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# Gender Equity in Coeducational Physical Education: Myth or Reality

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## ABSTRACT

Gender Equity in Coeducational Physical Education:
Myth or Reality

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Research indicates that physical education programs are not exemplars of equity, and girls' physical education experiences, fraught with unequal opportunities, attention and success, are potentially restrictive and oppressive. Specifically, this study provides an analysis of the socialization process and its effects on physical activity involvement. An historical overview then explains how gender influenced the development of physical education. A further account is given to show how dominant gender ideologies contribute to, and are perpetuated by the structures and practices of physical education teacher education within the current educational system.

Critical feminist pedagogy is then examined in light of applying a physical education curriculum which has the potential to challenge gender differentiation and produce a foundation for progress and change. Student narratives, from several Cegep physical education classes, are presented to illustrate students' personal reflections on their experiences with this new learning process.

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## PREFACE

This study stems from my concern for gender differences in participation, interest and performance in physical education classes, and draws on my experiences as a physical educator at a Cegep in the Montreal area. The educational reforms mandated by Quebec's Ministry of Education, as well as my decision to enter the educational studies graduate program at Concordia University were concurrent and favorable turning points for me as a physical educator. Given the process oriented paradigm of the reforms, and my increased awareness of critical and feminist critiques of education, I started questioning my assumptions about teaching in physical education. I found myself reexamining my pedagogical practices and attempting to develop an educational model that facilitates change and promotes social justice. My intention is not to impose my views on others, but rather, to carry on my search of possibilities.

# CHAPTER ONE

# INTRODUCTION

"The acknowledgment that it is the *social construction of gender* that is important, not biological differences, allows the development of a more critical and adequate understanding of gender inequalities in sport and physical education, locating the debate within the wider structures of society...There are certain characteristics associated with stereotypical views of femininity and masculinity which strongly reinforce the expectations of what is appropriate for girls and women, boys and men, at different ages. In state institutions, such as schools, these images are consolidated and reproduced as ideologies which form the basis for the political management of gender divisions in wider society." (Scraton, 1992, p.8-9)

Physical education research reveals that girls are less physically active than boys, and the gap in rates of participation widens during adolescence (Scraton, 1992; Wright, 1996; Hargreaves, 1994). Since the development of fitness is deemed beneficial by health professionals and society at large, some intervention is required to promote the benefits of lifelong physical activity, and it would seem that an obvious place to start is through the physical education curriculum. Unfortunately, research also discloses that, unlike boys, a great number of girls are negatively influenced by their school physical education experiences (Scraton. 1992; Hall, 1996; Hargreaves, 1994). The intent of this thesis then, is to examine whether a physical education curriculum, built around the concept of active lifestyles, and implemented within a critical feminist perspective has the potential to challenge gender differentiation and produce a foundation for progress and change.

Given that education and sport influence the socialization process of children (Hargreaves, 1986), and given that early experiences with physical activity impact on the eventual participation of men and women in sport and leisure activities (Brustad, 1992; Scraton, 1992), a serious look at the implication of gender in our physical education programs is justified. With this in mind, we must ask whether females are encouraged, to the same extent as males, to pursue physical activity? Are females influenced, through subtle and overt messages, to pursue "gender appropriate" activities? Do physical educators educate and motivate equally, regardless of gender, and are females provided with equal attention and instruction during drills and game situations? We must also ask ourselves why so many girls opt out of physical education when programs become optional, and why they are less likely to return to physical activity later in life. If unfair gender practices exist, can

the process be reversed, and can positive experiences influence women's eventual participation in sport and leisure activities?

**Brief summary of the important concepts.**

Children display sex related differences in motor skills as early as preschool years and these differences intensify by early to middle childhood. By the time students reach high school, discrepancies in both physical skills and hand/eye coordination exist between the average eleven year old girl and boy. Boys are more adept in throwing skills and display better hand/eye coordination, while girls have an edge in activities that require balance and foot movement such as skipping and hopping (Scraton, 1993). Even though research findings indicate that performance levels for girls and boys differ, biological differences in physical capabilities at this age are not large enough to explain these differences. Greendorfer (1983) argues that motor skills are learned activities, and insists that "there is no research that demonstrates that boys inherently move better than girls or are more physically skilled than girls" (p.18). Interestingly enough, the latest empirical literature in this area is inconsistent. Some studies conclude that, before the age of four, few motor skill differences exist between boys and girls, whereas other studies report that girls have an edge in both fine and gross motor skills. When differences are found, girls typically display better balance, agility, accuracy of movement, and superior overall coordination skills (Greendorfer, Lewko & Rosengren, 1996). Despite these findings, girls are less likely than boys to demonstrate the skills and interest that are expected in high school physical education classes. Research suggests that these gender differences in achievement and

participation are consequences of early gender socialization and elementary school practices (Scraton, 1993; Coakley, 1994; Greendorfer, Lewko & Rosengren, 1996; Eccles & Harold, 1991).

Substantial effort has been invested in the study of childhood socialization[1]. For the purpose of this study, which attempts to explain how gender influences the experiences and activities of boys and girls within the physical domain, a number of socialization theories will be discussed. A symbolic interactionist[2] theory is emphasized, however, since it rationalizes less predictable outcomes, and concentrates on the social influences that mold and shape human behavior (Mackie, 1987).

Although people have revised some of their ideas about gender over the last two decades, research clearly demonstrates the influence of gender stereotypes on society today. Social definitions grounded in dominant ideology[3] still prescribe and limit the range of appropriate activities for girls. Since sport is most closely identified with the male role,

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[1] I use Mackie's definition of socialization. Mackie draws on Mead's theory to define socialization which refers to the life long social process through which individuals develop a sense of self and acquire the knowledge, skills, values, norms, and dispositions required to function in society. Gender socialization is the process through which individuals learn society's expectations, pertaining to masculinity and femininity (Mackie, 1987).

[2] The term symbolic interaction underscores how human beings, through everyday interactions with significant others, develop and use symbols to interpret, understand, and give meaning to their social world. This theoretical approach assumes that human behavior involves choices, and choices are based on definitions of a particular situation (Mead, 1962).

[3] I define ideology as a shared belief system that legitimizes the position of dominant groups. This concept also draws from Gramsci's notion of hegemony which refers to the way dominant views saturate society and come to be accepted as common sense, taken-for-granted assumptions. Even though ideologies benefit certain classes more than others, they are sustained because, to a certain extent, they are grounded in reality (Persell, 1977).

girls' socialization experiences tend to direct them away from physical activity. The ideological beliefs perpetuated by these social practices are responsible for the over representation of males and under representation of females in physical activity and sport (Greendorfer, 1992; Greendorfer, Lewko & Rosengren, 1996; Coakley, 1994).

Both the home and the schools are involved in the reproduction of gender inequalities in sport. Research indicates that adult encouragement and example are powerful influences on children's physical activity involvement (Hargreaves, 1994). Parents, through gender role socialization, encourage physical activity via the toys they give to children, and by the type of play they allow and encourage (Coakley, 1994). By the time boys and girls start school, they already know what is considered appropriate behavior for their respective gender[4], and schools reinforce these ideas through the traditional sexual divisions that exist in the classroom, the gym, and on the playground. As Hargreaves (1994) emphasizes.

> In spite of increasing attention to equal rights issues in education, gender divisions are still apparent at all levels of schooling...the organization, classroom management and teaching methods of schools polarize girls and boys and reinforce their ideas about and previous experiences of gender divisions. (p. 151)

As mentioned above, the relationship between education and inequality has been the focus of much research in recent years. Studies have shown that teachers' differential expectations and biased classroom behaviors provide unequal educational opportunities for girls and boys. In the case of physical education, the perceived physical differences and

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[4] Throughout this thesis, I use the term sex in reference to the biological 'condition' of being female or male, whereas gender is used to refer to the "social/cultural/psychological processes through which femininity and masculinity are constructed and reproduced" (Scraton, 1992, p.7).

abilities between boys and girls have shaped the bedrock upon which these programs were constructed (Vertinsky, 1992). Traditionally, biological arguments that reinforced and legitimized the taken-for-granted assumptions that women were weaker than men, were used to restrict women's exercise patterns and exclude them from particular activities. "Experts" from the medical, physical education, and education fields were the major influences upon the definition and implementation of girls' physical education. As Lensky (1986) highlights, "Medical professionals played a major role in determining those sports and levels of participation that were safe for female anatomy and physiology" (p.139). Since it was presumed that women needed separate and different opportunities in physical activity, boys' and girls' physical education programs developed independently from each other. The male subculture emphasized the development and measurement of skill and the importance of competition through team games, whereas the female tradition focused on rhythmic activities such as gymnastics and dance. By the late 1960's, the need for equal opportunity in sport and physical education was brought to public attention by the feminist movement. Spurred by rising complaints, anti-discrimination legislation on the basis of gender appeared in both Canada and the United States in the 1970's. The assumption behind the antisexist legislation was that a coeducational setting would provide girls with the same opportunities as boys in physical education (Vertinsky, 1992).

Twenty years later, and despite increases in female participation, girls' and boys' involvement in physical activity still vary significantly and differences continue to exist with regard to type, level, and intensity (Duda, 1991; Eccles & Harold, 1991; Brustad, 1996). Girls and boys may have access to the same programs but previous experiences and

upbringing will affect the way in which similar activities will be received and experienced. Furthermore, equal access in physical education does not necessarily result in equal attention or equal participation. Research into classroom interaction in coeducational settings indicates that, overall, boys have more contact with the teacher, receive more attention, talk more in class, and are generally more visible (Flynn & Chamber, 1994; Lee, Marks & Byrd, 1994; Masland, 1994). Evidence shows that a coeducational physical education setting is not much different, as it also reproduces the sexist climate of classrooms. Studies confirm that teachers have stereotyped beliefs about the different physical abilities of boys and girls, and these expectations shape teacher/student interactions. Consequently, boys dominate the learning environment, both physically and verbally, while girls are relegated to peripheral roles (Scraton, 1986; 1992). Much research notes that different relations between teachers and students influence the performance of students as well as the development of their self concepts. We must, therefore, question how these practices contribute to girls' disaffection with physical education.

If physical education is to challenge the politics of patriarchy which "is defined as a system of power relations by which men dominate women" (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 31), it needs to undergo fundamental changes at the curricular level. As emphasized earlier, equal access to physical activities inadequately challenges the historical traditions of physical education (Smeal, Carpenter & Tait, 1994; Scraton, 1993; Wright, 1996; Vertinsky, 1992). Even though equal opportunity initiatives were an important political response to the limiting alternatives imposed on women over the years, the foundations for differential

treatment, participation and performance have survived. The hegemonic[5] practices of physical education with its accent on biological differences and ideological constructions of femininity and masculinity continue to disadvantage girls. A physical education curriculum which addresses girls' (and boys') needs and interests must not only provide equal access but insure equal participation, equal learning opportunities and equal success through a revision of content, educational processes and assessment (Kenway & Modra, 1992).

If schools are to challenge messages of inequity and be concerned with a better social world, future educators must be enlisted through education programs to address gender equity issues in classrooms of tomorrow. As Giroux and McLaren (1986) state, "any viable attempt at educational reforms must address the issue of teacher education" (p.214). Yet, research shows that teacher education programs fail at educational reforms, because they have relied almost exclusively on technical forms of knowledge (Beyer, 1987; Smyth, 1989; Sheehan & Fullan. 1995). Within this dominant conception of teaching, schools are introduced as instructional settings, while teachers are conceptualized as skilled technicians. The role of these technicians is to transmit knowledge in a simple and noncritical manner. This approach "tends to reproduce rather than challenge existing social arrangements" (Bain, 1990, p.29). Even though alternative discourses[6] to mainstream pedagogical approaches

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[5] "Hegemony describes a form of control which is *persuasive*, rather than coercive. It is understood to be the result of people's positive reactions to values and beliefs, which, in specific social and historical situations, support established social relations and structures of power" (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 22).

[6] Discourse is defined as the "regular, recurrent pattern of language that both shapes and reflects the user's basic intellectual commitments" (Tinning, 1991, p.1).

have gained some attention within teacher education programs, and have exposed the limitations of current pedagogical practices, they are not prevalent enough to insure progress (Gore, 1993). In the case of physical education teacher education, oppositional forms of discourses offer little challenge to the dominant and prevailing discourse of performance. This perspective accents and reveres scientific knowledge about human physical performance. It reduces knowledge about humans and their bodies to facts, and celebrates masculine values like physical size and strength (Dewar, 1990;Tinning, 1991; Mckay, Gore & Kirk, 1990; Whitson & Macintosh, 1990).

Given that teacher education does little in this area, we as teachers must seriously look at the implications of alternative pedagogies for ourselves and for our students. Although individual initiatives may have little impact on the larger picture in the short term, I nonetheless remind myself, that the smallest efforts at change do make a difference and do create opportunities for the future. Women's progress within the physical domain has been slow over the years, but consistent gains have been achieved, and we as physical educators must decide what role we will play against the restrictions associated with gender. If we choose to do nothing, however, we will be responsible for supporting the status quo in a male dominated society (Griffin, 1989b).

Therefore, in order to promote change within the discipline of physical education, there is a need to investigate how existing curricula and everyday teaching practices can be transformed to resist and challenge traditional notions of gender differences. In recent years, many theorists have championed a critical approach to educational reform. A critical theory of education is organized around concepts of enlightenment and emancipation, and strives

to empower students and teachers in an effort to bring about a more just and democratic society. Enlightenment is achieved through a process that provides students with insights about their view of the world, and about the real interests underlying different forms of knowledge. This critique of domination creates more holistically liberated students who can then attempt to emancipate themselves (Leonard, 1990).

Hence, to promote equality[7] and social change in physical education, we must examine what we teach and how we teach it. Feminist educators, committed to emancipatory goals, strive to create pedagogical environments that empower students. Gore (1992) defines empowerment as "the exercise of power in an attempt to help others to exercise power" which implies that empowerment is linked to pedagogical practices (p.68). Students within feminist classrooms, are not only encouraged to be critical of, and reflect about the knowledge they learn, but they are also provided with the opportunity to give voice to their experiences (Dewar, 1991).

The recently reformed collegial physical education curriculum targets goals of active living within the context of wellness. An active living concept implies participating in a wide range of activities with the objective of developing motor skills and physical fitness. A physically educated person would have the required knowledge, skills and attitudes to incorporate regular physical activity in her/his lifestyle. This type of physical education curriculum, informed by a feminist framework, could undermine and challenge traditional attitudes and images of gender in the physical domain. The focus on individual lifestyles,

[7] Equality is defined as "the full participation and inclusion of everyone in society's major institutions, and the socially supportive opportunity for all to develop and exercise their capacities and realize their choices" (Young, 1990, p.173).

and the quest to encourage students to become physically active broadens physical education's scope to one that analyzes social, political and cultural issues concerning health. It is around these issues that teachers could challenge students' taken-for-granted assumptions in an effort to encourage "a revisioning of female bodies as self-directed, strong, and skilled" (Vertinsky, 1992, p. 373).

The next chapter of this thesis discusses the role of ideological beliefs on gender socialization, and analyzes the contribution of child rearing practices on children's physical activity involvement. The third chapter outlines the historical development of physical education for girls, and examines the practices and unequal power relations that, over the years, have pervaded the institution and organization of physical education. In the fourth chapter, I argue that there exists a dominant ideological discourse within physical education teacher education, and assess its potential to challenge and transform the inequitable practices within the discipline of physical education. Chapter five presents the main concepts of Freire's critical pedagogy, and then discusses how critical feminist theory and pedagogy build on the limitations of Freire's educational theory. I then consider how these feminist theories can be implemented within Quebec's process oriented collegial physical education curriculum. Through the latter part of this chapter, student narratives are used to illustrate how these changes influence their experiences within the physical education curriculum.

# CHAPTER TWO

## SOCIALIZATION and PHYSICAL ACTIVITY INVOLVEMENT

"One's interests and concerns as an adult are very much the product of childhood activities and experiences." (Cochrane, Hoffman & Kincaid, 1977, p.4)

In the 1970's, anti-discrimination legislation[8] on the basis of gender appeared in both Canada and the United States. The rationale behind the anti-sexist legislation was that girls would be provided with the same opportunities as boys in physical education and/or sport programs (Greendorfer, 1983). Twenty years later, however, research shows that although girls and women are enjoying expanded opportunities to play and compete, rates of participation in physical activity for girls and boys still vary significantly and differences continue to exist with regard to type, level, and intensity (Duda, 1991; Eccles & Harold, 1991; Brustad, 1996).

In this chapter, I examine theoretical approaches that explain childhood socialization. I also discuss the dominant role of ideological beliefs on gender socialization in order to analyze the contribution of child rearing practices on children's physical activity involvement.

**Socialization**

Mackie (1987), defines socialization as a lifelong social process through which individuals develop a sense of self and acquire the knowledge, skills, values, norms, and dispositions required to fulfill present or anticipated social roles. Within complex societies, however, social roles and obligations vary to reflect differences in social class, ethnicity, race and gender, and also to mirror the constant changes within societies. Although

[8] In the United States, Title IX of the Higher Education Act Amendment of 1972 prohibited discrimination on the basis of gender in any educational program receiving federal funding, whereas in Canada, provincial anti-discrimination laws offered similar protection (Lenskyj, 1986).

individuals are greatly influenced by the groundwork established during childhood (primary socialization), socialization is not confined to infancy and childhood, but continues in later years as adults confront new role expectations. Additionally, socialization not only teaches individuals to function in society but also insures the maintenance of social order.

Social scientists have debated the importance of both biological factors and environmental factors in human development, but many now acknowledge the existence of an interactive effect between the two. Today, most scientists are engaged in recording the countless ways genes and the environment intermingle. Mackie (1987) explains that socialization provides the link between biology and culture, and argues that biology establishes the broad limits of human potential, whereas the social environment accounts for the wide variations in behaviors and personalities.

**Socialization Theories**

Substantial effort has been invested in the study of childhood socialization. A number of theoretical approaches attempt to explain how the child emerges with, and acquires culturally approved behaviors. The result of these studies, however, do not add up to a consistent body of information. Mackie (1994) believes that these theories should be seen as complementary since they all contribute to our understanding of childhood socialization. The four theories considered in this review are Freud's psychoanalytic theory, Piaget's cognitive developmental theory, social learning theory, and symbolic interactionism.

Freud's **psychoanalytic theory** relies heavily on biological factors to explain

personality and behavior development. Freud believed that the mind's irrational and unconscious dimensions are at the base of human behavior, and that early childhood experiences within the family determine adult personality. Freudian theory suggests that personality is composed of the Id, Ego and Superego. He advanced that the child is born with the Id, but must progress through developmental stages in order to develop an Ego and a Superego. The Id represents the individual's biological or unconscious instincts, and pursues immediate gratification. The Ego, recognized as the mediator, attempts to satisfy the Id's demands while respecting the limits imposed by the Superego. The Superego, defined as the individual's conscience, strives to regulate behavior within acceptable societal norms. These behavioral standards are the product of the child's identification with his/her parents who have communicated society's rules through a system of reward, punishment, and example (Mackie, 1994).

The **cognitive perspective** emphasizes the development of perceptions and thought processes and explains behavior in terms of children's mental efforts to organize their social environment (Renzetti & Curran, 1989). Not unlike Freud, Piaget's theory explains human development as the collaboration of both biological and environmental factors. The development of moral thought is at the center of Piaget's theory. Children are described as active learners who attempt to develop a sense of right and wrong. The systematic changes in children's thought patterns are demonstrated through the development of two levels of morality. Moral realism, attained between the ages of four to seven, judges misbehavior in terms of the consequences of the act, whereas moral autonomy, achieved by the ages of seven to nine, concerns itself with the reasons for misbehaving. The moral realists are

unconcerned with the extenuating circumstances or the intention of the wrongdoer, they believe that rules are sacred and digressions should not be tolerated. Moral autonomists, on the other hand, view rules as "arbitrary social conventions" and somewhat adaptable to particular situations. Piaget believes that the development of morality is made possible through the maturation of cognitive ability which evolves from the interaction of genetic capacities and social experiences (Mackie, 1994).

**Social learning theory**, in contrast to Freud's and Piaget's theories, focuses exclusively on the impact of environmental factors on the child. One of the basic learning principles of this theoretical approach is the notion of reinforcement and how it shapes behavior to conform with the expectations of socialization agents such as parents and teachers. The child is defined as a passive learner who is influenced by the rewards and punishment received for appropriate and inappropriate behavior. This theory also advocates that children learn vicariously by observing and modeling the behavior, perceived values, beliefs, and norms displayed by significant others. Mackie (1994), explains that observational learning also appears to be mainly responsible for the acquisition of language. She claims that children copy language and learn the meaning associated with language through the same imitation process responsible for other forms of behaviors.

Whereas social learning theory emphasizes the passive processes of conditioning and modeling, **symbolic interaction theory** accents the individual's active participation in the socialization process. Symbolic interactionists argue that humans possess autonomy and the ability to make choices. They posit, unlike learning theorists, that people act from internal reasons rather than external causes (Teevan & Hewitt 1995). The term symbolic interaction

underscores how human beings, through everyday interactions with significant others, develop and use symbols to interpret, understand, and give meaning to their social world. This theoretical approach assumes that human behavior involves choices, and choices are based on definitions of a particular situation. Individuals do not automatically respond to the world around them, they behave in anticipation of the consequences their behavior will have on themselves, on significant others, and the social world in which they live. As they interpret the implication of their actions they develop a sense of who they are and how they are connected to the rest of the social world. Reality is viewed as a matter of social definition which is constantly negotiated and renegotiated (Coakley, 1994).

The symbolic interactionist perspective was influenced by both Cooley and Mead, who were concerned with the development of the self. Cooley illustrated, by way of the looking glass notion, that individuals, through interactions with parents, peers and teachers, come to see themselves as they imagine others see them. In his view, people's self concepts are shaped by their perceptions of others' reactions to them. Although Mead's thoughts incorporate Cooley's insights, he elaborated that self development or self awareness requires the capacity to use language and interact symbolically. Furthermore, Mead contended that to interact with others, one must take the role of the other in order to imagine how this other views them, and to know what this other expects of them. Mead insisted that individuals act and react to one another according to these mental interpretations (Mackie, 1987). Mackie explains that Mead's self includes the " Me", a socially defined facet that represents internalized societal attitudes and expectations. The self also contains the "I", a unique and emancipated facet that produces spontaneity and individuality. These societal and individual

aspects of the self collaborate and highlight the interactive quality of the interactionist perspective. Moreover, since the self emerges out of relationships with others, development does not end in childhood but continues to evolve as individuals meet new people and adapt to new situations.

**Gender Socialization**

Volumes upon volumes of research on gender differences begin with an examination of biologically based differences between males and females. The biological argument centers around the role hormones and genetics play in establishing these differences. Mackie (1987), explains that people tend to concentrate on differences between the sexes rather than on similarities and asserts that "we tend to overlook the fact that males and females share much the same body blueprint" (p.19). Nonetheless, hundreds of studies have reported dichotomous psychological differences that originate from these biological differences. Recent reviews of this body of research, however, disclose that few conclusions can be drawn from this literature (Gill, 1992; Mackie, 1987). Gill states that "overlap and similarities are much more apparent than differences when comparing males and females" (p.144). Furthermore, variations within male and female categories are actually greater than the differences between the genders, which suggest that the discrepancies may be the outcome of predominantly social rather than biological factors (Duda, 1991).

Although the research on gender differences implies that boys and girls are more alike than different in behavior and aptitude, society maintains its belief in gender differences. This gender bias stems from the pervasiveness of gender stereotyped beliefs

and expectations (Gill, 1992; Mead & Ignico, 1992). Ashmore (1986), defines gender stereotypes as "the structured set of beliefs about the personal attributes of women and men. Stereotypes summarize and organize what the individual has learned about social groups such as men and women" (as cited in Hoyenga & Hoyenga, 1993). Gender roles are the expected, prescribed and proscribed behaviors associated with gender in a given society. Whereas, gender role attitudes refer to convictions people hold vis a vis these expected behaviourial patterns for men and women (Mackie, 1987).

On a cognitive level, people inherently categorize everything, including categorizing people into various groupings. Through the process of social categorization, people are classified on the basis of gender, race and other common attributes. By grouping people into existing mental categories, we quickly form impressions which allow us to act appropriately based on social norms and learned stereotypes. Stereotypes act as cognitive filters which help us select relevant information that is consistent with these categories when we interpret our environment. Unfortunately, this categorization process induces us to overestimate the differences between groups, and to underestimate differences within groups (Alcock, Carment & Savada, 1994).

Gender is recognized as the most obvious social category used to describe ourselves and others. Typical males are said to be assertive, independent, aggressive and task oriented, while typical females are described as sensitive, gentle, dependent and emotional. People all over the world make distinctions between boys and girls, men and women. In many respects, gender dramatically affects the type of life people lead. The beliefs and expectations about men and women are so ingrained that they influence the behavior of

adults the moment a child is born, and are reinforced and perpetuated through the practices of gender socialization. Renzetti and Curran (1989), define gender socialization as the process through which society's values and norms, pertaining to masculinity and femininity, are taught and learned.

From the very beginning, children are treated differently according to their sex. In one particular study, within twenty-four hours of birth, new parents used gender stereotypes to describe their babies. Girls were characterized as soft, small, and delicate, whereas boys were described as strong, alert, and coordinated. Although objective differences were not found between the boys and girls during earlier physical exams, parents tended to react differently to their newborns on the basis of sex (Renzetti & Curran, 1989). In a recent 1989 replication of this classic 1974 study, parents still described their infant child's physical attributes differently, which suggests that gender ideology has remained virtually unchanged over the last fifteen years (Greendorfer, Lewko, & Rosengren, 1996). Renzetti and Curran (1989), state that it is not unreasonable to suspect that these early stereotypical perceptions lay the foundation for differential treatment of sons and daughters.

Studies reveal that both parents are generally more protective of daughters and more restrictive with regard to their play activities. Parents, especially fathers, generally engage in rougher and more physical play with boys, and elicit more gross motor activity from sons than from daughters. Girls are handled more gently and picked up more often, are watched over more closely and denied the freedom to wander off and explore their environment (Coakley, 1994). Differential parental treatment predispose boys to be active, aggressive, and independent whereas girls learn to be dependent and inactive. Other comparative

studies in communicative styles found that mothers respond and communicate with sons and daughters differently which may account for the less assertive but more talkative communication styles displayed by girls (Renzetti & Curran, 1989).

Pellett and Ignico (1993) assert that by age three, children have been socialized into stereotypical gender roles. They explain that parents not only have different behavioral expectations for sons and daughters but they also positively reinforce gender appropriate behavior and negatively reinforce cross-gender behavior. Pellett and Ignico conclude that "adherence to these stereotypically defined gender-roles patterns are significant and affect learning and development in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor areas" (p.1284).

Further research has shown that the child's social environment is also an important influence on gender socialization. A related study revealed that ninety percent of children observed in shopping malls were dressed in sex typed clothing. Renzetti and Curran (1989), explain that the color of the clothing, pink or blue, supplies information on how the child should be treated, whereas the type of clothing, ruffles or sporting outfits, encourage or discourage certain behaviors and activities. Additionally, studies on the design and content of children's bedrooms, nurseries and playrooms exhibited traditional conceptions of femininity and masculinity. Two sets of studies one in 1975 and one in 1990, found that boys' rooms were more sports and action oriented, whereas girls' rooms were more family oriented. Given these observations, it is not surprising that other researchers discovered that children between the ages of four and twelve have strong preferences for gender typical toys (Greendorfer, Lewko & Rosengren, 1996). These particular studies emphasized that stereotyped settings can promote and set standards of gender appropriate behavior, while

gender typed toys teach children particular skills and encourage them to explore distinct and unequal social roles for the future (Renzetti & Curran, 1989).

Renzetti and Curran (1989) advance that the parent/child interaction studies are examples of social learning theory which maintains that children learn behaviors through reinforcement and imitation. The environmental studies are examples of cognitive development theory which contends that children acquire gender by decoding everyday observations and experiences. Together, these studies help explain why most four year old children come to prefer culturally defined gender activities, and why preschoolers pair off with same sex playmates. The main limitation of social learning theory, however, is that it only deals with the impact of external factors on behavior, and does not consider cognitive or affective influences associated with the learning process. In contrast, the cognitive-developmental theory, defined as a "self socialization" theory (Mackie, 1991, p.95), is inadequate because it downplays the critical role of culture in the acquisition of gender, and does not account for the wide variations in degree of femininity and masculinity displayed by girls and boys (Greenglass, 1982).

McPherson (1986) acknowledges that one theoretical perspective cannot adequately account for the multifaceted process or outcomes of socialization. He elaborates that social learning theory and cognitive development theory are sound explanatory frameworks at a macrolevel of analysis. At this level more universal outcomes occur, the learning process is more predictable, and the learner passively responds to socializers and the environment. Macrolevel analysis accounts for conformity to societal norms and the maintenance of social order. However, a micro level of analysis is more useful when individual learning and

situation specific outcomes must be accounted for. Symbolic interactionism is a theory that rationalizes less predictable outcomes and, as indicated earlier, recognizes the learner as actively involved in the process.

Since symbolic interactionism focuses on the social influences that mold and shape human behavior, an interactive framework will be used to explain how the social reality of gender influences the experiences and activities of boys and girls within the physical domain.

**Sport socialization**

Earlier, I borrowed from Mackie (1987) and defined socialization as a lifelong social process through which individuals develop a sense of self and acquire the knowledge, skills, values, norms, and dispositions required to fulfill present or anticipated social roles. The sport socialization process is also conceptualized to include these components. Brustad (1992) elaborates and defines socialization into sport "as the social and psychological influences that shape an individual's initial attraction to sport. These influences include the prevalent attitudes and values within the family or peer group" (p.60).

As noted earlier, parents, through gender role socialization, encourage physical activity via the toys they give to children and by the type of play they allow and encourage. Greendorfer (1992) contends that differential treatment of girls and boys, gender role stereotyping, and labeling of activities are potent social forces that guide sport socialization practices. She advances that the ideological beliefs perpetuated by these social practices are responsible for the over representation of males and the under representation of females in

physical activity and sport (Greendorfer, Lewko & Rosengren, 1996). Although the continued prevalence of gender ideology explains gender differences in sport participation patterns, it does not explain the increased participation of girls and women in sport and exercise related activities in the last 20 years (Coakley, 1994; Greendorfer, Lewko & Rosengren, 1996). Obviously, a great number of girls consider sport to be an appropriate activity, despite ideological beliefs and cultural values.

**Social Context and Gender Related Behavior**

To explain both the variability and stability of gender behavior, Deaux and Major (1987) developed an interactive model that emphasizes the importance of the social context on gender related behaviors. Although the authors recognize the influences of gender socialization and gender beliefs systems on the social context, they maintain that the application of an interactive model will permit greater insights into gender related behavior. They advocate that gender related behaviors may differ as a function of personal choice, the behavior of others, and the situational context. The extent that gender linked behaviors occur depends on the expectations of the perceiver based on his/her gender belief system, the gender related self conceptions of a target individual, and situational cues.

Deaux and Major (1987) explain that some perceivers are more gender focused than others. Bem (as cited in Deaux & Major, 1987) elaborates that certain individuals are "gender schematic" while others are "gender aschematic". She explains that gender schematics tend to interpret situations and process information in terms of gender stereotypes, whereas gender aschematics are more neutral in their perceptions and are less

likely to use gender as an organizing principle. The authors maintain that if the perceiver has stereotypical expectations, and given that sport is categorized as gender appropriate by sex typed individuals, the target's actions may reflect the expectancy.

Eccles and Harold (1991) advance that, for a gender stereotyped activity like sport, gender differences in involvement are mediated by differences in achievement perceptions. They developed a research framework, the "expectancy-value model", which recognizes performance expectations and task value as key determinants of behavioral choice. They advocate that the inclusion of both expectancy and value on activity choice, insures a link between the child's view of the activity with his/her view of self.

When Eccles and Harold (1991) assessed both self perceptions and activity perceptions on sport involvement, they reported that gender differences are present in expectancies and task values as early as Grade 1, and endure over time. The results on self concept of ability disclosed that girls perceived themselves as less able than boys in math and sports. Of the three domains tested (English, math, and sport), girls viewed themselves as least competent in the physical domain, whereas, boys viewed themselves as most able in this area. Interestingly enough, the children's evaluation of their own sport ability corresponded with their gender stereotyped beliefs about sport. Girls who had high estimates of their own physical abilities considered sport an appropriate activity for girls.

In the assessment of perceived task value, both boys and girls found that doing well in math and English was more important than doing well in sports. Girls, however, viewed doing well in both math and English as more important than did the boys, while boys considered doing well in sports as much more important than did the girls. These findings

support earlier results which suggested that sport is the more important popularity attribute for boys, while grades are for girls (Greendorfer, Lewko & Rosengren, 1996). Additionally, on the basis of the usefulness of what is learned, the boys rated the sport domain as more useful and more enjoyable than did the girls. The girls, on the other hand, appraised English as more useful and more enjoyable than did the boys (Eccles & Harold, 1991).

As hypothesized, the differences in the children's beliefs and self perceptions led them to be differentially involved in activities from the three domains which supports the model's link between expectancies/value and activity choice. Boys spend more time being physically active than girls, whereas girls spend more time involved in both math related activities and reading and writing activities than boys (Eccles & Harold, 1991).

A number of studies have attempted to identify possible sources of influence that shape these differences in perceptions and values. Empirical research reveals that children who engage in various forms of physical activity have been noticeably influenced by their parents (Brustad, 1996; Eccles & Harold, 1991). A study on four to seven year old children showed that parental activity level is directly related to levels of activity in children. The study determined that active fathers had more impact on children's level of activity than active mothers. Additionally, the researchers found that the greatest influence occurred when both parents were active, revealing that children are six times more likely to be active in this situation. Parental activity level, however, seemed to impact more significantly on sons than on daughters (Greendorfer, Lewko and Rosengren, 1996).

Eccles and Harold (1991) maintain, however, that parental belief systems are more significant than parental role modeling behaviors in the socialization process. The authors

theorize that parents provide different levels of support for children's involvement in free choice activities (e.g., physical activity, art, music) based on their personal beliefs about their child's natural dispositions and capacities, and based on their views of the value of the particular domain. Their investigation revealed that boys receive more encouragement and are provided with more opportunities to participate in sports than girls. Furthermore, they found that parents place lower value on the sport participation of girls than boys.

A number of later studies have consistently confirmed these findings. Brustad (1993), in a study that attempted to identify influences on 10 year old children's attraction to physical activity, found that parents provide sons with more encouragement to be physically active than girls, and demonstrated that the amount of parental encouragement is affected by gender role expectations. Another study by Coakley and White (1992) identified parental constraints as a factor that limited adolescent girls' involvement in physical activity. The girls reported that decisions about sport and leisure activities were problematic because restrictions were imposed on "where they could go, who they could go with, and when they had to return" (p.28). Conditional permission associated with parental concerns for well being and safety was not experienced by the males in the study. Once again the study pinpointed parental support and encouragement as key factors influencing participation.

Eccles' and Harold's (19991) expectancy-value model also provides an in depth analysis of the relationship between parental expectations of children's ability in physical activity and the children's own perceptions of ability. As part of the overall testing of their model, the authors examined the influences parents exert on their children in relation to

gender differences in sport involvement. It was found that greater levels of encouragement translated into favorable self perceptions of ability and continued interest and participation in the physical domain. Generally, this research supported theoretical predictions that, eventually, children adopt expectancies and values that are similar to those of their parents, which subsequently predict levels of involvement.

Harter (as cited in Brustad, 1992) also contends that children's self related perceptions in academic, social and physical domains emerge primarily from the feedback provided by significant others, especially parents. He explains that when parents communicate support for the child's effort, the child is more likely to perceive that he or she has aptitudes in that achievement domain and will display interest in pursuing challenging opportunities in the future[9]. Eccles, Jacob and Harold (1990) also argue that parents' gender differentiated perceptions and expectations of children's ability in sport, ultimately affect children's self perception, interest and skill acquisition in that milieu [10]. Eccles et al. explain that even though these perceptions are not based on actual differences in ability, they set in motion a process of self fulfilling prophecies. As a result of the gender biased impressions of their parents, children avoid activities in which they lack confidence. Eccles et al. conclude that self fulfilling prophecies contribute to gender differences in both math and sports. This theory support Cooley's and Mead's claim that the self concept is shaped

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[9] A 1989 study by Brustad and Weigand supported Harter's link between parental reinforcement and children's motivational patterns. In this study, children who received parental support and encouragement for their sport-related efforts displayed greater intrinsic motivation than did children who received less favorable support from parents (Brustad, 1992).

[10] See Brustad (1993) and Brustad (1996) for additional empirical studies on levels of parental encouragement and children's perceived competence in sport.

through social interaction and the process of interpretation (Teevan & Hewitt, 1995).

Overall, these studies show that children's initial attraction and involvement in physical activity, as well as their perceptions of ability are consistently linked to parental beliefs and behaviors. An interactionist view, however, does not presume that children simply respond or internalize external influences. Rather, and as Deaux and Major (1987) maintain, the degree to which the expected behaviors are enacted, hinges on the target's self system. The theorists explain that gender related facets of the self, called gender schemas, are often activated in gender linked situations. Hence, when women find themselves in a male dominant area such as sport, they may have more doubts about their abilities and consequently conform to the perceivers' expectancies.

Schools were also recognized as a possible influence on children's ability perceptions. Eccles' and Harold's (1991) study showed that teachers rated sport ability higher for boys than girls, although their ratings of boys' and girls' abilities in math and reading did not differ noticeably. They advanced that children's self perceptions of ability are affected by grades awarded for physical performances and through other more subtle messages received during physical education classes. Earlier reviews have confirmed that schools are an important influence of sport socialization for boys which contrasts with the more diffuse and less predictable pattern for girls (Greendorfer, 1992; Griffin, 1989). Greendorfer (1992) contends that for girls, schools merely reinforce sport roles learned elsewhere, and accents that schools do not introduce girls to sport nor do they teach them sport skills. Furthermore, it seems that, for the most part, physical educators do not focus on student learning, but rather, provide situations that emphasize order and participation

(Bain, 1990).

Thus, children's decisions to participate in physical activity are negotiated within the context of their social environment and influenced by their self perception characteristics. These elements, which are consistent with a symbolic interactionist framework, confirm Deaux' and Major's model, and can potentially explain the differences between men and women as well as the differences among members of the same group.

**Conclusion**

Even though people have modified their beliefs about gender over the last two decades, the above mentioned studies clearly demonstrate that gender stereotypes still endure today. Dominant ideology still prescribes and limits the range of appropriate physical activities for girls. Moreover, girls' socialization patterns tend to guide them away from physical activity, since sport is more closely identified with the male role. Unlike boys, they are not taught that physical activity and sport achievements can be a source of reward in their lives, their fathers spend considerable less time in shared physical activities with them, and their play time is more regulated and controlled by their parents (Coakley, 1994). Consequently, girls' stereotypical play does not promote the development of fundamental motor skills required for physical activities and sports (Mead & Ignico, 1992). Despite these restrictions, girls' participation in various types and levels of sport activities has increased since Title IX.

As noted earlier, the decisions young people make about sport involvement are tied to patterns of encouragement and support from significant others. Initially, girls must

receive encouragement from both parents if they are to prevail over the current societal norms that discourage or profess indifference for female sport involvement. Furthermore, they must be part of a family that values sport, have a mother who was or is physically active, as well as older siblings who participate and are interested in sport activities. Girls must associate with same sex peers who are also involved in sports, and must receive encouragement from physical education teachers and coaches during elementary and high school years. An additional variable that promotes interest and participation are the cultural values, norms and opportunities within specific communities (McPherson, Curtis & Loy, 1989). It is within this social milieu that girls are given the opportunity to learn athletic skills and to develop self perceptions of abilities. In the Montreal area, the West Island is a strong example of a community that encourages girls' participation in sport. Girls have always played sports on the West Island and grow up learning ringette, soccer, softball, hockey and swimming. For these girls the role of athlete becomes a desirable and valued part of their overall identity.

As illustrated earlier, differential gender involvement in sport is mostly due to modifiable social factors. Interventions are needed to increase girls' confidence level in the sport domain, and to raise the value they attach to sport activities. Parents, teachers, and coaches must recognize how gender relations operate to restrict girls' sport and leisure choices. They must foster equal status interactions and behaviors to insure that girls receive the same benefits as boys. Within schools, the health related value of physical activity must be emphasized and physical education classes must become a positive affective environment that stresses cooperation and skill development rather than performance and competition

(Eccles & Harold, 1991). Ultimately, alternative definitions of femininity are needed if girls are ever to be freed of patterns of protectiveness and constraints associated with gender. Only then will girls receive the same opportunities to develop competence in physical activities and sport (Coakley, 1994).

In the following chapter, I trace the historical development of physical education within our educational system, and point to the determining role societal ideologies plays in this process. I argue that physical education environments serve an important role in gender socialization, and perpetuate the foundations of our male dominated society.

# CHAPTER THREE

# HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

"Our failure to make significant changes in the ways girls and boys participate in physical education is due largely to two factors. One, we have not examined carefully enough how gender is conceptualized by both teachers and students and how deeply rooted that conceptualization is in the larger societal context. Two, we have been naive in our attempts to address gender inequity in physical education. By framing the problem as one of simply providing equal access, we have failed to question the structure of sport and physical education and the sacred meaning they have in a male-dominated society." (Griffin, 1989b, p.220-221)

The notion that physical activity leads to health and well being is centuries old. This belief was revered by the ancient Greeks who recognized the importance of educating the whole person. Their educational system reflected this view, and strived to develop both the mental and physical abilities of their young male students. In the modern world, the pursuit of physical fitness has undergone a transformation from being an able bodied male concept, to one that embraces both sexes, all age groups, as well as the disabled. Initially fitness was achieved through a narrow range of practices such as gymnastics and calisthenics, whereas today it is attained through a much wider variety of activities that include sports and dance (Lumpkin, 1990).

As discussed earlier, studies indicate that girls are more inclined to inactivity than boys. By the time girls attain puberty they generally reach a plateau in their physical activity patterns, whereas boys continue to participate and improve their physical skills well into adulthood. In several Canadian provinces, girls opt out, far more than boys, when physical education classes become optional in the last years of high school, and are less likely to return to physical activity later in life (Robinson, 1997; Humbert, 1996). In order to reap the health benefits of an active lifestyle, girls must be encouraged to pursue physical activity to the same extent as boys. An excellent avenue to reach all females is the school physical education program. The experiences and opportunities of young girls, however, are hindered by the inequities that exist within a great number of these programs.

Before I discuss the ongoing inequities that exist in physical education programs today, I will outline the historical development of girls' physical education within the educational system, from the time it emerged as a separate subject from the boys', to the

current situation where both programs have merged. This historical overview will show how society's ideologies about women influenced the growth of physical education within the schooling system, and will feature the unfavorable circumstances that women were up against in order to secure the right to participate. It should be noted that historical sources dealing with the early experiences of Canadian women in physical education are somewhat limited. As Lenskyj (1991) accents, however, American sources are relevant to the Canadian situation since there was substantial cross fertilization across the border. Through professional literature and conferences in the early 1900's, Ontario and English Quebec doctors and physical educators were strongly influenced by the attitudes and practices of their American counterparts from the north eastern states.

During the last century and a half, women's patterns of participation in sports and physical education have evolved from an almost total lack of acceptance to an active promotion in a wide variety of activities. The changes in habits and attitudes associated with female sporting participation closely paralleled the progress women made in other facets of life in North America.

**Early 19th Century: 1800-1860**

During the 19th century, women were relegated to dependent and subordinate roles, and the ideology of the time prescribed marriage and motherhood as desirable goals. Women strived for "true womanhood" which was characterized by ideals of piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity (Spears & Swanson, 1983; Vertinsky, 1994). As Vertinsky (1994) states, the dominant view of women's role in life was distinctly different from that

of men.

> The clear distinction between female and male roles encouraged the social construction of separate realms of activity for men and women — an active, public role for men in society and a confined and domestic role for women in the privacy of the home. (p.66)

Given these disparate gender roles, women appropriately avoided vigorous exercise, outdoor activities and physical labor. Furthermore, since it was stylish to have small waists and weak backs, women seduced by popular fashion, wore apparel which restricted circulation and freedom of movement. Consequently, a recurrent theme of the nineteenth century was the concern expressed by medical practitioners about the physical deterioration of women (Spears & Swanson, 1983; Vertinsky, 1994). As Vertinsky (1994) emphasizes, "physiologists were particularly worried that women who were living "unphysiologically" might produce weak and degenerate offsprings. Girls, they insisted, needed more exercise at a critical developmental period to become robust mothers" (p.65).

In response to health reformers who argued that exercise and hygienic living habits would improve women's physical energy and health, minor gains were made in women's physical activity patterns during the first half of the 19th century. Even though education for girls was controversial at this time, a broader concept of education was envisioned in a number of private schools and seminaries for girls, and in some women's colleges in the United States. However, the choice of appropriate activities was a concern for the schools who offered these programs. As articulated by one school founder, "prevailing notions of female delicacy and propriety are at variance with every attempt to render females less feeble and helpless" (Lee, 1983, p.37). Nonetheless, these schools provided a wide variety

of activities which included calisthenics, croquet, swimming, dancing, riding sidesaddle, and walking.

By the middle of the century, public elementary schools were established in the United States, and instruction in health and exercise was slowly initiated in state and city school (Spears & Swanson, 1983). Canada's public education system also started to spread to the more densely populated cities, and although differences existed in the development of physical education in Quebec and Ontario, as a result of independent provincial Departments of Education, the importance of physical education and exercise was recognized. With the possible exception of Quebec's French Catholic school system, it was acknowledged that schools were responsible for the physical as well as the intellectual development of children (Gurney, 1983). Although teachers had no formal training in this area, and lacked a well defined idea of the significance of physical education, play was recognized for its educational and recreational value and time in the schedule was set aside for games and physical exercise (Spears & Swanson, 1983).

Although physical education programs were initiated to improve the health of both boys and girls, considerable differences existed in the programs that appeared in the schools at this time. Boys followed a German[11] pattern of calisthenics considered too strenuous for girls, while girls adhered to a system of exercises that used wand drills and apparatus consisting of bars and pulleys devised to improve posture and strength. Though these programs appeared in a number of schools as early as the 1860's, physical education only

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[11] European traditions had a profound influence on North American physical education programs during the 19th century (Lumpkin, 1990).

became a required subject in the curriculum in the latter parts of the 19th century in the United States, and later still in Canada (Spears & Swanson, 1983; Cochrane, Hoffman & Kincaid, 1977).

Even though popular activities[12] are occasionally referred to in the literature, overall, women of this period were severely restricted in their recreational pursuits. Social values and norms dictated the acceptability of physical activities, and for the most part, women followed these constraints.

**Physical Education of the latter 19th Century: 1860-1900**

The second set of forces that insured some measure of change in women's exercise patterns was the growing concern for women's rights. During the 1860's, women crusaded to change the status of women. The first women's rights movement appeared and challenged traditional constraints on education, work and leisure pursuits. These demands included improved health and a more varied choice of physical activities. By the 1870's, industrialization and advances in technology generated new opportunities and provided women with the means to escape the obligations of domestic life. The 1870's also distinguished itself as the first full decade of higher education for women (Vertinsky, 1994).

It was mainly through the growth of education for women, at the end of this century, that physical activity for women was legitimized. Women's colleges and universities in the northeastern United States and in eastern Canada, offered different exercise systems as well

[12] The most popular and acceptable activities were dancing, horseback riding, and participating as spectators at horse races (Spears & Swanson, 1983).

as a variety of sports[13] to attain physical education's objective of improved health. In Canada, McGill University appointed its first women's gymnastics instructor in 1886, while the main influence on women's physical education came in 1889 when the Royal Victoria College for Women opened and employed Miss Ethel Mary Cartwright as resident instructor (Gurney, 1983).

However, it should be noted that the social status of women had a definite bearing on recreational pursuits. Whereas the socially elite had the time and money to engage in acceptable physical activities, the lower classes, overwhelmed by physical demands inside and outside of the home, had little energy for exercise nor did they have access to the private schools, universities and exclusive athletic clubs that provided physical opportunities for young ladies (Vertinsky, 1994; Lenskyj, 1986).

The demand for greater opportunities, and the increase in female rates of participation occurred mostly through athletic clubs and educational institutions. During the latter period of the 19th century, croquet, archery, and tennis became extremely popular pastimes, and were regarded as appropriate activities for female recreation. Women also engaged in horseback riding, bowling, rowing, skating and yachting, but none of these activities exerted the same influence on women's physical emancipation as bicycling. Vertinsky (1994) writes:

> For women, bicycling offered the potential for physical mobility and the benefits of healthy, active recreation, as well as a new sense of liberty from restrictive dress and chaperone. When American women took to the bicycle, dress reform became a necessity, demanding a loosening of corsets and the

[13] Games and sports were an English legacy that was initially added into the physical education component of private schools (Lumpkin, 1990).

> dividing of heavy skirts into knickerbockers or bloomers. Middle-class women who hitherto had lacked time, wealth, and social status to participate in elite sport found a sporting activity to suit their needs and a new means of transportation to increase their freedom of movement. (p.70)

In the 1880's and 1890's, the women's rights movement was gaining momentum, and different organizations emerged to channel women's energies. Women became much more concerned with their rights, their education, and their health (Hall & Richardson, 1982). By 1890, a modern vision of the "new woman" had emerged. Women of this generation were more independent, and had more opportunities outside the home. They attended colleges, had professional occupations or were busy with volunteer organizations. Not unlike today, women were presented with, and strived to attain, the ideal body image of the time. The Gibson Girl, "tall, vigorous, and commanding"(Hult, 1994, p. 85), a look created by a fashion artist, was promoted by *Life* and *American Beauty* magazines and became the popular symbol of womanhood.

Despite these gains, the physical emancipation of women was constrained by stereotyped assumptions of women's natural physical inferiority, and their prescribed role in society. Attempts to discourage female participation converged on the belief that women, perceived as gentle and docile, should not depart from their role of high moral standing to pursue such masculine endeavors as sport. Furthermore, the medical profession denounced the potential risks associated with physical activity. Eminent medical practitioners attempted to curtail women's efforts by establishing their intellectual and physical inferiority. In the late 1800's, male doctors claimed that female education weakened the female constitution. They maintained that energy spent on intellectual and physical pursuits

would tax energy stores required for childbearing. Vitalist theorists argued that the human body contained a limited and non-renewable amount of vital energy which had to be preserved and expended on specific needs (Vertinsky, 1994; Lenskyj, 1986). As Lenskyj notes, "women had a moral duty to preserve their vital energy for childbearing and to cultivate personality traits suited to the wife-mother role. Sport wasted vital force, strained female bodies and fostered traits unbecoming to "true womanhood"" (p.18).

The belief that academic pressures were a detriment to women's health influenced physical education practices well into the 20th century. However, female frailty myths prompted a strong focus on health and physical development in women's colleges and in coeducational institutions of the time. It was advanced that women could pursue their studies and remain healthy if they were provided with physical training and exercise. Most of these institutions engaged male doctors to oversee the development of the programs, while female physical educators, who accepted and followed the guidance of these medical advisors, were hired to teach the increasing number of female students. Their aim was to balance the demands of education with healthful and appropriate physical activities since the medical position held that female anatomy and physiology could only endure the most gentle exercises. Programs that included gymnastics and recreational games were implemented and enabled women to become strong enough to withstand the rigors of 'brain work' (Hult, 1994; Lenskyj, 1986).

The women who were hired to teach physical education in North America at the end of the 19th century, were mostly graduates of a British system of women's specialist colleges of physical education. This system endorsed a powerful ideology which aimed "to send out

women trained in mind and character as well as in body"(Hargreaves, 1994, p.76). This philosophy provided a day-to-day impetus for the new physical education profession, and as Hargreaves (1994) emphasizes, it also constitutes a particular version of feminism which resolves "that a freer, sounder and more responsible womanhood was essential to the well-being of any country" (p.76).

These specialist colleges featured a Swedish[14] system of therapeutic gymnastics which developed both health and balance, as well as English games which promoted appropriate female sport behaviors and values. This tradition eventually surfaced in physical education teacher programs in the United States and consequently inspired girls' physical education for the next half century. These women physical educators also influenced and controlled programs in YWCA's, the Girl Scouts, sports associations and athletic clubs, the Playground and Recreation Association, and advocated a minimally competitive model of sport for girls and women. They instituted modified rules in several sports in order to control unladylike behavior, and to contain what could become an overly competitive environment (Vertinsky, 1994; Hult, 1994). Prospective female physical educators from Canada were also influenced by these practices since they received their professional training in either British or American institutions until professional preparation for physical education teachers evolved in Canada in the 20th century (Gurney, 1983).

Although women had made substantial gains in the realm of sport and physical

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[14] This system, known as Ling's system, originated from the Royal Central Gymnastics Institute in Stockholm. It emerged and permeated the system in Britain upon the appointment of Mme Bergman-Osterberg to the London post of superintendent of physical education in girls' schools in 1879 (Vertinsky, 1994).

activity during the 19th century, sportswomen were still a minority among women in North America. Women remained disadvantaged and experienced discrimination relative to men, justified by claims of their biological limitations and by patriarchal beliefs that sport was not a respectable activity for women.

**Physical Education & Sport in the 20th Century: The First Two Decades**

By the end of the 19th century, sport had become a natural past time for the upper classes. During the first two decades of the 20th century, with the advent of public parks and urban recreation facilities, sport and physical activity opportunities spread to middle and to working class men. Publicly owned and operated tennis courts, playing fields, and golf courses enticed the masses to play baseball, basketball, football, volleyball, as well as tennis and golf. Religious leaders, educators, and doctors increasingly recognized physical activity for its health enhancing qualities, and play was gradually accepted as a respectable and healthy activity (Spears & Swanson, 1983).

Nevertheless, sport activity for women in Canada, prior to World War I, was still mainly confined to women of means. For these women, liberal opportunities were available through private schools, universities, and exclusive clubs. Women took up most forms of physical activity, with the exception of sports with body contact, which remained strictly forbidden (Cochrane, Hoffman & Kincaid, 1977). The increase in female rates of participation became noticeable enough to attract the medical profession's attention, who, once again challenged the wisdom of female sporting activity. As mentioned earlier, physical activity had become an established part of the curriculum at women's colleges at

the end of the 19th century, and follow up studies confirmed the positive effects of exercise on health and academic achievement. Medical critics generally agreed that carefully regulated and monitored exercise, promoted general well-being and functional health in females. Yet, and despite the lack of medical research to substantiate the alleged health risks associated with intense physical activity, doctors condemned 'excessive' female physical activity during this time (Lenskyj, 1986).

Predictably, women's participation was also compromised in a number of other ways. Whereas most sporting activities for women, in the United States, were taking place in the schools, Canadian[15] women had ample opportunities through leagues, clubs, YWCA's, and church groups. Yet, women could only become auxiliary members of clubs if they were related to, or were sponsored by a male member. Furthermore, the facilities were only available to these women when it did not inconvenience the men. In 1914, a further restriction, mandated by the Amateur Athletic Union of Canada, stipulated that women could only participate at gender segregated games or events and would not be allowed to compete at athletic meets where men were entered. Given these attitudes, women started up their own sport organizations and separate branches of men's clubs, but since most facilities were controlled by men, women had little influence on the policies that impacted on them (Cochrane, Hoffman & Kincaid, 1977; Hall & Richardson, 1982).

Additionally, the rules of a number of sports were modified because society not only accepted women's physiological limitations, but believed that women must avoid all

[15] In Canada, the importance of physical activity for girls in public schools, was still mostly ignored (Cochrane, Hoffman & Kincaid, 1977).

displays of masculine type behaviors. Lenskyj (1986) describes the typical philosophy of the period as it pertained to sports for women.

> ...sports, particularly a game like basketball, developed courage, self-denial, self-control and "gentle manners" — all desirable qualities of true "womanhood"... modifications to the game were intended to control the "roughness" — the body contact and risk of falling — and to reduce its demands on speed and endurance. The modified game restricted players' movement to specific sections of the court and allowed no interference between players. It moved "on the pace of ping-pong", according to the Windsor Collegiate teacher who first introduced the game to Ontario high schools in 1900. (p.28)

Although physical education programs were considerably different for men and women, the general trend in the United States at this time, was a decrease in gymnastics and an increase in sport activities. John Dewey was probably the most influential educator to emphasize the role of play in the education of children. He maintained that exercise should be more spontaneous and enjoyable, and accented the importance of education through the physical. As a result, more games and sports were incorporated in the curriculum of both colleges and high schools (Spears & Swanson, 1983).

In Canada, the development of physical education was hampered by the lack of teacher education programs. As mentioned earlier, the few who had training were graduates of either American or British programs. Efforts were made to rectify this deficiency, and a Diploma Course for men was established in 1900 at the University of Toronto, while a similar course for women appeared in 1901. However, these programs failed to attract many students, and only four men and one woman received diplomas in the first five years of the programs' existence. Despite this set back, later initiatives provided strong leadership especially in women's physical education. In 1916, the Margaret Eaton School in Ontario

started to offer a two year training program for women, and continued to make an important contribution to girls' physical education until 1941. McGill University, under the guidance of Miss Cartwright who trained at a British specialist physical education college, initiated summer courses and diploma courses in physical education for women as early as 1912 (Gurney, 1983).

Teacher training in the other provinces was initially provided by the 'Strathcona Trust for the Encouragement of Physical and Military Training in the Public Schools of Canada'. This fund, established in 1911, supplied provincial grants for the organization of physical education in all public schools. Based on the Ling system of physical education used in Britain, a 'military-influenced' prototype of physical training was designed and adopted by most normal schools. Professional physical educators, who advanced a program that included a much wider range of activities, fervently opposed this approach. Nevertheless, all prospective grade school teachers were required to obtain a certificate to instruct in physical training as part of their teacher's certificate. The most significant contribution of the fund, other than providing some much needed training for teachers, was that physical education was legislated as an integral part of the school curriculum (Gurney, 1983).

All provinces were affected by this "rigid and militaristic" model. However, the high school programs in the English Protestant system of the greater Montreal area and in Ontario were minimally so. These areas had already been influenced by American programs and had initiated a broader, more modern approach. The military dominance was not wholly eradicated, in the other provinces, until physical education teacher education graduates

became predominant across Canada (Gurney, 1983).

**The Golden Age of Sports Activity for Canadian Women: 1924-1934**

The increase in mass sport for men, during the first decade of the 20th century, eventually created a greater demand for sport participation among women. The period between 1924 and 1934 was considered the Golden Age of physical activity for women. This growth period was mainly the result of an increase in urbanization and leisure time, as well as the newly recognized entertainment value of sport (Hall & Richardson, 1982; Cochrane, Hoffman & Kincaid, 1977). Furthermore, as more women entered the labor force as teachers, nurses, clerks, saleswomen, and clothing or textile workers, their demands for the same leisure time activities as men augmented. As Hall and Richardson (1982) state, women of this period had dual images:

> On the one hand they were lauded as ideal homemakers, feminine and maternal, morally superior to men but requiring protection. There was concern that too much education and work might destroy their maternal instincts. On the other hand, a new image of women was becoming increasingly prevalent. It portrayed women as equal to men and endowed them with the same capabilities. Their potential could be successfully developed in all areas, including those like sport, which had been associated almost exclusively with men. (p. 34)

During these golden years, the "loss of femininity" argument was temporarily silenced, thanks in part, to the extensive and complimentary media coverage of women in sport. Women sought greater control and autonomy over their athletic activities, and the closed door policies of the past, incited women to establish separate sports clubs and organizations governing this facet of their lives. It was also during this period that Canadian

women participated in the Olympic games for the first time, and our athletes dominated the women's track and field events during the 1928 Summer Olympics in Amsterdam.

Yet, there remained intense resistance to women as serious competitors, and the medical profession once again challenged the suitability of sports for women. This renewal was precipitated by the condition of a number of participants at the end of the women's 800 meter event at Amsterdam. It was reported that several sprinters had collapsed at the finish line, and were "in a state of great distress" (Cochrane, Hoffman & Kincaid, 1977, p. 42).

Although sports for women had finally reached the masses, it would be a mistake to presume that an overall acceptance of women in sport existed. Even in the 1930's, the female frailty myth still existed, and the rationale "anatomy is destiny" prevailed. As Lenskyj (1986) highlights, "For most doctors, unique female anatomy and physiology, embellished by social convention, constituted destiny. Ultimately, sporting competition at all levels, from intramural to Olympic, became the target of heated debate in medical and physical education circles" ( p.30).

Doctors viewed sportswomen as women first and athletes second, and all athletic injuries were defined as sex related versus sport related. Although medical opinion on issues of women's health and physical activity was predominantly based on intuition and ideology, rather than on scientific research, it nevertheless affected public perception (Lenskyj, 1986). Society's rigid definitions of gender appropriate behavior endured.

The liberal attitudes that benefitted women during these golden years, shifted with the Great Crash of 1929 and the Depression of the 1930's, and a resurgence of conservative ideas about women and sport reappeared. A hostile view about the appropriateness of

women's sports was becoming evident, and a certain rigidity was reintroduced vis a vis acceptable female behavior. As a result of these changes, a number of their sports organizations ceased to exist (Cochrane, Hoffman & Kincaid, 1977).

Moreover, reactionary attitudes prevalent in the United States impacted women's physical education in Canada. Ontario physical education had made tremendous gains in the 1920's, and because female physical educators were receiving more training in basic skill instruction through graduate programs and conferences in the United States, female students were provided with better learning opportunities (Gurney, 1983). The ethic that governed women's physical education in the States had been instituted by women physical educators, who, as discussed earlier, had a monopoly over girls' physical education. They advocated a less competitive and modified version of sports for girls, and fought to keep women's programs as unlike men's as possible. They argued for separate programs, teachers, coaches and officials. Hall and Richardson (1982) describe these women's convictions in the following manner.

> They championed what they saw as a "more moral and democratic athletic philosophy than men's". They had, in other words, converted women's supposed limitations into "exemplary social virtues" by accepting the idea of women's incapacity for achievement and competition and then calling "sport for sports sake" morally and socially superior. (p.35)

As a result of these American ideals, Canadian female physical educators downplayed the role of competition for girls. Physical educators were supportive of this regressive model from the States, and by the late 1930's, a great number of schools in and around Toronto and Montreal banned interscholastic competition for girls. Play days began to take the place of interscholastic and intercollegiate competition. The belief that "sport

run *by* women *for* women" became an entrenched philosophy among female physical educators, especially in Ontario. The war years brought further decline to women's sports and the non competitive image of women prevailed (Hall & Richardson, 1982; Cochrane, Hoffman & Kincaid. 1977).

**Physical education after 1945**

By the end of the war, and although a great many women had entered the work force during this period, attitudes about sport and occupational roles were conservative. Married women were mainly forced out of the work force, while unmarried women were channeled back into traditional occupations. Women's education became concerned with 'the problems of marriage' and offered courses in psychology and home economics. These courses emphasized interpersonal relations and household management skills which were, seemingly, the exclusive responsibility of women. Hence, the stereotype of the quiet domestic woman was back in vogue (Hall & Richardson, 1982; Lenskyj, 1986).

Women's physical education programs responded to the climate of the period and provided a conservative approach to fitness, expressive activities like dance and gymnastics, as well as low level competition in a number of modified sports, while boys were offered traditional team sports. Furthermore, there existed within girls' programs a preoccupation with regimentation and with cleanliness of uniforms rather than with the development of physical skills. Sports were categorized, once again, for their 'feminizing' or 'de-feminizing' qualities, and the abolition of interscholastic competition for girls, in Ontario and Quebec schools, was maintained into the 50's and 60's. School yearbooks and local

newspapers sustained this mood by featuring cheerleaders and beauty queens and virtually neglecting girls' achievement in athletics. Likewise, physical educators never questioned the assumptions pertaining to sport and femininity. But then, since the modified rule constraint still predominated within schools, universities and community sports programs, participation hardly posed a threat to femininity. Girls who were serious about sports had to turn to outside organizations since little reinforcement was found in the physical education programs. Unfortunately, the opportunities outside schools were also quite restricted (Cochrane, Hoffman & Kincaid, 1977). As Lenskyj (1986) states, "not surprisingly, girls learned their proper place at an early age" (p.84).

During the 1960's, physical education programs increasingly sought to equip students with lifelong recreational sport skills. The curricula expanded to offer individual sports and track and field, while the more affluent school districts expanded their offerings to include tennis and swimming. In the 1970's, outdoor recreational pursuits such as skiing, backpacking, and canoeing were also added to physical education programs.

**Equal opportunity initiatives in sport and physical education**

In the 1960's, the issue of gender equity in sport was brought to public attention by the feminist movement. Equal rights amendments in Canada and in the United States were enacted in an effort to provide girls with the same opportunities as boys in academics, physical education, and athletics. These amendments led to the demise of separate physical education and athletic departments, required that the tradition of gender-segregated classes in physical education be discontinued, and provided girls and women with new opportunities

in varsity competition (Hult, 1994; Lenskyj, 1986). It was envisioned that these changes would provide girls with increased opportunities in athletics and physical education, girls and boys would learn to participate together, girls would improve their skills and learn to enjoy the benefits of sport, and boys would recognize that girls can be skilled performers. Ultimately, all students would share "in the new freedom from traditional gender role restrictions" (Griffin, 1989b, p.220).

Indeed, and as Vertinsky (1994) emphasizes, the women's liberation movement made sport "a respectable activity in a male dominated society"(p.79), and mass sport participation for girls and women became a reality in the last third of the 20th century. However, Vertinsky also accents that misconceptions that emerged over the last 100 years, still persist today. Although society believes in, and provides 'sex appropriate' physical activities for girls, vigorous and competitive sports are still assumed to develop masculine traits in women, and to be potentially harmful to women's childbearing capabilities. Thus, the dominant messages absorbed from these beliefs are "sport is masculine, and noncompetitive activity is feminine" (Hutchinson, 1995, p.43).

Furthermore, research indicates that all is not well in coeducational physical education programs, and inequities continue to exist. A number of researchers argue that,

> much of what is done in physical education, including curriculum, instructional techniques, teacher-student and student-student interaction, is influenced by gender in an asymmetric way. Although this gender stratification occurs throughout the school, it is especially problematic in physical education. (Knoppers, 1988, p.55)

Since the merger of boys' and girls' physical education programs, male models of physical education prevail, and the curriculum consists primarily of competitive team sports.

Given that sports are invented by men, emphasize competition, and are strongly associated with male norms of 'higher, swifter, farther', it is difficult to accommodate the goals of gender equity within this type of curriculum. Girls, raised to value cooperation more than competition, have difficulty seeing the connection between the content and intent of this male model of physical education, and their adult lives (Knoppers, 1988; Griffin, 1989a). Spender (1980) argues,

> When the aim is to provide women with exactly the same education as men there is an underlying assumption that the male way is the right way, and that one of the solutions to women's oppression lies in having women receive an equal share of the fruits of the ostensibly superior male educational diet. (as cited in Gaskell, McLaren & Novogrodsky, 1989, p.87-88)

Griffin (1989b) argues that "as long as sport and physical education are perceived as vehicles to teach boys how to be men, women will never be more than peripheral participants" (p. 226). If sport is to be a valued activity of importance to both girls and boys, we must, as Griffin (1989b) states, "begin to question the structure and function of sport and physical education" (p.229). As a first step, we must evaluate what we teach. Our structures must promote inclusion and accommodation versus exclusion and dominance. This is not to say that sports should be eliminated from the curriculum, but rather that team games should not make up the vast majority of offerings in school programs. The curriculum must be relevant for both girls and boys, and must provide all students with opportunities to "acquire a lifelong liking for physical activities" (Knoppers, 1988, p. 58).

Moreover, if gender equity is our goal, we must assess the values that guide our teaching practices. The research in this area discloses that interaction patterns in physical education classes disadvantage girls. A number of studies indicate that boys receive more

praise, feedback and attention than girls; boys monopolize both participation and space during team games because teachers permit a masculine, elitist and competitive environment to pervade the class which shunts the less skilled students to the sidelines; teachers continue to have and communicate their gender biased expectations; and boys are allowed to hassle girls physically and psychologically (Griffin, 1989; Hutchinson, 1995; Knoppers, 1988).

These teacher practices reinforce a gender hierarchy in which males emerge dominant, and this gender division is sustained by classroom interactions which value the attributes and qualities that are associated with males. Furthermore, these encounters contribute to the devaluation of girls in their own eyes, as well as in those of their male classmates. The belief that one gender is superior is not only communicated but is personally experienced by many girls in these physical education encounters, and this betrayal inevitably impacts on their self esteem. Given this situation, it is no wonder that a high number of girls are too intimidated to participate to their fullest potential in physical education classes, loose interest, and eventually opt out in droves when programs become a voluntary option. Also, it is not astonishing to find that their fitness levels are on the decline, and that their physical skills do not improve within these settings (Knoppers, 1988). As Williams (1993) so aptly attests, to ensure access to a physical education curriculum that reproduces and reinforces an essentially masculine world is not offering equal opportunity.

If the culture of physical education is to change from a structure that reproduces dominant gender relations, teacher education training programs must produce teachers who can challenge the status quo. In the next chapter I analyze whether physical education teacher education has the potential to transform the inequitable practices that currently exist within physical education.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# TEACHER EDUCATION

"If education is to live up to its commitments to social justice and educational equity, we need teachers who have an awareness and understanding of how sexism, racism, classism, and other forms of oppression sabotage these objectives. If "fair play" and "team work" are to be more than worn-out platitudes in the gym, we need teachers who can back up their commitments to these ideals with actions that are informed by their experience grappling with their own racial, gender, class, and other prejudices. Incorporating the principles of feminist teaching into the education of teachers provides a way to help all educators work toward goals of justice and equality in our classes and in our schools." (Griffin, 1991, p.61)

Years of research on gender and education have shown that teachers' differential expectations and biased classroom behaviors provide unequal educational opportunities for girls and boys. Despite the volume of gender related studies, there is a shortage of gender equity initiatives among teachers in our schools today (Acker, 1988; Christensen & Massey, 1989; Sanders, 1996). In this chapter, I examine why intervention programs have had so little effect on teachers' classroom attitudes and behaviors. I discuss to what extent gender equity issues are integrated into the curriculum of teacher education programs, and review the principle pedagogical discourses within teacher preparation programs. The main concern of this chapter, however, is physical education teacher education. I argue that there is a dominant ideological perspective within physical education teacher education, and analyze its potential to challenge and transform the inequitable practices within physical education.

Most educators become aware of gender equity issues through in-service workshops and professional association meetings. Although countless in-service workshops have taken place, and although most teachers endorse the concept of gender equity, most classroom practices have not been modified to eliminate gender bias (Acker, 1988; Christensen & Massey, 1989; Sanders, 1996). Acker (1988) argues that the successful implementation of innovations requires alterations in teacher beliefs and understanding, curriculum materials, and instructional practices and behaviors. She elaborates that few gains have been made toward gender equity because a number of these adjustments have not taken place.

Inasmuch as teacher beliefs influence classroom behaviors, changes in teacher perceptions and attitudes are essential for innovation (Acker, 1988; Christensen & Massey,

1989; Lundeberg, 1997). Changes in gender beliefs are extremely difficult to achieve. Acker (1988) notes that gender attitudes are socially constructed and are "buried at the level of unconscious assumptions" (p.314). Consequently, two hour workshops have little impact on teachers' deeply ingrained ideologies (Sanders, 1996; Christensen & Massey, 1989; Lundeberg, 1997). Moreover, teachers only attempt to implement innovation if the proposed changes are thought to be practical. While most workshops denounce the current situation and increase teacher awareness, they rarely offer alternative teaching strategies. The commitment to equity initiatives is further compromised by the time and energy that innovations require, and by the numerous other political agendas competing for teachers' attention (Sanders, 1996; Acker, 1988).

Researchers agree that teacher education is the obvious way to accent gender equity in education. Pre-service teachers are accessible and could learn, through methods and foundation courses, how gender bias is communicated in classroom interactions, how educational materials can result in inequitable opportunities for girls, and more importantly can acquire strategies to rectify inequality. Unlike "quick fix" in-service workshops, semester length courses could promote real change. Yet, research shows that compared to other areas of education, gender equity has received little attention in teacher education programs (Campbell & Sanders, 1997; Christensen & Massey, 1989; Lundeberg, 1997; Titus, 1993).

In a 1993-1994 inquiry on gender equity teaching in mathematics, science, and technology methods courses, Campbell and Sanders (1997) surveyed 470 teacher educators nationwide. They found that while 72% of the 353 respondents dealt with gender equity in

their courses, they spent less than two hours per term on the topic. Although most professors invested little time on gender equity, 82% believed that it is an important social issue, and approximately 75% of the respondents thought it should be taught in field seminars and in foundation courses. Campbell and Sanders (1997) concluded that gender equity was not "a planned, pro-active component of the MST methods course syllabus"(p. 74).

Moreover, education programs must provide more than factual information concerning discriminatory classroom behaviors. To insure the development of egalitarian attitudes, teacher educators must challenge the ideological assumptions that students bring with them to college. However, a study by Christensen and Massey (1989) found that teacher education programs have an insignificant impact on "traditional gender related stereotypes"(p.256). Although research on gender equity certifies that subtle gender bias is often present in classroom interaction, teacher recruits often resist these findings. Males dismiss the information as feminist propaganda, whereas females insist that the studies are inaccurate because they have never experienced inequitable treatment in school (Lundeberg, 1997). Lundeberg (1997) clarifies that while pre-service trainees acknowledge blatant forms of sexism, most are incapable of recognizing subtle gender bias in classroom interactions because they are so accustomed to males dominating classroom discussions.

Teacher foundation textbooks, which provide an initial view of education to prospective teachers, also fail to emphasize the nature of inequality in education and society. A 1980 analysis of foundation texts disclosed that one third of them did not mention the topic of gender equity, and none contained material on non-sexist teaching (Campbell & Sanders, 1997). A subsequent 1993 study also confirmed that the most widely used

textbooks lack significant material on gender equity, while the few texts that do address inequality neglect to critique patriarchy (Titus, 1993). Furthermore, the texts fail to encourage pre-service teachers to question their beliefs about gender, and do not provide strategies for change. Titus (1993) highlights that changes in pedagogy cannot occur when issues are not confronted. He states that women's subordinate position in society will remain a non issue until authors acknowledge that gender is "a social construction rooted in hierarchy" (p. 41). The author affirms that "if students have entered a teacher education program uninformed and naive, graduates whose understanding are constrained by what the texts provide will leave the programs with their narrow perceptions reaffirmed" (Titus, 1993, p.42).

**Pedagogical discourses**

Pedagogical practices within teacher education programs have been influenced by a number of dominant and contrasting ideological discourses (Tom, 1987; Tinning, 1991; Liston & Zeichner, 1987). Although different groups of scholars argue for and against particular pedagogical practices, educational reforms fail because teacher education programs have relied and focused almost exclusively on technical forms of knowledge (Beyer, 1987; Smyth, 1989; Sheehan & Fullan, 1995).

This dominant conception of teaching introduces schools as instructional settings. Teachers are conceptualized as skilled technicians, and their role is to transmit knowledge in a simple and noncritical manner. Time efficiency, classroom management and control, and accuracy of instructions are primary concerns. Moreover, teaching activities are

accepted or rejected based on whether they get the students through the lesson in an orderly and quiet fashion, and in the allotted time. This perspective defines educational issues as technical issues, and restricts its focus on means rather than on purpose (Beyer, 1987; McKay, Gore & Kirk, 1990; Tinning, 1991). A technocratic approach to education, regardless of how competent the teachers are, "tends to reproduce rather than challenge existing social arrangements" (Bain, 1990, p.29). Mckay, Gore and Kirk (1990) insist that,

> Technocratic education closes off rather than opens up the mind, depoliticizes instead of politicizes, and disempowers rather than empowers learners. It corrodes the ability to demystify hegemonic ideologies and to engender the professional and civic courage necessary for dismantling oppressive educational practices. (p. 58-59)

Alternative discourses to mainstream pedagogical approaches have gained some attention within teacher education programs. Social reformers suggest that teacher education should prepare novice teachers to question common school practices which are incorrectly perceived as politically neutral. Rather than highlight procedural and technical issues, this perspective emphasizes the need to step back from daily practices in order to reflect on the political, moral, and social implications of what is taught and how it is taught (Tinning, 1991). This radical perspective, includes a number of theories, and is organized around concepts of enlightment and emancipation which strives to empower students and teachers in an effort to transform social inequalities. As Adler and Goodman (1986) explain,

> Critical theory contains a number of implications for teacher education generally and for teaching methods courses more specifically. Traditionally, methods courses have emphasized the development of specific skills such as planning lessons, managing basal programs, and disciplining children, which represents competent and effective teaching. A critical perspective, on the other hand, fosters a questioning attitude towards teaching, learning, knowledge, the curriculum, and toward the role of schools in society. (as

cited in Tinning, 1991, p.10)

Although critical and feminist discourses exist and expose the limitations of current pedagogical practices, they are not prevalent enough to insure progress. The aforementioned studies disclose that oppositional discourses have had little impact on teacher education, continue to be marginalized within teacher training programs, and as such, have yet to be translated into program components or teaching strategies (Gore, 1993). As Tom (1995) emphasizes, teacher education has "been amazingly resilient to attempted structural and curricular reforms" (p. 117).

**Dominant pedagogical discourse in Physical Education**

Within physical education teacher education, oppositional forms of discourses offer little challenge to the dominant and prevailing discourse of 'technocratic rationality', or what is referred to as the 'discourse of performance' (Tinning, 1991; McKay, Gore & Kirk, 1990; Whitson & Macintosh, 1990). Although different scholars assert that physical education is "a negative and destructive experience for a significant number of students" (Gore, 1990, p.104), and is in a "midst of a deep crisis" (Fernandez-Balboa, 1997, p.161), the paradigm that shapes physical education teacher education remains intact. As Whitson and Macintosh (1990) emphasize,

> Different interest groups and proponents of different paradigms vie to define the profession's "mission" (Lawson, 1985). They combine to reproduce, in physical education, what Aronowitz & Giroux (1985) refer to as the technicist tendency in North America undergraduate and professional education. This involves an emphasis on technical and management "skills," and a corresponding deemphasis on the liberal arts subjects that might encourage analysis and questioning of the social relations within which

professional skills are applied. (p.46)

Although disciplines like humanities, arts, and the social sciences have been enriched by alternative views of knowledge in recent years, and although Hellison (1988) suggests that "Winds of change are ruffling the feathers of the study of teaching in physical education"(p.84), the discipline of physical education has been exceptionally resistant to these changes (Bennett, 1991; McKay, Gore & Kirk, 1990; Whitson & Macintosh, 1990; Tinning, 1991; Dewar, 1990; Gore, 1990). Tinning (1990) emphasizes that alternative discourses are increasingly marginalized as "sport science takes further footholds in the academy of physical education" (p.15).

During the 1960's and 1970's, physical education departments in Canadian and American universities supplanted a discourse of 'humanistic education' which accented the role of the physical in the development of the total person, by a discourse derived mostly from the sciences. In an attempt to increase their credibility and respectability, physical education departments broke their traditional ties with education faculties, and aligned themselves with the more powerful disciplines of biology, physiology, and kinaesiology. These affiliations prompted the appearance of 'human movement' departments, and the discipline of physical education became informed by the discourse of exercise science (Wright, 1996; McKay, Gore & Kirk, 1990; Whitson & Macintosh, 1990; Dewar, 1990). Sparkes (1992) insists that the dominance of a positivist approach within physical education has been "facilitated by the almost unquestioned respectability this research paradigm is granted within academia" (p.19).

The "scientization of physical education" (Whitson & Macintosh, 1990; McKay,

Gore & Kirk, 1990) has had an impact on the knowledge taught in teacher education programmes in Canada and the United States. Dewar (1990) reports that the curriculum emphasizes biobehavioural course work, designed to provide students with the necessary knowledge to analyze and correct human physical performance. These courses familiarize the students with technical and rational views of teaching, learning, health, sport, and exercise. McKay, et al (1990) elaborate that physical education students complete a high number of compulsory subjects from the biological and physical sciences, and very few option courses from the humanities and social sciences. Physical education departments in Canadian universities require students to complement their pedagogical experiences with as few as zero and with less than half of their course work from sub-disciplinary areas.

The purpose of physical education teacher education is to prepare practitioners to teach physical skills, fitness and health related activities. The obsession with scientific methods, however, reduces this content to "objective and technical information about performance" (Dewar, 1990, p. 74). As Whitson and Macintosh (1990) insist, the physical education profession is dominated by a discourse of performance, which prioritizes knowledge associated with increased levels of achievement in competitive sport. Furthermore, this scientific knowledge is presented as factual, empirical and value free. Given that the prevalent and much valued qualities associated with high level sport are speed, strength, and power, Dewar (1990) is right when she emphasizes,

> The privileging of certain kinds of scientific knowledge in sport pedagogy is not a neutral act. Science, as it is used in sport pedagogy, is a silent partner in the development of physical education programmes that privilege the young, the able-bodied, the lean and muscular, the middle classes, heterosexual men and white Christians. (p.76)

Scientific inquiry not only provides a framework geared to improve physical performance, but also enables sport pedagogues to guarantee better and more efficient ways of teaching physical education content (Dewar, 1990; McKay, Gore, & Kirk, 1990). Tinning (1991) argues that performance pedagogues concern themselves with the problem of 'how' to teach physical education, and assume that the quality of instruction rests almost exclusively on the understanding of technical phenomena.

Bain (1990) insists that within this technocratic equation, people are viewed as 'human resources', who are educated for the purpose of maximizing their productivity. She suggests that technocratic physical educators view the body as a machine, and their goal is to produce the most efficient machine in terms of physical outcomes. Knowledge about the body is seen as the most important form of knowledge. Bain (1990) articulates that the body becomes a commodity "exchanged for admiration, security or economic gain. The basis for this exchange differs by gender; for women, appearance of the body is the valued commodity, while for men, action and performance tend to be valued" (p.29).

As highlighted earlier, technocratic rationality is a language preoccupied with the development of increasingly efficient and effective means for achieving goals. These goals, however, are taken-for-granted, and for the most part, remain unquestioned. For instance, when fitness is presented in technocratic form, it alleges that health, fitness, and well being are attainable by all. Exercise is presented as a means to increase health, but the definitions of health are not critically examined. Often times, a healthy body is mistakenly equated with performance and/or appearance, and the risks associated with an obsessive concern with body image are left unexplored (Bain, 1990). Within this approach, attention is drawn

to technical issues such as fitness appraisals, and on subsequent exercise prescriptions that insure improvement. What this means is that students learn about the different components of fitness, and about the body's physiological adaptation to exercise. However, students do not learn why fitness is a key issue in society today, nor do they discuss whose interests are served by this concern. Likewise, issues of opportunity and how they differ based on different economic status, ethnicity, gender or disability are not examined (Fitzclarence & Tinning, 1990). Consequently, this technocratic treatment, with its uncritical transmission of knowledge, does not prepare pre service students for the varied contexts in which teaching occurs (Dewar, 1990).

McKay, Gore & Kirk (1990) insist that a technocratic and elitist definition of the profession makes sense to the majority of students who decide upon a career in physical education. Generally, the perceptions and attitudes that prospective students favor at the beginning of their university careers, are confirmed and reinforced by the practices that dominate teacher education programs. The authors explain that pre service students have an overwhelmingly positive and uncritical perception of sport. They clarify that most recruits were relatively successful in physical education classes during their primary and secondary school years, and have, over the years, internalized the common sense definitions of sport from physical education teachers, coaches, and the media. Given the values and attitudes gained from these favorable experiences, most students want to reproduce the systems that led to their success, and tend to dismiss knowledge that is critical of the dominant definitions of teaching and learning in physical education. Mckay et al emphasize that the trainees' understanding of physical activity is,

> predominantly biological, individualistic, elitist, masculine and mesomorphic...Most find it arduous to conceive of alternatives to sport that are not based on traditionally masculine notions of strengths and speed. Thus it is extremely difficult to get students to be reflective or critical about sport. (1990, p. 61)

Although curriculum offerings from the social sciences are allotted a negligible amount of time in physical education teacher training programs, they nevertheless attempt to challenge the disciplinary discourses that shape physical education. Students, however tend to undervalue the knowledge offered in these subject areas, especially if it questions their taken for granted assumptions about teaching and learning. For example, when social/cultural offerings present gender as a social construct, it contradicts the dominant construction within biobehavioural courses which define gender as one variable that can affect physical performance. As Hargreaves (1994) asserts, sports scientists converge on the biological differences between male and female and are blind to the distinction between sex and gender. When faced with this inconsistency, the students rate the social/cultural courses as irrelevant to and less valid than the scientific facts presented in biobehavioural courses. Unfortunately, most physical education trainees graduate with reductionist definitions of the body, which remain largely uncontested since few members of North American physical education departments are strongly committed to emancipatory concerns addressed by alternative pedagogical discourses (McKay, Gore & Kirk, 1990).

Thus, physical education university programmes linked to science and professionalism, have the tendency to scientize the profession. Physical activity and sport are portrayed in work-like terms and teaching is conceived as a technical matter. Gore (1990) argues that if physical educators maintain their hierarchal, institutional authority over

students, physical education will remain the domain of the thin, muscular, white and middle class.

**Conclusion**

If physical education is to promote change for a better future, it must reconsider the nature and purpose of the knowledge in physical education teacher education. Fernandez-Balboa (1997) contends that teacher preparation should be an "educational rather than a training enterprise" (p. 176). He declares that teacher programs have an obligation to inform trainees of the moral and political implications, as well as the conceptual and cultural limitations of the knowledge base presented to them. In view of the crisis physical education is facing, the meanings and the significance of the professional knowledge in training programs must be reexamined.

While many assumptions linked with empirical and analytical methods have been discredited by a number of researchers in the past ten years, teaching and research experiences in most physical education departments in Canadian and American universities have been unaffected by these critiques (Bennett, 1991; Fernandez-Balboa, 1995; McKay, Gore & Kirk, 1990). Although teachers must be technically competent, the exclusive emphasis on procedural and technical issues cause important social issues like gender to go unexamined. A number of researchers argue against the dominance of one conception of teaching, and advance that teacher education programs must recognize the contribution that different paradigms, each with its own assumptions and biases, could make to the teaching/learning process (Hellison, 1988; McKay, Gore & Kirk, 1990; Grineski & Bynum,

1990).

Currently, scientific functionalism is the dominant paradigm within physical education teacher education. As I have emphasized earlier, this perspective accents and reveres scientific knowledge and technical skill about human physical performance. Furthermore, it reduces knowledge about humans and their bodies to facts, and celebrates masculine values like physical size and strength. For many physical education trainees, the scientific construction of knowledge obscures the link between teaching, learning and the oppression of women in sport (Dewar, 1990).

With the discourses of performance pedagogy as the foundation of physical education teacher education, more informed practices are unlikely. These dominant practices will continue to prepare teachers who are ignorant of the ways physical education produces and reproduces many of the unjust social practices that typify many educational experiences (Tinning, 1991). As Fernandez-Balboa (1995) points out,

> If one agrees with the premise that, in physical education and sport, men's interests usually take priority over those of women, then, one may ask, how can one take pride in a profession whose frame of reference excludes and discriminates against approximately half of its constituency? How can one possibly move forward under such discriminatory conditions? (p. 97)

Given the lack of commitment to equity in physical education teacher programs, we as educators must take initiatives to challenge the existing structures and everyday teaching practices in physical education. In the next chapter I will consider liberatory and feminist pedagogies as possible approaches to achieving equity.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## EQUAL OPPORTUNITY in COEDUCATIONAL PHYSICAL EDUCATION: IS IT POSSIBLE?

"Feminist pedagogy reflects the goal of equality through revised curricula and pedagogies characterized by a challenge to masculine power and authority, and a celebration of women's differences. Such pedagogy foregrounds the learning needs of girls, and what the girls know, rather than what the teacher can tell them, thereby making knowledge production collaborative." (MacDonald, 1997, p. 4)

As I have discussed earlier, much research in recent years has shown how educational structures and practices reproduce social inequalities. This research has inspired a form of pedagogy, liberatory pedagogy, which strives to empower students and teachers in an effort to bring about a more just and democratic society. Liberatory pedagogy, also referred to as emancipatory pedagogy, foregrounds the key concepts of enlightenment and emancipation. Enlightenment, achieved through a greater awareness and criticism of existing inequalities, provides students with information about the real interests underlying different forms of knowledge. As students become more aware of their actual conditions, they become more inspired and committed to act in order to emancipate themselves (Leonard, 1990).

In this chapter, I present the main concepts of Freire's educational theory, and then discuss how a critical feminist pedagogy builds on the limitations of Freire's critical pedagogy. As a second step, I introduce the recently reformed collegial physical education curriculum. Given my concerns with gender inequality in physical education, I then draw on essential elements of the critical feminist perspective and describe how I have restructured my teaching in order to confront gender issues. Moreover, I analyze whether these changes have the potential to give students more control over the learning process, and to encourage critical reflection and self awareness. And, in an attempt to understand the impact of this approach on the student, I include their personal reflections which communicate their experiences with the learning process.

**Paulo Freire's Critical Pedagogy**

The focus of Paulo Freire's educational theory is on liberation and humanization. His goal of liberation, is achieved through a pedagogy that identifies, critiques, and acts to transform structures of domination and oppression. He aims to transform society to meet the collective needs of individuals and develops the premise that humanity's vocation is to become more fully human (Leonard, 1990; Weiler, 1991).

At the center of Freire's critical pedagogy is the political concept of conscientization. Within this concept, Freire recognizes learners as subjects of history, who can know and act on the world. Learners become aware of the forces and ideologies that shape their existence through the development of consciousness. Human beings demonstrate different stages of consciousness, but it is within the highest level, critical consciousness, that learners denounce their reality as oppressive and announce their engagement in creating a new reality. The denunciation of dehumanizing structures, and the annunciation of new forms of relationships is brought about through a praxis of reflection and action (Weiler, 1991).

Freire believes that theory and action must work together in any effort to influence reality. Reflection without action does not lead to humanization, and action without reflection is uninformed. Praxis is the unity of action and reflection. Freire argues that humans come to know their world more accurately by reflecting on it, and acting on it in light of their reflection. It is through praxis, the process of reflection and action, that people attempt to transform their existence (Leonard, 1990).

Learning for Freire, is the progressive movement through the levels of consciousness, until critical consciousness is attained. Critical consciousness brings individuals to see

reality as it really is (Shor, 1993). Within the learning process, students are challenged to examine and reconsider their knowledge base, which calls into question their taken-for-granted assumptions. Students search for knowledge and question its non-neutrality which provides them with information about the interests and assumptions underlying hierarchically organized bodies of knowledge. Through an historical and ideological critique of reality, students come to understand why things are the way they are in society, and how they got to be that way. Furthermore, when students question and challenge unequal forms of power, it allows them to understand their everyday lives and to develop a true and authentic vision of the world which leads to praxis. As a consequence of the interrogation of their own experiences, learners come to comprehend their ability to be knowers and creators of the world.

For knowledge to be critical, it must be analyzed and examined in its historical, socio-economic, political, and cultural context. For Freire, knowledge is in a constant state of flux, it is never complete since reality is always changing. He theorizes that knowledge is collectively created and recreated when people search and attempt to reflect on self and social reality. Freire argues that a critical reading of the world is essential to overcome dehumanization, and in attempting to reconstruct oppressive aspects of social reality (Frankenstein, 1993).

The Freirian pedagogy attempts to develop critical consciousness through a dialogical and problem posing process. Problem posing, in an effort to authenticate rather than dismiss the learner, is built around the history, culture, and personal experiences of the students (Shor, 1993). Freire's work also emphasizes that a liberatory content cannot be

delivered in a non democratic way since it would compromise the commitment to struggle for social change (Leonard, 1990). Hence, the content of education is jointly determined by both the learner and the teacher to insure the emancipation of those trapped in a culture of silence.

Within Freire's critical pedagogy, the traditional authoritarian teacher/student relationship does not exist, since unequal relations mirror societal oppression. Both teacher and learner are agents involved in the learning process. The conventional "banking" approach of education is replaced by a method that motivates students to claim co-ownership of their learning. Based on their common ability to know the world and to act as subjects in the world, the teacher dialogues and searches for real knowledge with the students. The democratic relationship between teacher and student is a mutually informing and transforming one (Shor, 1993).

**Feminist critique of Freire's liberatory pedagogy**

In light of the difficulties associated with the implementation of liberatory pedagogies, and of theoretical gains by feminists, theorists have reviewed and criticized Freire's work in an attempt to enrich his vision of liberatory pedagogy (Brady, 1994; Weiler, 1991). Feminist pedagogy, like Freirean pedagogy, strives for changes in structures of inequality. Even though feminist pedagogy is a distinct theory from critical pedagogy, they do, nevertheless, share some common assumptions. Both pedagogies examine the relationship between the learner and the social structures of oppression; both develop critical consciousness among the learners; and both view learners as subjects and actors of the world

(Weiler, 1991).

However, Freire's exclusive focus on class, as the only form of oppression, is an important limitation of his liberatory pedagogy. His educational theory does not consider inequalities based on gender. Furthermore, the assumption of a universal experience, where the learners arrive at a true and collective knowledge of the situation is also problematic. It seems that Freire has little concern for the complexities of the reality that people struggle with. While feminists also look to experience as a source of knowledge, they however, never recognize experience as unified or universal. Within feminist classrooms, students are not only encouraged to be critical of the knowledge they learn, they are also provided with the opportunity to reflect on and give voice to their experiences (Weiler, 1991).

Freire's vision must be expanded to include multiple and at times contradictory forms of oppression. To achieve this, Freire must acknowledge the diverse identities and subjectivities produced by different historical and social conditions. The recognition of these differences can, however, create tension in the classroom, and call into question the authority of the teacher (Weiler, 1991; Brady, 1994).

The role of the critical teacher is quite similar in both pedagogies. Freire, however, fails to problematize the power relations between teacher and student. The feminists have undertaken to explore this tension, and elaborate on the formal power granted to teachers within institutional structures and relations. Within our meritocratic educational system, rewards and grades are a reality that creates a dilemma for the critical teacher who challenges ideological structures, and attempts to transform oppressive features of the educational system. Feminist theory also analyzes problems encountered by female teachers

in classrooms where power and authority are undermined by a patriarchal society. Overall, the feminist exploration of authority attempts to insure a classroom setting that empowers both the learner and the teacher (Weiler, 1991).

**Gender Equity in Physical Education: What can be done**

Students' attitudes toward physical education are formed throughout their school years, and it is these same attitudes that eventually lead a high number of girls to opt out of physical education when the program becomes optional. LeDrew (1997) argues, and I fervently agree, that as a society we are responsible for girls' unsuccessful experiences in physical education. Our culture provides fewer opportunities and attaches less importance to women's participation in physical activity, yet we develop a model of physical education based on patriarchal values of achievement and competition.

If all students are to be provided with "a *physical* education that is sensitive to, aware of and prepared to challenge gender inequalities" (Scraton, 1992, p.136) the curriculum must be examined in terms of its relevance as a learning opportunity and as a foundation for future leisure activities for both girls and boys. Decisions, based on sound educational principles, about curricular aims, content, delivery processes, and assessment must provide all students with equal opportunities to participate, to enjoy themselves, to learn from, and to succeed in physical education. Research advances that to have fun in physical education, girls must be active, successful, learn new activities, and be able to associate with friends. A lack of fun, on the other hand, has been found in contexts where competition is over emphasized and fitness appraisals are used to measure student achievement (LeDrew, 1997).

In order to foster positive attitudes and encourage lifelong participation, all students must have the opportunity to gain confidence and learn from their experiences in physical education classes.

Twenty five years ago, co-educational initiatives attempted to provide equal opportunities in physical education by moving away from the conventional channeling of boys into sports of speed and power, and girls into rhythmical activities such as dance and gymnastics (Vertinsky, 1992). Given that equal access did not insure equal participation, we must now move beyond the conventional focus of performance outcomes in activities to promote change in the discipline of physical education. Standardized norms must be removed from fitness activities, and the competitive climate of sports offerings must be de-emphasized. As Vertinsky (1992) advocates, the elitist standpoint of high level physical fitness and athletic performance must be replaced by a more holistic perspective of fitness and well-being.

**Physical Education: Transformed by the Educational Reforms**

This is precisely what happened, five years ago, with the advent of educational reforms at the Cegep level. The physical education curriculum was redesigned to promote health and wellness. The Ministry of Education, concerned with students' long term health, mandated a physical education curriculum that addresses physical inactivity patterns, as well as other lifestyle behaviors of Cegep aged students. The new curriculum strives to empower students to achieve their highest potential of well-being. It focuses on the development of the whole person and emphasizes the physical, social, as well as affective rewards of a

wellness lifestyle. The performance, and content oriented paradigm of earlier years has been replaced by a competency based approach that primarily values participation.

Ideally, this competency based approach is more student centered, and concerns itself with the development of the student's health profile, positive self esteem, and decision making skills. In order to meet the collegial physical education requirement, the student must complete two courses (Phe-103, Phe-105) that focus on health related fitness, and one course (Phe-104) that accents the acquisition of motor skills for the future. The three courses focus on individual needs rather than on prescribed activities, and on the reflection and assessment of individual experiences rather than on the achievement of measurable norms. Ultimately, through this physical education program, students would acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to make informed choices that impact on their daily well being. Moreover, all students would have the competence and confidence to pursue physical activity in later life.

As I have mentioned above, a competency based approach requires teachers to refocus their attention on the students' involvement in the process rather than on the content, and on the students' performance level. Teachers within the collegial system, however, have responded to this innovative outlook with different levels of interest and commitment. The next section of this chapter centers on my interpretation and on my implementation of the educational reforms, as well as my exploration of the implications of an active lifestyle curriculum on traditional gender attitudes.

**Implementing a Gender Sensitive Model**

This student centered approach, versus the content oriented approach of earlier years, offers the possibility of modifying the relationships between teachers and students, and between students and knowledge. Kenway and Modra (1992), borrow from Lusted and define pedagogy as a concern with,

> what is taught, how it is taught and how it is learned and, more broadly, with the nature of knowledge and learning. Lusted argues for an understanding of pedagogy which recognizes that knowledge is produced, negotiated, transformed and realized in the **interaction** between the teacher, the learner, and the knowledge itself. (p. 140)

The implications are that learners will achieve a sense of agency only if they are involved in the negotiation of knowledge versus being the passive recipients of others' knowledge. Within this process, teachers are defined as facilitators and students are given more control over their learning.

Competency based planning requires teachers to describe the specific knowledge, skills and attitudes students will acquire as a result of participation. Learning goals not only help teachers to focus on what they see as important, but provide a context for discussion aimed at building 'co-intentionality'. Hence, in theory, the physical education initiatives which emphasize individual needs, interests, and abilities allow for less prescriptive modes of teaching, as well as negotiated learning.

Health related fitness courses (Phe-103, Phe-105)

The competencies targeted in these courses are "To put one's health in perspective" (Phe-103), and "To manage a regular physical activity regime within the context of

wellness" (Phe-105). Within these health related fitness courses, students analyze their lifestyle behaviors (physical activity, nutrition, stress management, and addictive behaviors) and learn how these behaviors will impact on their health in later life. Although a body of knowledge is required to make informed and responsible decisions about wellness, the principal goal of these courses is to motivate and guide the student toward making informed choices. Following an inventory of their abilities, needs, interests, and available resources, students develop individual and personalized activity programs designed to ensure the regular practice of physical activity. The aims are to create the habit of exercise and to integrate it into their lifestyle. The students are encouraged to do things for themselves, to develop a sense of agency and personal efficiency. The students achieve this by designing and applying a personal fitness program, by planning a work schedule to reduce stress in their lives, or by joining and participating in intramural programs.

The following excerpts serve to demonstrate students' reflection of their physical education experiences. On designing a personal program, Natasha (winter, 1997) elaborates:

> In designing my program, it was helpful to look at my profile, in terms of what activities were best suited to me, psychologically. I discovered that I was low on spontaneity, competitiveness, and risk-taking but more inclined toward activities involving greater discipline and mental focus. The idea of sociability came into play, in deciding whether I wanted to undertake individual activities or group ones- as much as I enjoy being with friends, practicing an activity is something I have always been used to doing alone. I get very self-conscious with others around, and I find it takes my focus away from the sport itself, so I chose to practice individual activities. Coincidentally, my personal profile matched almost exactly that of a runner. Thus, I began jogging. I realized that it demands focus and discipline, while still allowing me to clear my head and refrain from competition...

Another student, (Mael, autumn, 1997) states,

> Robert Hutchins once said, "whenever I feel like exercise I lie down until the feeling passes". This quote explains much more eloquently than I will ever be able to, my beliefs concerning exercise and this whole wellness concept. I hated physical activity since it was hard, painful and boring. Realizing I had to do something for this class during the semester, I set out to design a program which wasn't too hard, did not overwork me or even bore me....I decided my goal was to run 30 minutes non-stop...this initial program proved to be too ambitious and a little unsafe...30 minutes proved to be impossible. I would now jog for as long as possible and power walk the rest of the time..."

While health related fitness is communicated as a form of activity concerned with individual well being, it also provides the opportunity to recognize human similarities. In order to emphasize women's physical potential, and to counter gender stereotypes, the qualitative and quantitative similarities of fitness prescriptions, for men and women, are discussed. Students learn that both men and women should exercise with the same frequency and intensity[16], in the same way through the use of the same movements, and with the same equipment. This type of educational environment provides the opportunity, for both boys and girls, to recognize and value girls' abilities. It is through these physical experiences that women can develop the confidence to challenge the physical limitations imposed by a sexually divided society.

Dewar (1991), argues that feminist pedagogy "is designed to allow students to be critical of, and reflect about, the knowledge that they are learning" (p,70). Students must develop the capability to think through issues, and to form independent opinions. The focus on individual lifestyles, and the quest to encourage students to become physically active

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[16] The level of intensity varies with the individual since the formula takes into account the students' current fitness level based on their resting heart rate.

broadens physical education's scope to one that analyzes social and cultural issues concerning health. Since the fitness boom of the 80's, Canadians have been inundated with "news and commentaries" about smoking, high fat diets, and exercise. The over commercialization of health and fitness, however, has promoted a preoccupation with beauty and thinness, for both men and women, that are impossible to attain. Furthermore, the associations reinforced by the fitness industry between fitness and fashion, and fitness and sexual attractiveness create the illusion that fitness is an expensive endeavor, tied to a distinctly middle class image. This image obscures how much exercise can be enjoyed at little or no cost, and creates problems of exclusion (Hall, Slack, Smith & Whitson, 1991).

The student must be given the opportunity to reflect and be critical of the cultural and social influences that contribute to their understanding of health issues. Examining these issues within the context of physical education classes, provides students with different perspectives. As Dewar (1991) points out, "once awareness has been raised, students cannot return to the safety of their unconsciousness" (p.70). If educators use the traditional approaches of simply transmitting facts, if they believe that knowledge is neutral and apolitical, and teach it as such, physical education will do very little to challenge the existing power relations between males and females, and within society in general.

Physical skills course (Phe-104)

It is, unfortunately, within these skills courses that visions of motor elitism continue to plague the physical education curriculum. Even though reform guidelines have pedagogical implications, they do not specifically deal with teaching styles or pupil/teacher

relations. The choice of courses available to students in this domain are yoga, a variety of dance options, numerous racket sports and team sports, outdoor pursuits such as cross country skiing, canoe camping and backpacking, swimming, and weight training. Rather than present possible interpretations of this course, I will focus on my reading, and present my personal experiences of teaching badminton as a skills course.

In an effort to move away from a performance and outcome oriented approach, my badminton course emphasizes the cognitive aspect of the activity and accents the interrelatedness of the technical, tactical, psychological and physical elements of the activity. The challenge is to understand the intention and purposes of technical skills, to analyze tactical situations, and on a psychological level, to assess and identify emotional factors that might interfere with success. The final competency, "To apply a plan of action that leads to improvement in the physical activity" insists on a process that encourages students to take responsibility for their learning in order to experience the satisfaction of achievement and success. Students, through their involvement in the process which is transferable to other learning situations, become self-sufficient, independent learners and participants.

I encourage students to ask questions about the content and structure of the lessons, provide opportunities where students give each other constructive feedback (peer evaluations), and incite students to take responsibility for certain segments (warm-up, setting up matches) of the class. Students analyze and reflect on their experiences through worksheets and entries in a workbook. They identify strengths and weaknesses in order to develop a personal focus for practice sessions, they set personal expectations for each class

session, and establish specific, measurable, action oriented, realistic and time bound (SMART) objectives that render goals personal and attainable.

An important challenge for teachers is the practical issue of student assessment. If this curriculum is to achieve gender equality, it goes without saying that students must not be compared to standards or to each other. Kenway and Modra (1992), advocate that teachers must select assessment instruments that give all students the opportunity to be successful. They are, however, critical of the lack of clarity within feminist literature on the question of grades. In this badminton course, the assessment evaluates the students' overall involvement in the process, as well as their personal understanding of the competency. Workbook entries are worth 60% of the final grade, while a summative exercise that is completed at the end of the term is worth 40%. The summative exercise requires the student to reflect on the entire process. They identify and critically analyze the elements of the process that were most beneficial to them, and discuss whether the process can be applied to other learning situations. As I explain how I proceed in this class, I will refer to reflections made by individual students in an attempt to convey their personal experiences.

During the first few classes, students are required to reflect on their psychological state of readiness. The students assess and record their level of willingness, receptivity, and desire to acquire information and skills, and to succeed in general. Factors that may influence their psychological state such as prior experience, familiarity, skill level and previous success in the present activity, as well as attitudes and feelings toward the situation are discussed. During the course of the term, students learn that anxiety, shyness, boredom and frustration can contribute to poor concentration or to a tense and uncaring attitude.

They also learn that all these emotions are reduced if poor performance is recognized as insignificant and part of the learning process. Many students choose to work on the psychological component when setting expectations. Andrea (autumn, 1996) explains how the psychological was an important element for her:

> The more I practiced my serve the more frustrated I became. During a practice session with Nathalie, we started laughing at how stressed out I was getting over something as insignificant as a badminton skill. This seemed to relax me and all of a sudden I was making contact. From that moment on, I just concentrated on the process instead of agonizing over the outcome. Since then my serve has become a strength.

Yael (autumn, 1997) also elaborates on the psychological component during her summative evaluation.

> ...if I had not wanted to do well and if I had not gotten so involved I don't think I would have succeeded so well. Part of why I did succeed was because I wanted to and so I participated with open ears and a clear head.

In order to learn motor skills, students must develop an intellectual understanding of the skill. As a second step, students repeat the skill and learn to distinguish the sounds, feels and sights of the skill. They gradually become aware of the technical aspects of the stroke and can then provide themselves with appropriate feedback. On the technical content of the classes, Janey (autumn, 1996) remarked,

> The repetitive in class drills were of tremendous help for me. In the past I felt confused and frustrated because this wasn't my talented subject and it took me longer to understand and apply the techniques. I think that this was probably what got me so discouraged and made me give up hope, without understanding what's going on it's hard to improve.

Aicha (autumn, 1996), on the other hand, felt that setting expectations at the beginning of each class gave her a personal focus during these sessions. "Setting expectations is helpful

because I didn't feel I had to improve everywhere; I had a specific goal that I wanted to attain".

Their class expectations reflect the component (technical, tactical, psychological, physical) of their choice. With time, and as they get more familiar with the structures and processes of the class, the students select more relevant and effective courses of action that ultimately benefit them. As Kenway and Modra (1992) emphasize, students involved in decisions about their own learning, come to recognize their capacity to affect change.

I am optimistic that this type of reflective approach will contest some of the negative experiences that many students carry with them from earlier skill acquisition classes. Once students are provided with a safe space to develop their physical potential, the acquired skills and confidence might well entice them to pursue physical activity long term. Several students comment that the process oriented approach has been a positive experience. Badge (autumn, 1996) acknowledges that,

> the most I got out of this course, besides the actual acquisition of technical skills, is the psychological boost I have had. Setting out to learn something in this way has given me a process that I can apply to any other skill I may wish to pursue. The merit of this learning process, I think, reaches far beyond learning how to play badminton.

Another student, Janey (autumn, 1996) states that,

> learning to play sports doesn't seem an obstacle as huge as it seemed before this class. I feel a little more confident about myself...I've had a very low self esteem because I was bad at sports and felt guilty and scared to ask others to play with me...this course has helped me in so many aspects that I can see myself differently now, without the label "unathletic".

It should be noted, however, that a competency based learning approach is a radical departure for most students. This reflective approach, and the personal commitment to

exercise and informed lifestyle choices pre-suppose a certain level of maturity within the learner. The reality of the situation is that many students lack the maturity to fully engage in the self directed component of the process, and are not entirely dedicated to the goals and processes of the course as I present them. It is clear from my assessment of workbooks and summative exercises that each student's experience of, and commitment to the process is unique. Even though most students want to learn, a number of students reject the need to reflect on their experiences, and fail to see the relevance of the process since they demonstrate improvement without the benefit of reflection. Consequently, these students use their workbooks infrequently or tend to back-date entries to give the impression of regular use. Other students are grade oriented and cannot see beyond the evaluation procedure. Their workbooks and summative exercises echo what they think I want to hear rather than reflecting their experiences. As Ellsworth (1992) rightfully points out, the institutional authority conferred on teachers is, at times, problematic. Weiler (1991) explains that within our meritocratic educational system, rewards and grades are a reality that creates a dilemma for the critical teacher who challenges ideological structures, and attempts to transform oppressive features of the educational system.

Griffin (1989b) emphasizes that teachers must question their own conception of gender and accents that "changing conceptions of gender is an evolution of consciousness, not merely a change in attitude" (p. 229). To insure changes in the culture of physical education, teachers must also be critical and reflexive about their pedagogical practices, their position of privilege, and their commitment to social change. Teachers must realize that they are accountable for their interactions with colleagues and students and are also

responsible for the interactions that take place between students in their classes. Teachers must be aware of the power relations between female and male students, and attempt to build cooperative structures. Furthermore, a teacher who uses inclusive language and uses non sexist grouping strategies, creates a more equitable classroom than the teacher who does not. Physical education teachers must critically reflect on the nature of the interactions in the classroom setting as well as the silences.

Cooperative learning, group discussions and space to voice opinions are some of the positive qualities of feminist pedagogy. I feel, nonetheless, that there is potential for contradiction within these interactive settings, since the teacher's authority can be challenged in a negative fashion. As a forty something female physical educator, in a multi cultural and coeducational college milieu, my power is at times challenged due to the cultural attitudes of certain students. As Ng (1995) explains, in the course of a discussion, power relations between teacher and students are continuously negotiated, and students can either be cooperative or confrontational. Again, because of her status within the educational hierarchy, the teacher's authority prevails when faced by confrontation. Unfortunately, this type of situation is not constructive or empowering for either the teacher or the student.

Notwithstanding these criticisms, a physical education curriculum built around the concept of active lifestyles, and informed by feminist pedagogy, has the potential to empower students and promote change. Ultimately, society's taken-for-granted assumptions about men's and women's physical abilities and capabilities can be challenged through this curriculum. The social and biological factors that influence physical traits can be debated, and this type of dialogue allows the student to recognize the persistent and well established

differences in socialization, and how these limitations impact on his/her physical skills and attitudes. This curriculum framework has the capacity to empower students to experience and enjoy equal opportunity and equal success in physical education. It can potentially eliminate conventional relations of power in the classroom, and connect the content and objectives of the courses to broader social issues. As Scraton (1993) states, coeducational settings, "can provide the forum for increased pupil awareness of gender issues and the challenge to existing gender inequalities and expectations" (p.151).

**Conclusion**

The aim of this study was to critically assess whether the content and process of physical education can be transformed to undermine traditional attitudes surrounding gender and physical activity. In order to understand why girls are less inclined to be physically active than boys and to explain their lack of achievement in the physical domain, early socialization practices were reviewed to show that girls are provided with less encouragement and fewer opportunities to participate in physical activities. Also critical in this equation are girls' perceptions of physical competence which were also shown to be linked to parents' and teachers' beliefs and behaviors. Secondly, since proposals of gender inclusive models should be constructed with a familiarity of the sexism that has plagued the history of women's physical education, and with the understanding that the social construction of gender continues to disadvantage girls' and women's participation in sport and physical activity, this study outlined the historical development of physical education. Moreover, it was established that teachers play a pivotal role in this process since their

attitudes, beliefs and behaviors are expressions of society's deeply ingrained gender ideologies. This thesis then examined why teacher education fails at gender equity issues, and found that technocratic discourses are privileged in teacher education programs. Given this influence, future teachers are rarely presented with the information concerning this issue, and are even less likely to be provided with strategies to combat sexism in their classrooms. Consequently, our education system exposes students to different educational experiences, which consolidates their view of the world and prepares them for their respective futures in it. I therefore conclude that the actual practice of gender-sensitive physical education rests with the teacher. In order to reverse this cycle, the teacher, through the praxis of reflection and action, must formulate and initiate specific interventions for change.

Gender equity in physical education is a complex issue that requires a critical examination of the curriculum. If physical education departments continue to equate equal access with equal opportunity, girls will not reach their full potential and, more importantly, they will not experience the same sense of accomplishment and enjoyment in physical activity as most boys. All departments must broaden their standard of equal opportunity to a vision that includes a curriculum that accommodates the values of both girls and boys, that is process oriented versus outcome oriented, and insures the equal involvement and the equal success of all participants.

Five years ago, Quebec's Cegeps took a step in the right direction when they implemented a competency based physical education program, which advances health enhancing lifestyles. Theoretically, this approach is designed to be student centered rather

than performance or content oriented, and offers students the option to bring their interests and needs into the classroom. Before this revised program can be held up to be admired, however, we must also examine how this program is delivered. As Martin (1985) states, "So long as sex and gender are fundamental aspects of our personal experience, so long as they are deeply rooted features of our society, educational theory — and educational practice, too — must be gender sensitive"(as cited in Vertinsky, 1992, p.382).

Generally, physical education pedagogy tends to encourage patriarchal values of achievement and competition, perpetuating the message that physical activity and sport are primarily for boys. Unfortunately, and as Vertinsky (1992) asserts, this tradition is deeply ingrained "in the psyche of those who implement curriculum" (p.386). As I have emphasized earlier, gender equitable behaviors require educators to examine and alter their embedded attitudes about gender and physical activity. Educators must be mindful that teacher expectations shape classroom interactions and consequently influence the development of students' physical and motor skills, as well as the development of their self concepts. Additionally, educators must be committed to, and incorporate the values of individual experience, critique, and voice in order to enrich all students' physical education experiences. This safe and respectful environment will encourage learning, affect self-esteem and self-confidence, and dispel stereotypes about gender and the physical domain. Moreover, these changes will foster aspirations for the future, and motivate girls to pursue physical activities, providing them with the same health benefits as men.

The reforms have encouraged us to move beyond the traditional model of physical education, and this has promoted positive changes in post secondary physical education.

This revised curriculum encourages students to work toward achieving their maximum potential. For me, this means encouraging students to attain their best, and insisting that they not accept the traditional limitations of gender. However, as Smyth (1989) accents, "the idea that teaching is a political process serving certain interests in demonstrable ways, while actively excluding and denying others"(p.497), is not generally accepted by teachers. This situation is somewhat understandable given the bias of technocratic discourses in teacher education programs. Consequently, teachers continue to transmit knowledge uncritically rather than challenge the political, moral, and social implications of the knowledge. All physical education departments, and every teacher within these school structures have the responsibility to move beyond questions of technical issues, and offer classes that benefit every individual student.

Teachers are a vital link in promoting non sexist attitudes and are responsible for the equitable conditions in their classrooms. However, when messages communicated in schools contradict messages transmitted by society, the influence of schools' messages are limited. As a number of theorists advocate, schools will only generate comprehensive change when corresponding change occurs in other social structures. Nonetheless, I believe that we as individuals, can certainly redefine our roles in the classroom to resist the power relations that exist in society today. Vertinsky (1992) considers that,

> If the culture of physical education is ever to change, we need to begin with the teachers, and teachers in training, who are critical and reflective about their practices and personally committed to gender equality and the "cultural emancipation of the body". Reflecting on the changing context of physical education in the 1990s, they may find the concept of student-centered learning to be a promising step toward a truly gender-sensitive physical education. (p. 391)

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"....physical education makes both friends and enemies of children in schools...by reinforcing certain socially questionable values—for example, that one can only succeed in a competitive environment if there is a loser; that girls are inferior to boys in the physical domain, that the slim mesomorph body is the preferred body shape to which we all should aspire...our physical education programs should be challenging such values and consciously working to transform those aspects of the practice of sport and physical activity that are unjust, immoral, divisive, insensitive, and limiting". (Tinning, 1991, p.4)

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