



THE CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Gender reform policies in Australia have recently focused on affirmative action strategies and changing the curriculum in order to improve access and opportunity for girls. This has also been the case for physical education, a subject which has traditionally required the demonstration of physical power, dominance and muscularity. This study begins by drawing on research which analyses the ways in which dominant constructions of gender are reinforced by the content, teaching and structure of physical education. It examines how students come to understand their own physicality and the ways in which physical education reinforces or challenges the way they see themselves as gendered beings. The polarisation of masculinity and femininity, homophobia and sex-based harassment are seen to be major determinants in the maintenance of sexist traditions and strategies in physical education. This raises implications for the establishment of a gender-sensitive physical education which intentionally and consciously challenges the patriarchal and ethnocentric nature of the physical education curriculum and challenges students to identify the gendered and gendering practices in sport and physical education.

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DECLARATION

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any other university or tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being available for loan and photocopying.

Signed _____

Dated 12/12/06.

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Finally, I figured that I should feature in here too. As anyone who has completed a Master's degree externally would know, writing a thesis can be an isolating, lonely experience. So, I would like to pat myself on the back for having the courage to have a go and for learning and growing from the experience.