The Construction of Complementarity in Physical Education

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Introduction
Central to much of the current writing on sexuality and bodies, particularly that writing which draws on a psychoanalytic perspective (Benjamin, 1988; Gatens, 1989) is the cultural construction of masculine and feminine subjectivities as complementary - that is, defined in opposition to one another and, more specifically, the male defined as all that is not female. Complementarity is taken to work through bodies, not as a biological given, but through meanings ascribed to differences and through the technologies of training which work on male and female bodies to construct those bodies as antithetical. Sport and its reproduction and recontextualisation in the pedagogic discourse of physical education is a powerful site for the demonstration and construction of sexual difference. The production of embodied difference has, however, begun a long time before these students reach high schools. From their earliest play experiences, male and female bodies have been disciplined in different ways. There is more than sufficient evidence to suggest the boys begin to learn the skills and the control over their bodies and space in their play with fathers and male peers before schools and through their participation in the competitive sports
which constitute much of the leisure time activity of most young males in Australian society. Girls experiences are usually quite different. Their play is more sedentary and restricted in the space it occupies, it is more likely to be inside rather than outside and centre around interpersonal relationships. Where girls are actively involved in physical activity, this is more likely to be the consequence of a family interest and encouragement in sport rather than a consequence of their experiences at school (Oldenhove, 1987).

In a recent paper Richard Tinning and Lindsay Fitzclarence have drawn attention to the “apparent disjunction between school physical education and adolescent youth” (p.1). They used interviews with students to explore the cultural context in which Australian adolescents live in order to understand what sense students make of physical education and how this engages with that of their teachers. In many ways the purpose of this paper is similar although the focus here is on gender relations and the construction of meanings about female and male bodies. However, with Tinning, I would argue that if we are to attract and enthuse adolescents - and for this paper, particularly female adolescents who are generally acknowledged as considerably more reluctant than their male peers - we must radically rethink the nature of school education. This requires that we become much more reflective/reflexive about our own historically and culturally constructed needs and desires, our beliefs and understandings about physical education and male and female bodies. This entails not only beginning to ask what meanings our students make of physical activity and bodies but also to examine our own positioning in relation to the discourses that inform physical education practice. Although the methodology of the study did not itself involve reflexive practice on the part of the staff and students involved, it does provide through case study examples, the means to identify the beliefs and values (the discourses) which underpin many current practices in physical education.

The primary purpose of the paper then is to identify the discursive biographies - or experiences of themselves and their bodies in relation to physical activity - that students and teachers bring to their interactions in secondary school physical education lessons. In keeping with this purpose the paper will discuss the analysis of open-ended interviews with teachers and students which were carried out as part of a larger study investigating the construction of gendered subjectivity at a number of related sites including teacher-student interactions in physical education lessons (Wright, 1991). The implications for quality teaching in physical education will be taken up in a final section.

Three schools were selected to participate in the larger study. This selection took into account the combinations of teachers and
students most likely to be found in New South Wales secondary schools. One school, situated in a semi-rural area, had co-educational physical education for Years 7 to 10 with few exceptions; one other school was an independent religious school that had recently amalgamated and had all single-sex classes but with some of the girls' classes taught by male teachers; and the third school was an urban government school having most of its classes segregated but with some mixed classes in Years 7 and 10 and mixed classes for social dance. From these schools, six male teachers and three female teachers consented to have their lessons recorded on video and audio tape. These teachers, together with at least one other member of staff from each school, were also interviewed at length about their background and their attitudes to girls' and boys' participation in physical activity.

Forty nine female students and thirty two male students from Years 7, 8, 9, and 10 were also interviewed from the three schools. Students were withdrawn from physical education and health education classes in pairs. Some students were interviewed because they were not participating in the lesson and therefore had some free time, but most became interviewees through volunteering, sometimes with encouragement from the teacher.

The construction of female incompetence and male superiority

The most powerful and pervasive theme from all the interviews (and indeed the analysis of classroom interactions) was the construction of boys and girls, male and female bodies as quite different, as polarised in their characteristics. The male and female teachers and students interviewed for the study all described male and female attitudes to, and involvement in, physical activity as though these were antithetical. In general the attributes and behaviours ascribed to the male and female students were consistent with those associated with the dominant expectations of masculinity and femininity outlined in other contemporary writing on the subject (Connell, 1982; Scraton, 1986, 1990; Young, 1980). However, challenges and contradictions to hegemonic positionings were evident from both male and female students in relation to their perceptions of their own sex as well as the other. These contradictions, however, were themselves largely constrained within and by the more powerful discourses of hegemonic heterosexual relations. For instance, Michael in Year 7, articulates the difficulties that some boys have in a culture which equates manliness with toughness and the ability to withstand pain.

Mike:     Like um boys., um girls should have the choice whether they wanna do it or not because they know they're gonna get hurt in some way. But um you know boys should be more courageous and not be able to have a choice. But I think some boys should have a choice as well. Like because some boys they don't like playing cricket. They know they're gonna get hurt because they've
probably had experience from um out of school games. And then like both of them should have the choice.

Int: But isn't it a harder choice for boys because of the way they're supposed to be courageous. It's a bit hard to say "look I don't want to play cricket because um I don't want to get hurt".

Mike: Yeah because the boys..., most of the boys think they're tough and they hang around big guys but they're all, most of them are little and they're not that tough. And when they, (small pause) when the choice comes along they think, "Oh I have to do this otherwise if I don't everybody will think I'm a wimp and everything". But the girls you know they're sorta like in a team and they don't, they're not as mean and as stupid as boys.

Michael begins by taking what might be described as a liberal feminist or 'fairness' position in arguing that girls should be given a choice to participate in male sports such as cricket, but he also argues that once the girls had been subjected to fast bowling they would choose to be exempt from "sports that use a hard ball". On the other hand, he is much more ambivalent as to whether boys should have a choice, wrestling with the recognition that boys are expected to be more courageous while at the same time acknowledging that boys, too, get hurt and experience pain in the same way that girls do.

In other interviews with male teachers and male students, the general opposition of female incompetence against male competence, toughness and superior ability, came through more clearly. In many cases, the teachers were less likely to recognise the girls' skills in gymnastics and dance and for most of the teachers, female students were regarded as a problem in physical education. They were perceived to be far less enthusiastic than the boys, much harder to motivate, slower to change, far less skilled and more resistant to being positioned by the discourses and practices of physical education. This perception was also shared by three out of the five female teachers interviewed. As one female teacher said: (T)he girls have to be virtually dragged over. I've got to drag the gear myself, and they, they're so happy to race off at the end ... they can't get away quick enough.

In comparison the boys run, they run everywhere. They run to get the equipment. They run to take it out. They quickly set things up. They don't hardly need to be instructed, and that's, I mean I don't teach the boys, but I look over and watch them sometimes.

From her point of view to not be enthusiastic about activity is to be morally wanting, and easily influenced by the wrong kind of leaders as is the case for many of her female students who from her point of view "don't recognise the importance of practice".
In other words they will not accept a positioning in the pedagogic discourse of physical education and sport to which their teacher subscribes - they will not put in the effort, they will not practice, they do not like it and they do not realise how good physical activity is for you. In other words the girls are constituted as problems, as resistant in comparison to the compliance of the boys. However as will pointed out later in the paper the characterisation of girls as resistant and boys as compliant only works when physical education is conflated with games and sports related areas - if dance and gymnastics were to be taken into consideration the picture is rather different. Distinctions could be made between female students - some did behave more like boys. The others who were less cooperative were often characterised in terms of patriarchal discourses of femininity. For instance, for one male teacher female students were polarised between those few who were keen and talented and worth taking some time with, and a group who "won't make that real maximum effort", who will not "put in full effort". He has a problem understanding the girls' motivations or rather lack of them, "they seem to have different reasons (from the boys)". He believes that they regard physical education as a burden, whereas the boys see it as a chance to be active, to play a game, "as a break between classes .. as an organised form of recess or lunch". He explains the particular problem posed by Year 9 female students in terms of a move into ultrafeminine attitudes and behaviours.

I think at that stage when they're moving into puberty, and they're becoming a lot more conscious of how they present themselves to other people and they probably get the concept of getting out and getting all hot and sweaty looks unladylike and offensive to people, so they don't want to do it. That's because they spray, you know, put the hairspray in the hair and they want to make everything to look nice and neat and sharp. They see what people look like after exercise and stuff, and they think I don't want that, they don't want to be uncomfortable, because they don't want to sweat. They don't want to smell and that sort of thing. So that's one of the main reasons I think. Plus (pause) I don't know, I don't think they're into pain, or they don't like feeling tired, you know. Once they start to work a bit and it starts to hurt they don't like it, they can't, I don't know, I suppose they can tolerate it, but they just don't like that feeling of being exhausted or having to try harder or to over-work themselves, I think that's the problem.

Although he may be quite accurate in describing some of the girls' attitudes, he represents the girls resistance entirely in relation to a concern with appearance and inability to withstand fatigue and pain. Examined grammatically, his use of language associates the students, as subjects, with mental processes
(verbs) of affect and cognition. Their desires were most often constructed in the negative, for instance, "they don't want to smell", "they don't want to be uncomfortable", and "they don't like feeling tired". In the few instances when they were positioned as actors in relation to material processes (verbs of 'doing/acting'), the actions were not those likely to be valued in a patriarchal culture - for instance "present" which has to do with concern for appearance and image construction, and "spray" another process linked to work on appearance and very gender specific.

Most of the teachers explained male and female differences in competence and behaviour as influenced by social forces, but at the same time characterised the differences as so closely tied to male and female subjectivity as to be unchangeable. One female teacher has no compunction in attributing male and female sexuality to biological factors.

The girls have a problem about showing their nickers and the boys have a problem about looking at them ... Boys have got too many hormones and girls are convinced that everyone's looking at them. On the other hand, she is firmly committed to "normalising the behaviour between male and female students" through the more "natural" environment of mixed physical education.

I think it helps relationships throughout school doing P.E. together, um. (small pause) They learn to interact together physically without sort of, there's no sexuality, there's no sort of or background of, there's no sex involved, you know, sort of different sex or any sort of sexuality questions involved at all. Um, and as I say it's only the, it really is only the bottom half, bottom end of the school that sort of worry about knickers and you know sort of things like opening your legs on the trampoline and things, you know.

"Normal" behaviour for boys and girls in the lesson means that they should think of and treat each other as non-sexualised bodies, as she perceives herself to do - "I don't even think of them as boys and girls". This teacher attempts to resolve the contradictions posed by juxtaposing statements about biological inevitability with those about behaviour change by attributing the deviant, overtly sexual behaviour to the lower, less bright streams in the school who are less amenable to the 'normalising' influence of mixed classes. In a further contradiction, she says that she prefers to teach boys because they are not only more competent, but more responsive, in comparison to the girls.

Teach: I find it really stimulating, um, because it's, boys, the results you get from boys lets be honest are, are much more obvious. I think that, as far as I'm concerned the effort the girls put in is just as great as the boys, but the results you get from boys because of the basic training they've had in

primary school is more obvious and more rewarding.
Int: Mm.
Teach: And because of that I get a real buzz. I've achieved something, which with an all girls class I always found it very frustrating because I never felt that I was achieving very much. The throwing and catching never improved from the time they came into high school till the time they left.

To characterise the teachers' representations of the female students as examples of sexist stereotyping would be far too simplistic. Observations of classes, to some extent, confirm the teachers' descriptions of female behaviour. However, female students were less likely to be reticent in gymnastics and dance lessons (particularly jazz dance lessons). In these lessons female students stayed behind after class to practice and worked independently creating their own sequences. It seems that it is in lessons involving skill acquisition for traditional competitive games or in lessons that involve running that the girls are most resistant. These are activities which in the public sphere are constructed around those values of competition and/or comparison with specific standards of skill and which are most likely to be associated with a hegemonic masculine discourse and practice of sport. Moreover, these are areas of the curriculum, as was repeatedly pointed out by the teachers (often with an exasperated sigh), in which the boys pick up skills from families and peers, as well as from their primary schools, before they reach high school physical education classes. It has been well documented that the acquisition of hand-eye and foot-eye skills through play with parents or peers is far less likely to be the experience of girls (Dyer, 1986).

Two female teachers, both of whom have strong dance and gymnastics backgrounds located the female and male students in a different but not inferior/superior relation to physical activity. They linked the girls enjoyment and skill to dance and gymnastics and the boys' enjoyment and skill to competitive team sports.

and aggressiveness and things like that, you know. Like they love to go out and play hockey. I mean they get a hockey stick in their hands and it's like a weapon.

While this teacher still polarises female and male relations to their bodies and physical activity, both these teachers were less likely to talk about the girls in ways that represented them as inadequate. In comparison most of the other teachers, represented the female students as generally lacking or inadequate in comparison to the boys. They were described as lacking the same skills as the boys, the same, positive attitudes and as requiring extra attention which is often grudgingly given. At best it seems that they are patronised as possessing deficiencies over which they have no control and which might be partially made up with plenty of encouragement and cajoling.

The female students seemed to concur with this positioning. When asked if they would like to participate with the boys in physical
education, they were rarely definite in their answers. The female
students’ ambivalence was generally expressed as reservations
based on perceptions of the boys’ superior skills and rougher
style of play and the problems arising from these differences for
the girls.
For most of the boys in the study, the girls were perceived to be
far less competent at games than they were, less able to take
rough play and less likely to put any effort into playing. The
boys who were active themselves (and this meant the majority of
the boys) said that they preferred girls who were also active and
competent. They were far less tolerant of girls "who sit around
all day" or who "wreck" games through their lack of skill or
indifferent attitudes to playing. The girls were welcomed as
companions and as playmates as long as they had attitudes and
skills similar to the boys. However there were limits. For some
boys, particularly those who were not so skilled themselves,
girls should not be better than boys nor should their
participation lead to a body shape which exceeded the bounds of
the appropriate feminine form through excessive muscularity.
However, no matter what the response, whether positively disposed
towards the female students or totally denying them access to the
boys’ activities, the boys’ characterisation of the girls
remained located in a discourse which describes women and girls
as more fragile, physically weaker and less physically skilled in
the areas that count, such as competitive team and individual
activities. These are the boys' games in contrast to netball and
gymnastics and dance, the 'indoor' activities, which were 'owned'
by the girls.
The opposing representations of indoor activities as those in
which girls were skilled and outdoor ones as those in which boys
were superior was made explicitly by some of the boys and
implicitly by some of the teachers. The dichotomy of
indoor/outdoor, private/public, is a pervasive preoccupation of
many contemporary feminist writings including those concerned
with early female and male socialisation. Lewis (1990), for
instance, argues that "(s)ocial biases constructed around gender
differences push girls into the less visible interior spaces,
into what McRobbie and Garber label, "bedroom culture"(p.90). The
girls’ superior skill and the preference expressed by many of
them for the indoor activities of gymnastics and dance should not
be taken as a natural phenomenon. Rather, it is at least partly a
consequence of practices, images and social relations that
construct the 'inside', the domestic and the world of inner
feeling as the proper places for the female and the feminine.
Thus the female students are permitted superior skills in the
'inside' activities because firstly, this is perceived to be
their proper sphere and secondly, because for most boys, the
value of physical education lies in the opportunity it provides
to take them out of the classroom into the freer and more expansive spaces of the outside playing areas. Further, in masculine sports discourse, those activities that the girls do inside, gymnastics and dance, are of lesser value in comparison to the outdoor activities of competitive team games. For the girls, the enclosed areas of the halls and gymnasiums provide freedom from the gaze of the male Other together with an opportunity to participate in activities that allow them self-expression and creativity.

The female students were not entirely compliant to being positioned as inferior. They responded by asserting their own definitions of competence and by representing the boys hassling as immature, attacking back, ("we yell back at them") or by laughing the comments off. Moreover, it is clear that for many of the girls their enjoyment of their chosen activities and their feelings of competence and achievement helped them to be independent of masculinist definitions of female inferiority and provided sufficient resistance to the boys' jibes. Further, the boys who were themselves highly active and skilled generally respected and enjoyed the company of girls who were also active and skilled. Most girls in Australian schools, however, are less likely to have the confidence or the skills to resist being positioned as inferior. It is these girls who are locked into subjectivities and social relations that leave them feeling inadequate about their bodies and their capacities. Not that being an elite athlete guarantees security and a resistant relation to hegemonic discourses of femininity. As demonstrated elsewhere (Wright, 1991), even top athletes continue to be preoccupied by their appearance as desirable to men.

Sexual attractiveness vs rough and tumble
For both boys and girls not to be active was often equated with laziness but for the girls this was more likely to be associated with guilt and a concern that they might get “fat”. The boys too equated the absence of exercise with being “fat” but for the girls rather than for themselves. For instance in the following quote, although Simon admits that his sister is not really “fat”, future fatness is likely to be the outcome of her inappropriate inactivity.

Simon: I've got a sister older than me.
Jan: Is she very active?
Simon: No (laughs) She just lays around and does nothing.
Jan: (laughs)
Simon: Gets fat.
Jan: Is she really?
Simon: She doesn't really play sport no.
Jan: Is she really fat.
Simon: No, she's not really fat (laughs) She's not fat as in fat, she's just ...
Clare is glad that her mother pressures her to participate because if she did not, she "wouldn't be skinny ... cause I like to eat a lot". Kate says she's "gotta start jogging soon" and her friend Jo says it's because "she thinks she's fat". Others feel guilty if they do not do some kind of activity. In the following quote, Deanne and Lisa describe their desire to be slimmer.

Jan: Do you see yourself as being as active as the boys that you know?
Deanne: No.
Lisa: No.
Deanne: (unclear) race down to Kiama and back and up to Mount Keira.
Lisa: Like Ronnie goes up to, goes up the freeway on his bike every Sunday or something.
Deanne: Even if we do a lot we don't, look like it. (laughs)
Jan: You mean your body doesn't reflect it, their bodies sort of develops in some way and your body, but you don't want to look, I mean, do you want to look like they look when they do a lot? Is that what you want to look like?
Deanne: I want to be skinnier (laughs)
Jan: You want to be skinnier, and you're, they're skinny or they've got muscles.
Deanne: (word) body's toned.
Jan: Really toned, really tight, yeah.
Deanne: Yeah.
Jan: And you're saying that doesn't happen for you, and that's what you want.
Deanne: Yeah (laughs)
Both these students describe activity patterns that would rate well above the average, but they are still not satisfied. In this exchange the girls describe their desire to look slimmer and fitter, a desire that is located in the fitness/slimness discourse of the consumer culture. However they define their ideal body, not so much in terms of female models but in terms of the toned, slim bodies of their male friends - that is bodies that are stripped of all the curves of femaleness, that are "toned" and "tight", bodies that show the evidence of the work that has been done on them. It should also be pointed out here that whereas the girls compare themselves to a male standard towards which they aspire (a common phenomenon in sport) boys at no time aspired to be themselves more like the girls and certainly no boy in the study ever spoke of a desire to look more like a girl. Thus are boys defined as not-female rather than the
other way around. Their desire and the practices the girls pursue to attempt to change their body shape are indicative of subjectivities that are positioned in a discourse of femininity which links activity with a notion of fitness that is expressed through slimness; not to be active is to be lazy, morally weak and fat. This discourse intersects with and reinforces other discourses of femininity that describe the female body as the object of male desire. Images of beauty and sexual attractiveness in magazines, advertisements and other sites of textual production have been centrally implicated in the production and reproduction of a contemporary discourse of patriarchal 'femininity' (Coward, 1984; Smith, D., 1988; Brownmiller, 1986). As Dorothy Smith (1988) has pointed out what stands out about these instructive texts on femininity is the pervasiveness of a sense of inadequacy or lack in not measuring up: "Viewed from the standpoint of the discursive image, women's bodies are always imperfect. They always need fixing" (p.47). Corresponding to this is the emphasis on the importance of the knowledge, the skills and practices necessary to do the work on the body needed to bring it closer to the ideal image.

Where for the girls the outcomes of physical activity are instrumental and tied to their femininity as sexual attractiveness, for many of the boys the nature of their participation and the sports participated in defined their masculinity. Physical education and sport was associated with the opportunity to express aggression and toughness through the rough and tumble of contact sports and through activities specifically designed by at least one teacher to allow this to happen. Many of the boys were opposed to the girls' participating in their games because it would mean curbing the aggressiveness of their play - that is, they would not be able to throw the ball as hard in cricket and they would have difficulty playing league because they would feel hesitant about tackling the girls. The boys a one school described the way they enjoyed playing recreational soccer in the mud - "we pummel each other in the mud" - and how the "teacher stays out of things" or encouraged aggressive play, "he just says beat each other up". The same teacher provided other opportunities for the boys to be physically aggressive through what one set of boys called "class bashing" or "rumbles". Pain is also part of the experience of being male. Allan described in graphic detail the "scary feeling" of riding his skateboard down a steep hill and "stacking" or coming off. It's alright, you get a good feeling when you try something new and you hurt yourself, cause you know when you hurt yourself and that you know you don't do that again, and you do it some other way.

Not all boys are comfortable with a masculinity that expects them
to be aggressive and tough in the face of pain. For these boys, including girls in physical activities is one way of militating against these practices and attitudes. The usual punch ups were less likely to happen and there would be "a friendly atmosphere".

Female as the antithesis of male
As has been argued in this paper the girls represented themselves and were represented by the boys and the teachers as lacking, in particular as lacking the skills, moral qualities of toughness and courage, ability to withstand pain and lacking the desire to 'get in and have a go'. These were all in relation to a very specific form of physical activity - that of traditional team sports and competitive endurance activities - in which the girls were compared to boys. Unlike most of the teachers, many of the boys did acknowledge the girls' superior achievements and skills in areas such as gymnastics and dance. Dance in particular, however, was not regarded by some of the boys as appropriate to physical education because it is not active enough or because it belongs to a social sphere outside of school. It seems, then, that physical education becomes another location in and through which bodies are inscribed with gender differences and in which both males and female teachers and students are complicit in maintaining oppositions that inscribe the female body as lacking those qualities associated with the active male body in sport.

Drawing on the Lacanian notion of "doubling", Moira Gatens (1988) argues that both men and women have an investment in maintaining themselves as the antithesis and complement of the other; each gender/sex "sees" only those qualities in the other that are the antithesis of itself.

Each (gender) projects (and so predictably finds) those qualities antithetical to itself, to its 'ideal image', onto its double. Each therefore becomes the indispensable complement to the other. Each is deeply complicit in maintaining not only her or his own body-image, but also that which it assumes: the body image of the other. Aggression requires submission, independence requires dependence, and sadism requires its masochistic counterpart. Each only 'sees' what it is antithetical to it, that which complements it, and this 'seeing' is itself socially constructed. (p.39)

As Gatens goes on to argue, the mutual complicity and the reciprocity involved in maintaining such definitions or "interdefinitions" makes the relations between the sexes appear "natural, necessary and immutable" (p.39). The interview transcripts provide convincing evidence of this process. Physical education and sport seem to be powerful sites for the visible demonstration of male and female differences as the antithesis of one another. Despite the high levels of skill of many of the girls they are seen as and see themselves as a group to be the antithesis of the boys: fragile in comparison to the boys'
toughness; preoccupied with physical attractiveness in comparison to the complete absence of statements about appearance in talk by and about the boys; less capable of effort and less skilled. It is not simply an antithetical image but an image that leaves the girls as lesser beings, as locked into an opposition which forces them to compare themselves to a male standard of skill in activities valued within patriarchal discourses of sport.

An important motivation for this paper has been a concern to challenge the taken-for-granted practices of teachers in ways that provide a model for change. It has become increasingly clear that the patriarchal discourses of sport that underpin so much of the traditional practices in physical education are alienating for many girls. These include not only and not necessarily the specific skills of traditional sports, but more particularly their dominance in the curriculum, the directed mode of teaching that denies students autonomy and is specifically designed to discipline bodies in narrowly prescribed ways, and which inscribes girls as inferior and inadequate. It should be said at this point that the practices of sport also discipline and inscribe male bodies in equally, if not more narrowly prescribed ways, in opposition to the patriarchal feminine (Connell 1983; Waring, 1985). The question then is what form(s) might physical activity take which fits with the needs and interests and is, at the same time, empowering of female students but which does not also deny the possibilities of access to male students. By this I am not using 'access' in terms of access to a location or a resource, rather I wish to avoid thinking about alternative modes of physical activity that challenge patriarchal purposes and social relations as only the preserve of women and girls.

What has been clearly identified by this study and by others such as those by Young (1980) and Scraton (1986) is the real lack of physical power and confidence that characterises many young women's experience of their bodies. Whatever activities might be offered, they need to include opportunities to provide girls and women with a sense of their bodies as enabling, as a centre of strength from which they can be assertive in their dealings with the world, including their relations with other women and men. It is no surprise that many women's community groups have self-defence classes as part of their offerings to women, not only to provide the specific means to defend against physical attack but also to develop confidence through a new sense of their bodies as powerful.

Insufficient research is available at this stage to fully appreciate the meanings that physical activity has for women. We do know that many mature women speak of their school experiences and physical education with deep dislike as disabling experiences that left them feeling alienated from physical activity and their bodies (see, for example Thomas, 1988). Many of these same women, however, have found for themselves as adults, other activities such as the martial arts, tai'chi, tap-dancing, aerobics,
marathon running, in which they have developed a confidence in and liking for their bodies. But what they enjoy about these activities does not necessarily correspond with the simplistic motivational factors identified in the positivist factor analyses studies of traditional motivational studies of participation (see Watkin, 1977). There needs to be a further exploration of the meanings and the pleasure that movement has for women (and perhaps for many men).

The challenge, then, is to think beyond the boundaries set by patriarchal constructions of physical activity. This is no easy task since by definition just as our ways of thinking, seeing and feeling are constrained by the language we have learned as members of a particular culture so are our ways of moving and making sense of our movements. For instance, the value of competition is so deeply embedded in western capitalist discourses of sport that physical activity without some element of competition is almost unthinkable (and unplayable). It is unclear at this point in time what a woman's tradition might look like, but there are alternative models of physical activity on which to draw (including Eastern practices which often seem to draw a strong female participation) as well as different ways of being involved in and constructing meanings about existing mainstream Australian activities.

The task, then, is to work towards the construction of experiences of physical activity which are pleasurable and which engage with girls' interests and needs, to explore new movement possibilities that contribute to redefinitions of individual female bodies as sites of personal power and control and which challenge patriarchal definitions of women as passive, dependent, fragile and physically incompetent. In doing so we will also be challenging the definition of male as not-female; masculine activities as those closed to women and vice versa, thus broadening options for both men and women.

References

Gatens, M. (1989) Woman and Her Double(s): Sex, Gender and
Discursive practice: an analysis of teacher talk in physical education lessons

The lessons recorded and transcribed for this study were first and foremost recognisable of typical physical education lessons drawing on those discourses and practices associated with a masculine, directed activity, skill acquisition approach. With some slight variations, the lessons were characterised overwhelmingly by directions concerning the manner, and location...
of the performance of specific skills and/or exercises. Grammatically, the lessons were dominated by imperatives and modulated rule like statements functioning as commands. Questions, other than those intended as disciplinary measures were rare, and most rare, in the lessons taught by male teachers. The predominance of a command-style approach and the very limited opportunity for student choice in these lessons would seem to indicate that the personal development discourse of the syllabus statements of aims has penetrated only so far. Although most of the teachers would express some concern for the personal development of students and for the need to be plan for individual differences, this concern only emerges tangentially to the practices that constitute their lessons. The female teachers, for instance, did engage in linguistic practices which seemed to be intended to reduce the social distance or unequal relations of power between themselves and students, and they were also more likely to move around amongst practising groups and individuals, providing assistance and encouragement. However, they, as well as the male teachers, provided few, if any, opportunities for student choice of activity and the nature of the activities, the specific skills that made up the content of the lessons, by their nature allowed for few deviations. In their very purpose and techniques of training the teachers took as their task the regulation and disciplining of students bodies in narrowly prescribed ways theoretically aimed at achieving a standard of skill, which for the most part were the standards associated with the masculine practice of sport. The female teachers also incorporated appeals to appropriate attitudes to playing, to each other and for the girls specifically, in the case of dance, to the boys, in ways that are not present in the interactions between male teachers and their students. In the context of a masculine discourse, constituted by a power/knowledge relation that values competitive achievement, the exhibition of strength, power and toughness and the technical knowledge and strategies of specific team sports, the female students were positioned by the discourse and by their own practices as marginal and inadequate in comparison to the male standard. In practice this meant that the female students were anticipated as resistant, they were expected to be unenthusiastic and were encouraged by both male and female teachers through a constant stream of talk which reassured and cajoled them, explaining why and how they should perform each task. On the other hand the boys were given minimal instructions and left to get on with their activities. Where boys were given maximum standards of performance to which they should work, the girls were encouraged to do a minimum. For one male teacher when teaching girls it was “Fairly quickly, not too slow, jogging the whole way”, “just a few stretches” and “As far as is comfortable but feel it stretch. Keep it there, keep it there. Right now up slowly. Other leg, just nice and easy girls. It’s fairly cold.”
Need to be warmed up” compared to “make sure you feel it” and several injunctions to do tasks “correctly” when teaching the boys. For other teachers, in gymnastics, where boys were expected to do as many activities as they could, girls were more likely to be exhorted to be concerned about how they were performing, to be conscious of their appearance, both in terms of modesty and aesthetic form.

In another example the interactions of one male teacher with individual female and male students in the same lesson were able to be compared. There were quite clear differences in the choices of language made by the teacher and the female students in their interactions as compared to the choices made by the same teacher and the male students. These differences in language encoded differences both in social relations and in the discourses that constituted the content of the exchanges. The exchanges with the female students were often extended interactions, characterised by an initiating instruction from the teacher which was challenged and then rechallenged by a female student. In contrast, the exchanges with male students were usually very short, often one task-related instruction by the teacher, followed up with the appropriate action on the part of the student. The male students rarely spoke to the teacher and when they did it related to the task at hand or, in isolated instances, to the behaviour of the girls.

The boys were praised more often than the girls. During the game segment of the lesson there were six clear examples of praise to the boys (for example, “good catch”, “well done”) and only one to a girl. On the other hand the girls were more likely to be subject of “out”, and “bad luck”. To a large extent, this is because the boys were positioned more favourably by the nature of the activity to warrant praise. They were more likely to be involved in the game, they did not get ‘out’ as often as the girls and they demonstrated far superior skills than most of the girls. In the same lesson girls were also more likely to be associated statements or commands modified by the negative - that is, directions on how or what not to do (“Jenny don’t stand there and look at that. It's not going to come to you if you don't chase the ball”). Far fewer negatives were used with the male students and three of these were used to prohibit behaviour in relation to female students (for example, “Don't listen to her”). In contrast to their construction as physically less competent and less enthusiastic than the boys, female students were constructed by male and female teachers as talkers and as the recipients of talk. They were allowed, and appropriated for themselves, the verbal and the interpersonal as their sphere of competence. The students subverted the purpose of the lessons through their employment of familiar interpersonal and heterosexual genres in which their competence lies in their
ability to play subtle verbal games. The following exchange is only one of several between a female student and the male teacher in this lesson.

Teacher: Righto, who doesn't understand the game?
Girl: Me.
Teacher: Why don't you understand the game Bec?
Girl: Cause you didn't understand it.
Teacher: I understood. I explained it properly. I can understand it. I explained it well enough that other people understood it.
Girl: (Unclear)
Teacher: D'you understand.
Girl: Yes.
(Two people talking together)
Teacher: Look, the main reasons why people don't understand this, people at the moment like Corinne and Jenny are talking while I'm trying to explain the things, and they get out there and they think 'What's going on'.
Girl: We know what's going on Sir.
Girl: Excuse me sir, with the two balls and that, like just say, like just say one team gets the ball, are we supposed to get the two balls into the same thing.
Teacher: No, its just that, its just that we're playing with two balls. So two games are going on at the one time.

Girl: Oh God. What happens if you get, you go to catch a ball and the other ball comes and hits you on the head.
(laughter)
(girl laughing)
This exchange is not about the giving and receiving of information but about scoring points, about challenging social relations and defending positions that are attacked. The authority of the teacher is attacked through reciprocating and initiating familiarity and by directly challenging the teacher as information source/primary knower until he 'cracks' - that is, in defending his position as authoritative and competent, he succumbs and is complicit in shifting the discourse from the task-oriented to the interpersonal. The students themselves respond personally/interpersonally to what began as a task-oriented exchange.
The female teachers as well as the female students also demonstrated a propensity to talk more and to use a wider variety of linguistic meaning-making practices from those used by the male teachers; in doing so, they seem to construct a different reality and different social relations. Where for the female teachers’ explanations were likely to take the form of extended clause complexes characterised by dependency relations; the male teachers were much more likely to use a series of independent single clause structures - that is, a series of propositions with...
little explanation or contextualising. Where the female teachers were more likely to take into account the girls’ reactions, their experiences and needs; the male teachers in their talk to boys were more likely to establish what had to be done and how and then let the boys get on with their tasks. This is the case in the two examples below. The first has been taken from the orientation stage of a girls’ gymnastic lesson, the second from the same stage of a boys’ lesson and the third from the orientation to a hockey lesson taught by a female teacher to a class of girls. This last example has been clausped to demonstrated the complexity of its structure as a series of lengthy dependent (joined by conjunctions such as “if” “because” ) and independent clauses (joined by “and” and “but”).

Last week, when we did back arches I explained how your stomach muscles were really being stretched much more than they probably had been (small pause) since the last time you did back arches, and that you were compressing this area here, and you would end up with a little bit of soreness, muscle soreness the same as when we start cross country running and you know that you can't get down the stairs after Maths or whatever else, because your legs are sore; its the same type of thing. Before you start, make sure that your area is smooth. Secondly, make sure that your spotter's in the correct position before you start. There were a number of guys yesterday who were going through and saying 'oh where's the padder after they've vaulted?'. Your padder has to be in position first. Safety is most important all the time. I don't care whether you've done the skill five, fifteen, a hundred times; you always have a padder there first!

Now there's two sides.
If you have a look at your stick,
there's two sides,
now one's flat
and the other is curved.
Obviously if we were to hit it with that side, the curved side, it's awfully difficult,
cause it could hit at any angle and go off.
So we use the flat side.
In fact if you start using the other side you'll get pulled up for obstruction, so you're not allowed to use that side there.

Okay so you always use that side.
So you might say well what happens if you're left handed
and (if) you like to have it, you know hold it that way and hit it there.
What you have to do is turn the head of the stick over.

Bernstein's (1971) distinction between elaborated and restricted code is helpful as one way of theorising the different orientations to social relations and social control that the male and female teachers had towards their students and the way this is realised in their choice of language. Although an association between the two linguistic codes and social class appears to be more common and also more controversial (Atkinson, 1985), of more interest here is the relationship between the nature of the codes and social orientations to others in an exchange. For instance, according to Bernstein (1971), the major function of the restricted code is to "define and reinforce the from of the social relationship by restricting the verbal signalling of individual experience" (p.150). In contrast, elaborated code facilitates the expression of individual dissimilarity and personalized meanings.

An analysis of individual lessons demonstrated that the female teachers not only talked more to their students but they also made different linguistic choices, in particular choices in the realisation of logical relations. The verbal explicitness of their talk has striking similarities to that described by Bernstein for the elaborated code.

The preparation and delivery of relatively explicit meaning is the major function of this code....The code will facilitate the verbal transmission and elaboration of the individual's unique experience. The condition of the listener unlike that in the case of a restricted code, will not be taken for granted, as the speaker is likely to modify his (sic) speech in the light of the special conditions and attributes of the listener. (p:150)

On the other hand restricted code, is primarily characterised by predictability, the intent of the person is likely to be taken for granted. The meanings are likely to be concrete, descriptive or narrative rather than analytical or abstract. In certain areas meanings will be highly condensed. The speech in these social relations is likely to be fast and fluent, articulatory clues are reduced; some meanings are likely to be dislocated, condensed and local; there will be a low level of vocabulary and syntactic selection; the unique meaning of the individual is likely to be implicit. (p:150)

This description comes remarkably close to the style of the interactions between male teachers and their students. This is not at all surprising if, as Bernstein argues restricted code is predicated on an assumption of solidarity in the form of shared knowledge, values and attitudes of the parties involved (Atkinson, 1985).

By drawing on the concepts of elaborated and restricted codes, and the social relations they anticipate and construct between participants in exchanges, it is possible to link the language of
the teachers with differences in their relationships with their students and, in particular, the differences apparent between the female students and their teachers, both male and female. Taking a case of female students with their male teacher, as an example, it would seem that the male teacher’s increased talk with the female students is not only concerned with cajoling and 'talking' them into the lesson, but is also an anticipation of a different point of view, a recognition that the girls do not share his knowledge and particularly, do not share his orientation to physical activity and sport. As such he needs to make his intentions more explicit, than he is required to do for the boys. He cannot assume their position in relation to the discourse, rather he can and does anticipate a range of positionings, some compliant and others contestive.

It would seem that the girls behaviour brings the interpersonal to the foreground of the lesson at the expense of the task-orientation purpose of the lesson. In the boys lessons, it seems to be less important as to whom the teacher is dealing with in comparison to what is being taught. The ritualised discourse/restricted code of skill instruction, coaching, refereeing and so on can then be more easily employed. With the female students with whom the teacher is dealing becomes far more important and far less predictable as twenty to thirty subjectivities with varying orientations to the discourses and practices of the lesson need to be taken into account.