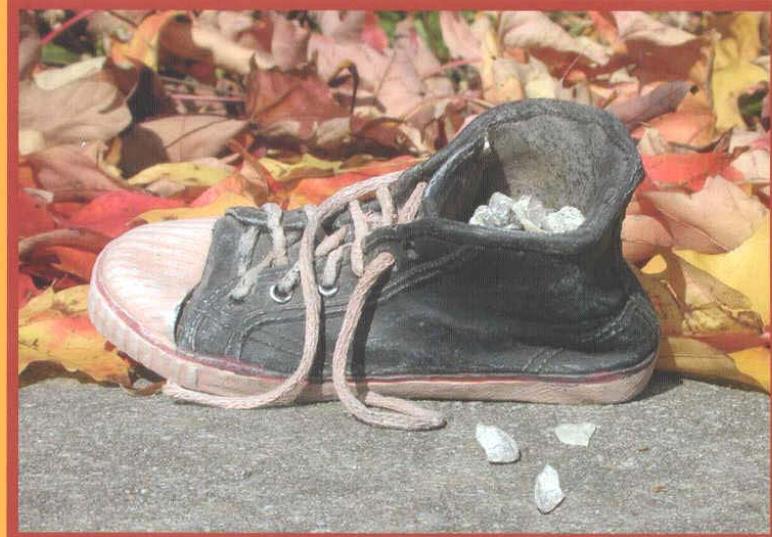


Stones in the Sneaker:

*Active Theory for Secondary School
Physical and Health Educators*



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Chapter Thirteen

Masculinity in Physical Education: Socialization of New Recruits

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Introduction

Recent concerns in Western society regarding the health and inactivity of children have provoked an examination of physical education programs in schools and efforts to provide more effective physical education for all students. Curriculum documents have broadened the scope of physical education, encompassing the areas of active living, movement, personal and social responsibility, and leadership and community involvement. These identified learning outcomes, however, do not always appear in physical education programs offered in schools. Rather, traditional masculine sports-focused programs persist, dominating physical education from elementary school through to post-secondary education. It is the purpose of this chapter to examine (a) How physical education teachers develop their understanding about what teaching physical education entails; (b) How gender issues affect the socialization of physical educators, and, (c) How social constraints limit changes to traditional physical education programs and activities. We will be considering how preservice teachers who specialize in physical education have been influenced by their former teachers and coaches, and the role of gender as a social construction in forming these relationships and perpetuating traditional values and practices in physical education.

Background

Gender as a social construction has had a powerful impact on the way that physical education in schools has evolved throughout history, and continues to shape the way PE is offered in schools today (Braham, 2003; Brown & Evans, 2004; Curtner-Smith, 1999; Flintoff & Scraton, 2001; Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998; Rich, 2001). Constructions of masculinity dictate, in large measure, the types of activities that are considered desirable in PE programs and the types of students who will be successful in these activities (Lesko, 2000; MacDonald, 1997). Western societies continue to draw on the Olympic model of physical education and sport that began in the seventh century B.C. and was revived over a century ago, one that celebrated male athletic prowess. The events celebrated in the Olympics were highly nationalistic and were engaged in by men and viewed largely by men. Single women were relegated to the role of spectator, and married women were banned from the events altogether. Another significant influence on the development of PE has been the military model, with its emphasis on battle, winning, strategizing, and physical strength. The values of the military can be seen in the language used to describe game play, such as “strike”, “power play”, “long bomb”, “offence”, “defense”, and the pervasiveness of words such as “penetration” suggest how male-dominated sports are seen as core to the traditional PE curriculum and support the hegemonic masculinity pervasive in the profession (Evans, Davies, & Penney, 1996).

Several authors have problematized this notion of hegemonic masculinity in PE (Braham, 2003; Brown, 1999; Flintoff & Scraton, 2001; Laker, 2003; MacDonald, 1997; Rich, 2001). The gender order in PE is such that girls are generally marginalized and absent because boys are at its centre. Sports, and games in particular, celebrate male space, male physicality and male dominance. As Flintoff & Scraton (2001) note, for girls PE did not “help them develop physical identities as other than antithesis of men – less able, less strong and less competitive.” Indeed Brown (1999) argues that novice PE teachers,

to accommodate the social expectations placed upon them...draw upon their background experience and in so doing shift their teaching identities towards a complicit masculine teaching identity. Although unintentional this situation represents a dilemma that serves to perpetuate a link between generations of PE discourse and practice, helping to reproduce and legitimize hegemonic masculinity and the gender order in physical education (p. 143).

These unexamined notions of PE imply a sense of embodied power and a sense of competence exercised over others that generates status, pride and identity at the expense of others. In other words, the very success that motivates students to become PE teachers may be the factor that leads them to perpetuate the boys’ physical culture and the subsequent gender order.

Gender influences PE in many ways, from the types of activities that are valued and supported in western society, the types of students who are encouraged to participate, and the types of teachers who are attracted to the PE teaching profession (Brown, 1999; Lawson, 1988). Most often prospective teachers are drawn to the profession because of their own personal experiences in school; in the case of secondary teachers, as a result of experiences in particular subject areas (Lortie, 1975; van Maanan, 1977). Many PE teachers were those students who succeeded in team sports both in school and the broader

community, and most had positive relationships with PE teachers and coaches. Lawson (1988) defined this occupational socialization as “all kinds of socialization that initially influence persons to enter the field of physical education and later are responsible for their perceptions and actions as teacher educators and teachers” (p. 107).

As noted by Lawson (1983a, 1983b) and applied in detailed case study research by several authors (Brown, 1999; M. Curtner-Smith, 2001; Curtner-Smith, 1999; O'Bryant, O'Sullivan, & Raudensky, 2000), prospective PE teachers seem to be attracted to and socialized into the PE profession by either a coaching orientation or a teaching orientation. The coaching orientation embodies masculine attributes of competitiveness, strength and power. Lawson (1988) suggested that the coaching orientation tends to be more attractive to male teachers who see instructional PE as a career contingency with inter-school sport as a focus of success for them and an experience they wish to create for students like themselves. The teaching orientation attracts prospective teachers who focus on student learning with participation and improvement in physical ability as a focus of success. Lawson suggested that this orientation tends to be more attractive to female teachers, though not exclusively, who see coaching as a contingency of being a PE teacher. The participants being reported here, however, drew almost exclusively from the coaching mindset, although there were glimmers of connection to a more inclusive teaching orientation. These glimmers offer suggestions for working differently with prospective teachers, which will be discussed in the conclusion.

Lawson's work suggests that the PE teachers' focus on creating good quality PE programs is often connected to their positive instructional experiences as students in a quality PE program. Agreeing with Brown and Evans (2004) we do not see teachers' engagement with others in their profession as the only experience that shapes their orientation toward physical education, but we feel that these experiences, inter-acting with gender constructions in the broader community of family, peer-group and socio-cultural community, will offer insights in perpetuation of a hierarchical and competitively oriented PE curriculum focused on boys' physical culture.

The socialization research has mapped the connection of PE teachers' perception of PE, linking their enculturation into a career as a PE teacher to their time as students in school (Curtner-Smith, 2001; Lawson, 1983a, 1983c; O'Bryant et al., 2000; Schempp & Gruber, 1992; Stroot, 1993). The socialization literature has identified the need to address this pre-socialization in teacher education programs as a way of enabling prospective teachers to understand and broaden their frames of reference for teaching PE (Lawson, 1988). Differences between teaching PE and coaching a sport are not explicitly recognized or addressed in PETE programs and hence the approaches used for elite players are often imported and applied to PE programs. The distinctions between the two types of experiences are not clearly distinguished; teachers, coaches, and the general populace do not recognize the differences between the two experiences, i.e., a physical education class and an extra-curricular sports team. The coaching mindset is based on a patriarchal understanding of the world, valuing competition, physical prowess, endurance, individuality, and includes many of the sports that are valued in school, i.e., basketball, football, soccer, volleyball. These activities have a short-term or terminal length of play – once students have completed high school, there is little opportunity for those who have been able to play to continue. These activities are valued and are perpetuated by coaches who have themselves participated in this world, often male

coaches, or female coaches who have succeeded in the male world of sport. A teaching mindset for PE should be based on an inclusive and balanced approach to active living, movement, personal behaviours, safety practices, leadership, and community involvement, as identified in curriculum. However, often the distinction between the coaching mindset and the teaching mindset are blurred and traditional sport values dominate PE classes as well as team practices. The teaching orientation should be focused on redefining the PE program to develop on-going activities, e.g., hiking and other outdoor pursuits, yoga, racquet sports, golfing, etc., that are inclusive, communal, and valuing shared experiences, where it is acceptable to pursue activity with no competition, not relying on pitting one person against another.

Methodology

The insights presented in this chapter are drawn from themes generated from a qualitative, semi-autobiographical study. Participants were sixteen pre-service teachers, eight female and eight male, completing their final curriculum and instruction course for secondary school physical education at a major university in North America. The participants were generally from white middle class communities with rural and urban backgrounds. The participants reflected the typical age (22 to 25) ranged for a five-year Bachelor of Education degree entering the profession. Their schooling experiences included private and public schooling. Their sport backgrounds were varied with all playing for some type of representational team in sports such as rugby, soccer, volleyball and basketball. They were all quite able players at a range of sports and believed in the goal of PE to offer a diverse set of activities to encourage all children to pursue an active lifestyle.

Similar to life story research in PE (Brown & Evans, 2004; Curtner-Smith, 2001; Sparkes & Thomas, 1992) insights from the pre-service teachers were limited to a focused analysis of their storied memories of past teachers and coaches. To elicit the memories the repertory grid technique from George Kelly's (1955) personal construct psychology (PCP) was used (see Hopper, 1999 for a detailed description of using the repertory grid). Within the course, the repertory grid process was used to help pre-service teachers understand the idea of becoming reflective practitioners by examining the effective and ineffective teachers that framed their understanding of teaching with a particular interest in PE teaching. The participants were asked to select from teachers, junior high and senior high school teachers, and coaches from their past. The participants generated approximately ten teachers that they then wrote onto cards. Using a triad process the students dealt three cards and compared how two teachers/coaches were similar and different from the third teacher/coach (see Fig. 1). The descriptions generated formed a bi-polar construct as shown in Fig 1 (i.e. "Kids improved – Not a lot of learning"). Participants repeated this process, changing the cards, as they felt appropriate, to generate 8 to 10 bi-polar constructs. The participants then used the bi-polar constructs to rate each of their teachers/coaches using a 1 to 5 ordinal scale ("1" very much positive pole, "3" neutral, to "5" very much negative pole). When this was done the computer software program Rep-Grid 2 (Shaw, 1991) was used to create a cluster analysis of the number patterns generated for each teacher/coach role and for each bi-polar construct. Figure 2 shows a typical repertory grid with the closeness of the number patterns shown by the connection from one teacher/coach or bi-polar construct to another. These clusters became the focus of the interview with each of the participants.

Insert Figure 1 about here
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The interviewer, in a conversational style, asked the participants to explain why certain teachers/coaches generated similar number patterns. Often participants told stories involving the teachers/coaches. The clusters for the bi-polar constructs encouraged participants to generate explanations as to why certain descriptors for teaching seemed to be associated with each other on their grids.

The sixteen PETE students' interviews enabled an examination of how gender constructions influenced their socialization into PE. The repertory grid evoked participants' memories of physical education and teaching that explored the influence of the relationships they had with teachers/coaches in their schooling, and the influence this had on their perceptions of effective teaching in PE.

Findings

The analysis of data offered by the sixteen participants has generated three major themes: 1) dominance of male role models, 2) personal "special" involvement in PETE students' lives, and 3) gendered valuing of coach/teacher characteristics. These themes provide insights as to how pre-service teachers specializing in PE have been influenced by their former teachers and coaches.

Dominance of Male role models

In this paper we do not wish to suggest that gender and biological sex imply a deterministic sense of attributes, but we will suggest that certain "male" traits are more prevalent in male teachers than female teachers and that these "male" traits are dominant in prospective teachers specializing in PE. As summarized in table 1, male role models dominated the PETE students' memories of teaching both as effective teachers and ineffective teachers with the vast majority of role models being coaches or PE teachers. Though slightly more female PETE students selected female role models (33.33% female compared to 11.39% males), male role models featured prominently in the female PETE students' memories of teaching. When consideration was given to the gender of the coaches experienced by the PETE students it was noted that no male PETE student selected any female coaches, and for the female PETE students 5 male coaches were selected compared to 3 female coaches. This data may not be surprising, but considering that at the time these students were going through the provincial schooling system from the early and late nineties there were approximately 60% female teachers (BCED, 2004), one could expect more female representation. However as students advance through the education system there is 60% male teachers teaching at the high school level (BCED, 2004), and for PE teachers the ratio of males to females becomes almost 2 to 1. This male representation in upper levels of the school system may encourage the traditional gender positions with a focus on male physical culture in PE. A "demanding" teacher/coach, a performance orientation, "high expectations", and a high level of physical stamina represent this culture. These implicit and explicit expectations communicated by the teacher/coach may also be a factor in maintaining hegemonic masculinity in PE and coaching in schools (Braham, 2003; Brown & Evans, 2004; Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998). For the participants of this study, these criteria became the standards by which they measured the effectiveness of the teachers. This dominance of male role models influences these prospective PE teachers' construction of effective

teaching by giving them a construction of “effective” that is highly gendered and virtually unexamined.

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Personal “special” involvement in PETE students’ lives

Another criteria that marked teachers/coaches as effective was the ability to connect personally to the participants. A recurring notion throughout all the sixteen interviews was the sense of personal connection with effective teachers. This was normally associated with teachers involved in a sport that the PETE students played. What made the teacher effective was the relationship that extended beyond the school. For example Charlie stated, “I think looking back it was probably more than just what is going on in the class, they [effective teachers] have an understanding as to what is going on in the students’ lives.” Deanne supported this notion but also included teachers not coaching a sport saying “Most effective teachers...they put in that little extra effort like to know your name or to find out an interest of yours and to you know, give out nicknames or to joke around.”

However, for most PETE students it was the individual attention they received that made teachers effective, made the student feel that the teacher was their friend. As Rick explains,

Yeah we got along really well and we are still good friends today, I have coached with him at the racquet club out here. A fairly high level of bantam, and midget AAA...I actually do the UVic hockey school with him...Very relaxed, only seen him get mad a couple of times, and I think even that was an act, just to get people going. As suggested by other authors (Braham, 2003; Brown, 1999; Brown & Evans, 2004; Rich, 2001) this personal acknowledge and invitation into the PE fold represents a key process in attracting fledgling sport players into the PE profession. Once in PETE, students experience many benefits such as a sense of importance and being seen as able to take on adult responsibility to a degree that they got special treatment. For example, Judy comments in relation to a provincial exam, “I wrote it early because it was the last opportunity I had to coach a bunch of kids and the exam was on the same day so she [the teacher] was willing to let me write it a little bit early.”

All the PETE students were encouraged as students in school to take on coaching roles and run teams of younger players. These coaching experiences were very positive experiences and often framed the PETE students’ desire to enter the teaching profession. As Joan explained,

I always enjoyed coaching because it is a different sort of experience with the kids, you get to know them on a different sort of level; the kids want to be there...so in that way I tend to have a little bit more fun with them then I do with the classes that I am teaching because I get a little tenser with the other classes, because they are ‘I don’t want to do this’ and complaining.

For Joan, who had only taught PE in a few trial experiences, coaching was the fun part of teaching. Because “kids want to be there when you are coaching, that really gives you enthusiasm and makes it fun for you...opportunity to be buddies.” The challenges of teaching a PE class for Joan would be compensated by the energizing fun of coaching a

small select group of children. As O'Connor and Macdonald (2002) comment, these coaching and teaching roles do not necessarily produce conflict in teachers' lives, but the focus on coaching as the joy of being a PE teacher may focus PE teachers' efforts away from the demanding role of teaching large classes of students with diverse physical abilities and indifferent attitudes. The coaching role may also focus a PE teacher on those activities that are traditionally sports coached in school cultures, away from the life-long activities offered in society. The successes experienced by the PETE students as sports figures offered them no insights into the lives or realities of their peers who were not selected into the elite group. Their lack of awareness of different treatment for a select few did not prepare them to teach the diverse groups of PE students in school classes; those who did not meet the high expectations of teacher/coaches were at risk of being seen as a "joke" or "remedial" PE students in the eyes of prospective elite sports-playing teachers.

Gendered valuing of coach/teacher characteristics

High expectations

Among the sixteen participants there was consistent reference to coaches who showed the students how to pursue a sport to a high level, to achieve success and accomplishment. As Anne explained about two coaches who were teachers as well, "they were both really demanding, and they expected a lot from us, they weren't really willing to accept a half-assed job or whatever, they wanted us to try our best and do our best. So they had high expectations and they wanted us to meet those expectations." She had internalized their ideals saying,

Well you have to be, in order to be demanding and have high expectations of your students or athletes, you have to be confident, you have know what you are expecting of them other wise they will just think you are a joke. They won't take you seriously. For Anne being female and living in a rural area gave her access to this sport elite team as she said, "We lived in a small community so there weren't very many girls so if you were athletic and female you could play on all the sports teams, because there was so few." Her achievement and her success at being a university student all seemed inter-twined with the high expectation of her male coaches.

This sense of high expectation seemed very much a part of the students' identities; they had succeeded in reaching the high levels demanded of their male effective teachers. As Laura said, "Yeah, the teachers academically that had high expectations of you really drew a lot out of you. More so than the ones that didn't have high expectations, like they challenged you individually." As with Anne, for Laura these high expectations were embedded in her understanding of coaching. As she said,

I am a bit of a perfectionist and so I want it done a certain way and that doesn't always come across as kind and compassionate and laid back or something like that. You know this is how I want it done, and you have to keep working until we get it done. And the most effective coach that I had was very much like that. Perfectionist, he wanted it done just right and you worked to that level.

This sense of effective teachers driving for achievement was also located in the male PETE students' role models but it was most evident with the female students. However high expectations were only effective if the teacher knew the student personally and connected to them as a person. As Joan commented, "my coach who was unfriendly was

just, you know, we would be playing the game and he would be screaming at the top of his lungs at us...he could not be bothered with us outside of the game."

Easy Going

A dominant notion within the male PETE students was high standards but they also focused on the coach being easy going. As Rick said about a teacher who was a coach, "I think I kind of liked him because he was my basketball coach as well. Basically the same, easy going, you know, joked around with the kids." For Rick this teacher created a kind of "boys sport club" in the school. As he said, "It was a mixed class but there was only a couple of girls. It was grade eleven or twelve so there wasn't many girls partaking." For Rick and many of the PETE students this "boys sport club" was the experience of grade 11 and 12 PE, a place to connect with high level, able sport players, including the teacher. This connects to what Brown (1999) describes as the inner sanctum of the physically able and keen young male athletes.

Active naturalness as "male" teacher

The male PETE students aspired as teachers to what Brown and Evans (2004) refer to as a "naturalness and practiced performance" (p. 59) of their effective male teachers. These PETE students spoke of "active and energetic," "fun but in control," teachers who "joked around...[were] laid back" but always "respected...a model." For the male PETE students these qualities existed in all the PE role models. As Tom stated, they were "laid back but because the respect is there [he] doesn't have to worry about getting the kids to toe the line."

For the female PETE students the effective male teachers were "tough but fair," they "gave confidence," "like, they forced the confidence on us, nope you are not backing down." As well effective male teachers seemed to focus on a sense of connection and sharing. As Dawn said, these effective teachers "Let us have our own ideas...shared own experience in humorous stories." These teachers were sympathetic, "he knew that something else was going on in our lives so he would just leave us alone."

Caring for students' learning

Outside of the dominant coaching theme the participants also recognized a common desire to care for students, a reaching out to students who were not seen as being able sport players. However, while this characteristic was recognized and valued by the participants, they did not see it as particularly relating to them, but rather to the students who were not as capable and successful. PETE students universally expressed a desire to model how effective teachers cared for students. As Anne explained about a female PE teacher,

So we didn't actually go in depth because most of the girls in my PE class probably wouldn't be able to understand what she was trying to teach us. But she made it really relevant to them and she encouraged them to be active and encouraged them to participate in grade eleven PE and to think about why it is important to stay active and stuff.

As discussed by O'Connor and Macdonald (2002), PE teachers try to negotiate the role conflict between a teaching role and a coaching role as suggested by the socialization literature (Lawson, 1988; Templin, Sparkes, Grant, & Schempp, 1994). Indeed, Anne was able to offer a contrast to her "high expectations" of the coaching world and draw from teacher models that tried to "encourage the students to apply learning to their life, that is making it relevant and authentic." In a sense, Anne saw this as adapting the PE

curriculum to meet the needs of the less capable students. Similarly, Joan felt that her female PE teacher created the attitude of participating "at your own level, otherwise I don't think I would have ever gotten into PE." For Joan this teacher also modelled what she preached. As she said, "she meant it about physical activity, like she believed it, and I ended up going out for cross country and like she ran with us and she was like 45 and she kicked our butts, and it was just really cool." This teacher modelled achievement but adapted it to the needs of her students. She explained,

I didn't really like physical activity when I got into grade eight, and she just totally brought us along at our own level within the PE class. I didn't run or anything and I started running on my own time because she made it fun, because we could be terrible at it and it didn't matter. And I was dreading PE, like I didn't think I would ever be a PE person, and my most effective teacher was really good but it wasn't the same thing as wanting me... making me want to do it outside of class type of thing.

For the male PETE students this sense of "female" effective teacher being caring was evident, but never in relation to them, more in relation to other students. They made observations such as, "she took extra time," "tried to make connections to kid lives," and "students knew she was there for them." The majority of male PETE students, however, did not bond with their female teachers, and they did not have a sense of an effective female coach or PE teacher.

Same gender criticisms of PE teachers

For the male PETE students, ineffective male teachers were lazy, as Tom said, "too laid back." As Andrew described, "I mean there is always a necessity to be able to work on your feet and ad lib but he would come to every class with nothing prepared and just kind of set up a floor hockey game and let us play."

Similarly, the female PETE students criticized what they perceived as ineffective female teachers as being unprepared but also lacking control. As Judy commented, "she had absolutely no control over her class. I can't really remember any routines or doing anything in class except running around like idiots." Another criticism came in the form of being seen as limited in teaching approaches and understanding. As Laura said, "in our field hockey she was an excellent teacher, but it was just that she limited ... like she limited the fun, she made it so structured that it took the enjoyment out of the play of it."

Different gender criticisms of PE teachers

The female participant PETE students' ineffective male teachers seemed hostile and even intimidating. As Alice said, "He looked me straight in the eye and said, "Do you really think this is where you should be?" Or as Dawn said, "There was a math teacher in college and he used to tell us, we would walk in there and he used to say that we were all stupid." And other male teachers were seen as just "full of themselves", "stuck in his own ways." As Joan stated about several ineffective male teachers, "They just talked about their credentials, and all of the things that they have done and why they were so great." Rather than demonstrating their effectiveness, these male teachers attempted to impose their authority on their students, by virtue of their position rather than their effectiveness.

For the male PETE students, ineffective female teachers were largely ignored. However, Rick made reference to a female teacher who was very confrontational, "we butted heads sometimes, you know if somebody said something that she didn't agree with or didn't know." Or as several of the male PETE students commented, ineffective female

teachers were not knowledgeable, and they made comments such as, “She did not know any more than we did.” In a traditionally male-dominated domain such as PE, women teachers/coaches must struggle to be seen as competent sports players, otherwise they become unnoticed, virtually invisible to their peers and colleagues. However, if they try to impose alternative views, they become described as strident and hostile (Lesko, 2000; MacDonald, 1997). Female students in co-educational PE classes are relegated to the same roles, either being pushed to the sidelines as little more than spectators, or becoming aggressive and masculinized.

Conclusion

Recognizing that PE is necessary in today’s world, more than ever in our isolated and sedentary lives, we need to be aware of how we are socializing new teachers into PE and who is being attracted to these roles. As described by these sixteen participants, generally the roles continue to be filled by the same small group of successful sports figures as in previous decades. Clearly, those who enter the profession to replicate their own positive experiences with PE and sports teams have a difficult time conceptualizing a balanced curriculum not focused on team sport and on conceptualizing students whose interests and needs lie beyond the scope of elite sports activities. They draw dominantly from an exclusive coaching orientation rather than a more inclusive teaching orientation, not by choice but because of lack of awareness of alternatives.

The ongoing hegemonic masculinity that shapes sport perpetuates ideas of competition, elitism, physical prowess, and narrow focus, excluding ideas of balance, inclusion, cooperation, and lifelong involvement. Rather than continuing to support PE programs that focus on terminal activities that often end when participants leave formal schooling, PE teachers need to offer programs providing a wide range of life-long activities. What the participants of this study do not recognize is the number of girls and boys who lose out on opportunities to participate in PE activities, who are ignored and overlooked by teacher/coaches tending to focus their attention on skilled and athletic sports players, students like themselves who are destined to become the next generation of PE teachers. Additionally, it is also hard to see how these PETE students might have the opportunity to consider the needs of different cultural groups or how socio-economic status impacts on students’ capacity to become physically active.

The continuation of existing PE/coaching programs is highly problematic for a number of reasons. Elite athletics is not a healthy balanced way to live, and negatively affect physical and emotional health in many ways. PE programs focusing on elite sport teams are not inclusive, restricting access to many students, all of whom need and are entitled to daily physical activity. Such elite PE programs are very costly, funnelling money needed to fund a range of programs for all students into exclusive competitive programs.

PE is for all children, adolescents, and adults; it is necessary to maintain lifelong physical and mental activities. PE should include coherent programs that develop from elementary to secondary schools with pedagogical approaches that encourage students to make appropriate choices, adapt situations to enable physical engagement, offer a variety of physical activities that students can access outside of school and with skills that build into a physical lifestyle beyond school. As Flintoff & Scraton (2001) noted, female students in schools want a more diverse curriculum focused on the health benefits of

exercise. In addition, all male students are constrained by traditionally masculine sports that do not transfer into an active lifestyle (Braham, 2003). The next generation of PE teachers need to renew the PE curriculum as they establish the value of PE within the evolving school curriculum.

Studies such as this one are important in that they reveal existing attitudes of potential key change agents, that is, schoolteachers who can encourage activity for all children. Through talking with the participants, their own growing awareness of a more inclusive attitude was evident. However, PETE students have limited access to identify with the needs of a diverse student population. Within teacher education PETE students need to engage in reflective assignments that help them to understand how their past experiences frame their present understandings of PE. The repertory grid process did cause some students to look at themselves with a critical eye. For example Charlie, who had the opportunity to reflect on his interview after his practicum, commented about his model teacher,

This teacher was also my basketball coach in high school so I had a really tight relationship with this person, so I may have had a sort of bias of him as a teacher because I knew him out of the school confines. So maybe when I first graded this person maybe I was looking at the entire person and not just as the teacher in the classroom. Because he was definitely a different person in the classroom than he was coaching basketball. So maybe I was just biased in the fact that I knew this person quite well out, and I thought of course they are entertaining because they are such an engaging person as a coach and then as a teacher maybe though they may not have been quite so good.

The capacity to “see differently” after using the repertory grid process in PE context has been well documented (Hopper, 1999, 2001; Rossi, 1997; Rossi & Hopper, 2001), and is a recognized feature of autobiographical type research (Sparkes & Thomas, 1992). What is needed in PE teacher education and in teacher education across all subject areas (for examples of ideas see Bullough & Gitlin (2001)) is a commitment of time and space for undergraduates to examine the assumptions that frame their notions of practice and allow them to engage in professional development that can counteract the dominant hegemonic forms of masculinity that still prevail in schools today (Connell, 1996; 1995; Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998; Martino & Meyenn, 2001). This study adds to the forming body of sociological research that consistently highlights the social and cultural inertia in gender relations in PE with links to the school apprenticeship of sport and PE for prospective PE teachers (Brown, 1999; Brown & Evans, 2004; Curtner-Smith, 1999; Curtner-Smith, 2001; Rich, 2001).

This research highlights what the final year PETE students draw on to construct their notions of effective teaching in PE. How these students were able to develop their practice within the field as they established the confidence to manage and teach classes of children is not within the scope of this study, but would be a needed line of inquiry. It is the opinion of the authors of this paper that to address dominant hegemonic forms of masculinity that draws away from PE for all for a life-time, PETE programs need to work with schools as they educate new PE teachers. Only through a supportive and continued dialogue between those committed to the education of all students can issues of inequality and contradictions between action and intent be addressed and new alternatives developed. Our own work with school integrated teacher education (Hopper & Sanford,

2004), where portions of university courses are taught in local schools, has offered us hope that universities can work with schools to promote more effective education both at the university and in the schools. What this effective education looks like is open to debate, but we believe that the insights from principals, teachers, student teachers and parents indicate potential. In PE we can only speculate as to what degree a teacher education program can enable prospective PE teachers to counter-act the discourse of hegemonic forms of masculinity. Research needs to examine how PETE students entering the profession find a “position” in this dominant discourse where they are change agents creating more inclusive discourses. In the present political climate the role of PE in schools is being under-funded and continually marginalized. In the school district around our university the recent restructuring to a middle school system has resorted in the loss of PE specialists from grade 6, 7 and 8. We have to show that PE is vital for the education of all children, especially before high school, otherwise PE will be continually eroded to be only for the elite few, the “boys’ physical” culture of the high school.

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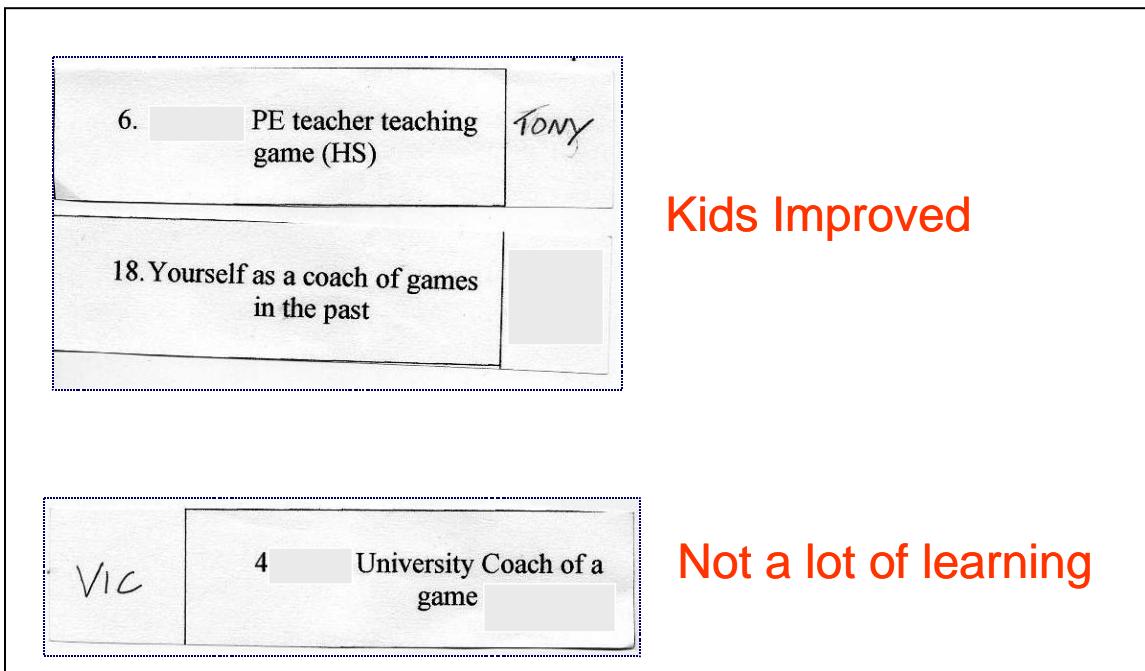


Figure 1. Triad process to elicit a bi-polar construct

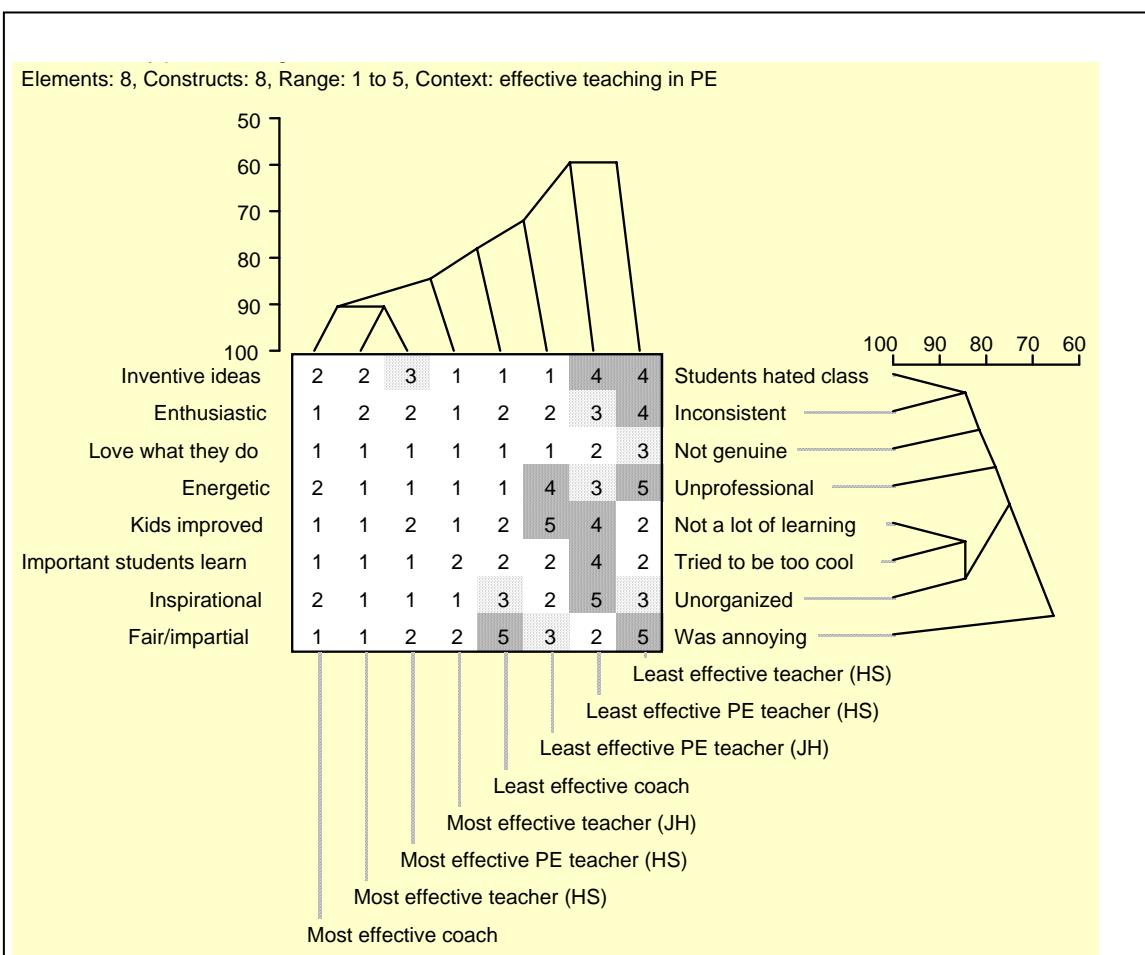


Figure 2. An example repertory grid produced by the RepGrid 2 software program

Table 1: Summary of effective and ineffective teachers selected by the 8 female and 8 male PETE students

	Female effective selected	Female ineffective selected	Male effective selected	Male ineffective selected	Total teachers selected
Eight Female Students	20	7	29	25	81
Female % by type	24.69%	8.64%	35.80%	30.86%	
Female % by gender	33.33%		66.67%		
Eight Male Students	6	3	39	31	79
Male % by type	7.59%	3.80%	49.37%	39.24%	
Male % by gender	11.39%		88.61%		
Totals	26	10	68	56	160
Total % by type	16.25%	6.25%	42.5%	35%	
Total % by gender	22.50%		77.50%		