreted. However, many of the male teachers also say that if it is possible, it is better to take the help from a lady teacher. At some schools; “A parent/lady-teacher is always here to make sure that nothing happens” (Male teacher 8). One teacher stated that: “During weekdays they are here, female teachers are here. If there is no lady teacher, then I bring my wife” (Male teacher 2). By having a female present during all his lessons, both the teachers’ and the students’ safety are considered. The female acts both as a witness as well as a helping hand in case a girl needs help.

A few teachers explained that they used different kind of tools when touching students (and in particularly the girls). One teacher said that he always made sure to use an object when touching the girls, as examples he mentioned cell phone, newspaper, or a cane. Another teacher also claimed that: “We use to correct with a cane. Use the cane for correcting student” (Male teacher 10). By touching the student with an object the touch will automatically be desexualised and the teacher is thereby “safe” from being accused of immoral touching. Another strategy used by some teachers to desexualise the touch is through verbal communications.

See, if you are touching without communicating, otherwise the child can just misunderstand, he or she can think like it is a wrong gesture. And better to avoid the wrong things, better to communicate. When you are just touching the kid better to just insist on him or her that “I am correcting the skill only, that I am not having bad intention”. So communicate and during even touching itself, you communicate. Suppose like a patting on shoulder, but when you are patting on shoulder, don’t go for a rubbing or something, just pat and take it off. Don’t touch like too long or something. (Male teacher 7)

This teacher is touching both girls and boys in his class, but is always avoiding the rubbing and touching the student for “too long or something”, since this risks to be interpreted as a sexual touch. The strategy of communicating can also be seen as a way of making sure that his actions are desexualised from the students’ perspective. He emphasises the importance of asking for the student’s permission before touching by saying:
If the person, the male staff is touching with some other purpose, even if it is a misunderstanding it will make a problem so before touching with the senior girls or anything you should ask the permission, what I believe as a male staff, you should ask the permission from that female. (Male teacher 7)

The fear of being misinterpreted as a male teacher has not only created routines regarding how to touch, but also strategies regarding when and where to (or not to) touch the students. Male teachers always interact with students in groups or in open areas, is another important way for the male teachers to act according the strong no-touch attitudes in society. According to the teachers’ statement below this is of extra importance when interacting with female students.

Open auditorium, we will conduct such activities in open spaces so it would be visible to other people. So no closed. The classes are always given to groups and no particular individuals especially to girls. (Male teacher 3)

Male teacher 6 describes how he acts to avoid misinterpretations from others when touching a student by saying:

Don’t physically interact with a student if they are alone. Touch in front of everybody. (Male teacher 6)

By making sure that there are other people observing their actions the teachers are more on the “safe side”, when it comes to how others might interpret their actions. As previously mentioned, the teachers are still at risk of being misinterpreted when others are observing them, but by making sure to always be visible with the students, they at least minimise the risk of creating false rumours and accusations towards themselves.

From the findings presented above, it is clear that present norms in society are affecting the (male) teachers in both attitude and action. The norms in society are affecting teachers’ views on intergenerational touch. Furthermore, knowledge regarding how to touch is affecting how teachers act. The teachers then have to be careful with how they act so that they do not risk to deviate from society. The strategies to avoid misunderstandings and false accusations can be interpreted as a result of bio-power. This is, according to Foucault (1978) how bio-power is used. Society is managing the (male) teachers’ bodies, and makes them act
in certain ways. The norms are affecting society in what kind of touch that is “appropriate”, which is affecting the public view on intergenerational touch and not least the PE teachers’ actions.

6.5 Approval discourse

In many of the conducted interviews physical punishment appears in our conversations. It usually appears as a question from the participants during our introduction before we have started the recorder, when introducing the topic and explaining what intergenerational touch can be referred to. Questions like “Do you mean touch in the sense of punishment?” often arose during the introduction. This kind of question shows that the corporal punishment somehow is present in the teachers every day teaching, even though none of the teachers say that they use corporal punishment themselves. “So I don’t believe on manhandling the kids, so I only just prefer to touch the kids when you are motivating or during the skill-correction, that’s all” (Male teacher 7). The teacher further explains that there are different meanings regarding corporal punishment by saying the following:

See now the government has opened an order, like it’s not manhandle of just beating the kids, so but most of the schools are not following that. But if it is a limit, I mean even the parents accept that. (Male teacher 7)

This example shows, once again how important it is for the teachers to be “accepted” by society. Even if the teachers “know” that there is a rule from the government that teachers are not allowed to punish the students physically, the approval from the parents’ side seems to legalise the action. Explanations like this have occurred in several of the interviews with the same answer; as long as the parents agree, it is okay to physically punish the students. Another teacher says that the teaching is difficult when he is not allowed to touch the students, and specifically referring to corporal punishment when talking about touch.

Teacher: It is very tough. Physical education is very tough here because we are not allowed them.
Interviewer: To touch them?
Teacher: Even the punishment also, giving the punishment is also.
Interviewer: So it’s not allowed to punish?
Teacher: not allowed (Male teacher 5)
This can be interpreted as if the latter teacher believes that teaching PE would be easier if he was allowed to use corporal punishment to some extent. This indicates that a power is controlling his actions and he is choosing not to use corporal punishment. Power in this sense is the power relation between government and the population, where the government is in a higher hierarchical position to decide than the population. Male teacher 5 believes that it would have been easier to teach (or at least not as difficult) if he could use corporal punishment at some times, but since it is not allowed he will not do it. Drawing on Foucault’s (1980) theory on power is helpful to further understand this teacher’s answer. The power from the “rule makers” is stronger than the teacher’s will. We can assume that the government is behind the rule making and therefore the power from government is strongly affecting this teacher. On the other hand, physical punishment can be accepted to some extent, as earlier described by male teacher 7. This can be understood as though the parents (who is a part of society) have a stronger power “over” teachers’ actions than what the government (who wrote the rules on banishing corporal punishment) have.

There seems to be an approval discourse when it comes to corporal punishment in Keralan schools. In particular, this refers to approval from the parents. With the permission from the parents, the teachers are not at risk to be reported to the government or management, and therefore the teachers can (to some extent) physically punish the students, at least as long as the parents agree. Power in this sense is a power relation between the teachers and the parents. The reason why this kind of physical interaction is accepted, is the fact that it cannot be interpreted as a sexual action, which makes this variety of intergenerational touch acceptable. A further reason for parents to allow corporal punishment to some extent, is that they believe that teachers can discipline and teach their children in a way they consider is right. The general opinion of society is that corporal punishment is a desexualised action and therefore at no risk of being misinterpreted in a sexual way. The societal norm regarding touch is in this case stronger than the government’s power over society.

6.6 Summary
When approached from the perspective of Foucault’s theory of discourse (1972), the interviews reveal an interplay between several discourses on PE teachers’ actions. We refer to these discourses as: the gender discourse, the risk discourse, the no touch discourse, the heterosexual discourse and the approval discourse. The most salient of these is the one we
refer to as the gender discourse, which allows female teachers to physically interact with all students (including those of the opposite sex), whereas male teachers are only permitted to touch male students. This construct is rooted in a heterosexual assumption, what we define as the heterosexual discourse.

The gender/heterosexuality discourse in turn tie into what we identify as the no touch discourse in the interviews. The gender and no touch discourses together result in male PE teachers finding themselves in a discourse of risk, where they are constantly at risk of being misinterpreted as sexual perpetrators. Finally, the interviews reveal one discourse that contradicts the other ones; the one we refer to as the approval discourse. The approval discourse refers to parents’ approval of corporal punishment. Corporal punishment is the only physical interaction allowed between teachers and students, intergenerationally. This is likely due to its non-sexual nature and can thereby not be misinterpreted by society.
7. Discussion

Intergenerational touch generally appears to be a problematic topic across the globe, and this is also the case among PE teachers in this study. The following chapter discusses the results in relation to the aim and research questions formulated in the introductory chapter as well as previous research findings. This is followed by a discussion regarding research limitations and further research. Lastly the conclusions from this study will be presented.

7.1 The discourses of (no) touching and their implications for PE practice

The results of this study show many similarities with previous research, such as the fact that PE teachers are cautious on the matter of intergenerational touch and that teachers create strategies to avoid bodily touch in PE (Piper, Taylor & Garratt, 2012; Öhman, 2016; Scott, 2013). Unlike previous studies however (Garratt, Piper & Taylor, 2013; Scott 2013; Öhman & Quennerstedt, 2015), our results show that there are no guidelines or child protection policies that influence PE teachers’ touch. PE teachers in India are not affected by any documents on what is allowed concerning physical interactions with students, since there are none. An important result in this study is the dominating gender discourse, which has not been prevalent to the same extent in previous research.

A no touch discourse is present among the teachers who participated in this study. As previous researchers have found, many of the teachers are well aware of the touch discourse, and touching is considered a problematic topic. The results regarding the risk discourse can be put in relation to the Fletcher’s (2013) findings regarding the suspicious attitude in society. We have found that the suspicion of the teacher’s actions among the public affects the teacher, an observation similar to that of Öhman and Quennerstedt’s study (2015). Teachers are afraid of deviating from norms in society. Teachers do not only risk their reputation and to be falsely accused of immoral touch, they are also risking their jobs. This shows a notable risk discourse among the PE teachers, something that Fletcher (2013) also has mentioned in his study.

We believe that the risk discourse might feed the no touch discourse and that it thereby makes it even more difficult for the teachers to create a change in their teaching practice. Teachers are encountering the paradox of caring in their everyday profession (Andersson, Öhman and Garrison, 2016), whether to touch students or not. Although teachers want to care, they are not fully entitled to, and that so since their caring can be misinterpreted
as something other than the teacher’s professional action (Fletcher, 2013; Piper, Powell, Smith, 2006). Similar to the findings of Piper, Taylor & Garratt (2012), this study also suggests that teachers are not trusted to be alone with children without supervision, since they are assumed to act immorally. Hence, teachers are risking their jobs when physically interacting with students. Nevertheless, even though the stakes are high, there are teachers who have the “courage” to deviate from the norms and choose to interact with students.

Öhman and Quennestedt (2015) emphasise a decreased touch in PE as a consequence of the no touch and risk discourses in PE. Our results show that touching is problematic according to the teachers, and that the majority of them avoid touch during the lessons. One of the interviewed teachers claim that the students are the ones who are “losing” when the teachers avoid touching. Like Öhman and Quennerstedt (2015), we see a risk that this lack of touch may affect the students negatively as they miss out on their right to proper education. However, our results do differ from previous research in one particular aspect: PE teachers (in Kerala) are moving towards more touch in PE. Based on the results, we suggest that teachers in Kerala may have found a solution in terms of how to confront the suspicious mind of society. This mainly has its origin in the PE teachers’ ability to build trust. The trust building strategy increases to an environment of touching, since the method makes society more acceptant of touch in PE. In line with Andrzejewski and Davis (2007), this study shows the importance of trust building when creating a learning environment. We argue that PE teachers in Kerala are facing one more aspect in trust building, compared to what has been shown in previous research, namely that teachers have to build a trustful relationship to the parents. By building trust between themselves, students and parents, touch tend thereafter to be more accepted in society. This creates possibilities for PE teachers to teach in new ways.

Gender is a big issue when it comes to touch. As previously mentioned, the gender discourse affects male teachers much more than female teachers. The gender discourse is also highlighted by Öhman (2016) who, just as this study, recognises that the touching matter is constraining male teachers’ actions.

Öhman (2016) argues that it is problematic when touching automatically becomes sexualised, and this study suggests the same. This seems to be the main reason why the male teachers experience the risk discourse on a deeper level than the female teachers. To judge from cultural and social norms in Keralan society, the reason for this gender difference seems to have its origin in a sexualised matter, and thereby an uneven power relation, where male teachers are seen as more likely to sexually abuse female students. In the gaze of
society, female teachers are considered harmless and are viewed as parents, and therefore it is accepted for the female teachers to physically interact with all students.

How teachers are influenced by the aforementioned discourse, becomes clear when analysing their strategies regarding physical interaction. As a consequence of the no touch discourse, the teachers have developed strategies to avoid being misunderstood or accused. These strategies are developed by the male PE teachers and include: asking for permission before touching, holding an object in one’s hand when touching and always having a female member of staff present during lessons. Many of the male teachers recognise that it is possible to change the view of touch over time. By building trust between themselves, the students and the parents, they can eventually be “allowed” to physically interact with the female students as well. Once again it becomes clear that touching is a matter of gender in Kerala, since it is only the male teachers who claim using different strategies to be able to work according to the rather strict societal rules regarding intergenerational touch. Similar to what Scott (2013) stated in his work, some teachers also made sure to ask the students for permission before physically interacting with them. The need of an explanatory conversation to be held prior to a touch is of big importance for the PE teachers. This is mainly a strategy to avoid misinterpretation among the students, a way of “legalising” the touch. Another strategy that became visible during the interviews was the use of “tools” when touching students. As previously mentioned, the tools made it possible for the teachers to touch students in a non-sexual way. This can be compared to Öhman’s (2016) result, where a teacher used a clenched fist when touching a student. Both strategies aimed to desexualise the touch. Whether using a cell phone or a clenched fist, teachers are “safe” from being misunderstood.

There is a form of physical interaction that is considered acceptable between all teachers and all students, which results in an approval discourse. This discourse shows that physical punishment is a way of correcting students’ “bad” behaviour and mistakes in school, with the parents’ approval teachers are allowed to physically punish students, though only to some extent. As previously mentioned, we believe that the approval discourse is based on the fact that this kind of physical interaction is not viewed as a sexual action, and thereby society allow teachers to physically punish the students if they believe that this is needed.

We argue, as Öhman (2016), that the view on touch only as a sexual action becomes problematic in terms of how PE teachers can act. If a teacher’s touch always is interpreted as a sexual matter, the teacher is limited in how to interact with the students.
One thing that we would like to point out is that the students, in many cases, are treated differently depending on their gender. Since male teachers are not physically interacting with female students, this has to imply that female students are required to have a higher understanding when it comes to verbal instructions. Nevertheless, we are questioning how this is affecting female students’ involvement in PE, due to the lack of physical interaction from the male teachers. Does the absence of intergenerational touch between female students and male teachers result in a lack of interest among the female students? We argue that, since students are treated differently depending on their gender (if the teacher is male), their involvement and motivation for the subject might be affected in different ways. Furthermore, touching may have more than merely educational purposes. It is also a way of comforting and showing care to the students, which may be crucial for their mental and social health. Taking the educational and social disadvantages of a strict no touching culture into account, it becomes evident that female students are also among the losers.

This study shows that the discourses that are present and related to touch during PE lessons in Kerala is: no touch, gender, heterosexual, risk and approval discourse. These discourses are all affecting the teachers and their teaching practices in different ways, mainly by restricting the teachers in how they physically interact with the students. The male teachers are influenced by the no touch discourse, as well as the heterosexual discourse to larger extend than female teachers.

### 7.2 Research limitations

As mentioned before, the study was conducted in only one state in India, Kerala. Since the state of Kerala is only one out of 29 states in the country, no general conclusions can be drawn from the results. Nevertheless, we reached the saturation of the study, due to the repeating answers from the participants. We managed to collect the data needed and were able to come into contact with more participants than first expected.

During many of the interviews, a translator was required and the translators involved were not always of objective points of view or unfamiliar persons to the participants. As earlier mentioned, it was usually an English teacher employed at the school, whom was handed the role as the translator. During some interviews, there were more than only the PE teacher and the “translator” present, there could be up to four people at some times, but they all were personnel at the schools, teachers in other subjects. Since we did not use professional translators, we cannot be completely sure that the translators’ words entirely corresponded to
what the PE teachers actually said. We are aware of the contingent effect that this could have on our results. It is possible that the answers from the PE teachers were affected by the fact that the PE teachers and the translators often were colleagues. This might have led to a situation where the PE teacher felt that s/he could not fully express his/her thoughts and feelings in someone else’s presence. On the other hand, it could have been a positive effect with someone in the room that the PE teacher were familiar with. If we would have brought a translator who was a stranger to the participant, s/he might have felt more exposed to the setting. We thus assumed that the use of familiar persons as translators was the most suitable option, given the conditions of the study.

Using discourse analysis made it possible to find different patterns in the answers. Nevertheless, the culture and background differences could have affected our interpretations of the participants’ answers.

7.3. Further research

Since this study only collected data in the state of Kerala, further research should be conducted in other parts of India too in order to generalise the findings. This would give a broader perspective of the country’s view of touch. Such research could contribute to a deeper understanding of the (no) touch in PE from more than just a western perspective.

It should also be investigated how the students are affected by the no touch discourse in PE. Are the PE teachers’ different approaches towards the students regarding their gender affecting the students? And if so, how? Does this affect the female students’ results and development in the subject of PE?

Further research could also examine how the usage of PE teachers’ strategies of (no) touch are affecting the students’ learning abilities. More specifically, such research should focus on how the students are affected if the teacher uses different objects (such as a cell phone or a cane) when touching the students. It would be interesting to investigate whether the usage of objects is a good way to handle suspicions or not, and how this might affect the students and the subject. Is it better to touch with a cane than not to touch at all?

7.4 Conclusions

The conclusions to be drawn from this study can be summarised as thus: male PE teachers are more exposed to society’s judgement of immoral touch than female PE teachers. Society has a
suspicious mind towards male PE teachers, this entails in careful actions between male teachers and female students. This has led to a fearing environment for male teachers. They are afraid of being misinterpreted or worse – reported and accused of immoral touch by female students. Since society’s general opinions of intergenerational touch is generally viewed in sexual terms, a gender discourse in PE was also detected. This discourse appears to be of bigger importance for the PE teachers in this study compared to previous research.

By using Foucault’s (1972) concept of discourse, we were able to detect a heterosexual discourse among Keralan schools and society. Male teachers know of this matter and so does society, and because of the physical limitations between teachers and students, there are strategies that teachers use to be able to touch students without using their own physical body. These touches are achieved through extended arms, such as a cane, mobile phone etc. The way teachers are acting is what Foucault (1978) would call bio-power, the power that control bodies, which is why the teachers do not use their own bodies when touching a student.

The no touching is a norm in society that no one wants to diverge from, since they always feel that they are being under surveillance. The feeling of being under surveillance can be described using Foucault’s theory of panopticism (1995); teachers choose to obey the societal rules due to the impression of being constantly watched. To not physically interact in PE is an old tradition and no one really knows how and when this norm occurred. Even though the norm is not to touch, there are teachers who still touch the opposite gender, by building trust with students, parents and society. With trust and understanding from society teachers can freely interact with all students.

Even though this study is conducted in a different culture compared to most earlier research, the findings still correspond well with previous findings, PE is not a “touchy” subject in India.
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Appendix

Appendix A – Interview guide

Questions regarding intergenerational touch in Physical Education (PE)

- When do you use physical contact during PE-lessons?

- How common is physical contact between you as a teacher and students during PE-lessons?

- When do you believe that it is necessary to use physical contact? (In what kinds of pedagogical situations do you think that physical contact and touching are pedagogically relevant, necessary, and reasonable in a PE context?)

- Has the increased public anxiety associated with physical contact between children and adults in institutions affected your work as a teacher?

- What do you think would be lost if you were given a set of rules (regulations) that prohibited physical contact (between teachers and students) in PE-lessons?

- Do you feel that you have to protect your own safety?

- Have you changed your manner of teaching in recent years? For actions that were previously considered innocent, are there any differences from today?

- Have you created sets of avoidance-orientated procedures, if so, in what way?

- If you could change the PE-lessons, how would you like them to be instead?

Thank you for your participation!
Appendix B – Participant information

Ethical considerations

The aim of our study is intergenerational touch. This is it about the physical communication between teachers and students during PE lessons, in Kerala.

Attending this study is voluntarily. You and the school will be anonymous in the study, only referred to by your gender, age, years as a teacher and age of students you are teaching.

During the interview, you can decide to resign at any time. And if you do not want to answer all questions, you will not be forced to.

The interviews will only be used in research purposes only.

For our own sake, we will record the interview, to be able to go back and quote correctly without misinterpreting your answers.

Your participating is very important and helpful for our study.

Thank you for your participation!