Gender Construction in New Zealand Physical Education

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Abstract

This study investigates how teacher beliefs, programmes and practices contribute to gender construction, within co-educational secondary schools, in New Zealand. It explores how physical education teaching practices support and reinforce socially desirable forms of masculinity and femininity. The research utilises interviews with teachers and students in co-educational secondary schools in the Canterbury region. Students and teachers offer narratives surrounding the gendered beliefs and practices that are inherent in physical education classes. The evidence presented represents the collaborative ideas of four teachers and twenty students.

The discussion investigates the nature of teacher beliefs surrounding the development of gender, and examines the hidden curriculum that supports the replication and legitimisation of socially desirable forms of masculinity and femininity. In particular, it examines teachers' understandings of masculinity and femininity, the hierarchies and different expectations of achievement and behaviour that exist in physical education classes. It examines how changes in physical education programmes, have challenged explicit issues relating to gender, while hidden messages have not been addressed. Lastly the discussion reflects on the reasons why gender constructions go unchallenged, and provides insight into possible avenues to instigate change.

This research indicates how gender continues to be constructed due to the hidden curriculum that is operationalised by teachers and students in physical education classes. It suggests strategies that would assist in changing and challenging the gender construction in physical education. Finally, the study concludes that in order for gender construction to be reduced within from the physical education classroom the physical education sector must strive to challenge existing ideologies and develop practices that allow and provide for a diverse range of masculinities and femininities.
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Chapter One  - Introduction

Background to issue

Physical education in New Zealand is in a transitional phase. With the introduction of *Health and Physical Education in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 1999) a philosophical move was undertaken that challenged physical educators to move from traditional motor skill and sport based programmes, to one which adopted a socio-ecological approach. Among the many significant issues the curriculum is directing teachers to address, are those "that specifically effect the learning experiences of girls and boys" (Ministry of Education, 1999, p. 50). In order to achieve this teachers are being asked to "select learning outcomes that are equitable, regardless of gender (Ministry of Education, 1999, p. 50). While the initial implementation phase of this curriculum has past, the long term prospects of New Zealand secondary schools achieving this are restricted by stereotypical beliefs and traditional practices that I believe remain entrenched in physical education teacher culture.

Physical education and sport are historically masculine constructed institutions. Scraton (1992) suggests that:

... common-sense assumptions and stereotypes concerning girls’ and boys’ ‘natural’ physical abilities and capabilities have significant consequences for the teaching of physical education and result in gender differentiated practices. The historical legacy, together with powerful contemporary common-sense assumptions, result in the institutionalisation of gendered policies, priorities and practices (p. 50).

It is commonly agreed by researchers that sport and physical education are powerful sites for the visible demonstration and social construction of male and female differences (Messner & Sabo, 1990b; Scraton, 1992; Shilling, 1993; Talbot, 1993; and Wright, 1996).
Within the New Zealand context, there is limited research on physical education and its role in gender construction. Early commentators in the field of gender and physical education in New Zealand included Abigail (1984), Jones (1981), Mitchell (1992), and Sands (1991). Their work contributed to the functionalist arguments surrounding gender, but neglected the social constructionist and critical perspectives.

Burrows, a more recent New Zealand researcher, furthered the study of gender and physical education with a range of contributions that reflect feminist, social constructionist and critical perspectives. Burrows, (2000a,) suggests that:

…it is not just girls or women who have stories to tell about the ways gender shapes their experiences of school physical education. Boys too, have experiences of schooling contoured by gender in ways that are not always emancipatory for them or for girls (p. 31).

The construction of gender in physical education is not simply an issue of the continued expectation of girls to meet stereotypical forms of femininity or the exclusion of girls from activities. It is as much about the pressure to conform to socially acceptable forms of masculinity for boys.

The social construction of gender in physical education occurs as a result of gendered beliefs and hegemonic practices. This affects every individual in the class. Students of physical education are socially constructed when the school and classroom environment supports the superiority of one group over another, and when the teaching practices are hegemonic. Experience, as a secondary school physical education teacher, would suggest that teacher programmes and practices continue to be developed around common stereotypical assumptions regarding males and females, and these contribute to the construction of gender.

Any insight into how this construction takes place can only enhance understanding of changes needed in teaching practices. There is a need to eliminate gender construction
from the physical education classroom. In understanding what takes place in the classroom then the process of change can begin.

**Purpose of study**

This study investigates how teacher beliefs, programmes and practices contribute to gender construction within co-educational secondary schools in the New Zealand context. It explores physical education teaching practices that support, reinforce and challenge socially desirable forms of masculinity and femininity. It is in essence, a critique of the ways in which school physical education draws on and reinforces dominant discourses of gender, and the effects this has on both males and females.

**Research questions**

- How do teachers perceive that they achieve gender equity in their classroom practices?

- Do teachers of physical education in secondary schools have different expectations for different gender groups within their classes?

- What actions do teachers take that reinforce or challenge gender stereotypes in the classroom?

- Do students in secondary school physical education classes believe their teachers have different expectations for different gender groups within their classes?

- What actions do students believe their teachers take that reinforce or challenge gender stereotypes in the classroom?
Theoretical Framework

Research focusing on gender has the added dimension of the researcher bringing their own gendered identities and experiences to the design, interpretation and synthesis of the research. The framework provided below is an attempt to provide the reader with an understanding of the foundations on which this study is grounded. Three theoretical perspectives form the basis for my research.

Social Constructionism

Social constructionism suggests that people are the way they are because of the experiences and opportunities that the individuals have in their lifetime, not simply because of their biological makeup. Pre-service training courses, for me as a physical educator, certainly exposed me to the realm of the physiological sciences and essentialist arguments. Burrows (2000b) suggests biologically based developmental assumptions are the “bedrock for practice” (p. 26) in New Zealand schools. While biological assumptions may remain as the foundation of practice for physical educators, there has been a move toward understanding that knowledge and resulting social behaviours are constructed by society. Social constructionism is the view that all social knowledge, and therefore:

... all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context (Crotty, 1998, p.42).

Knowledge is something that society produces in complex ways. It is the result of:

... diverse social practices that give meaning to human activities, of social definition and self-definition, of struggles between those who have the power to define and regulate, and those who resist (Seidman, 1994, p. 268).
Social constructionism as an ideology, and its relationship to gender and physical education, is discussed in extensive detail throughout the literature review that follows in the next chapter.

**Feminisms**

While there is a range of ways that feminists may perceive power relations between men and women, most feminists seek an equitable society, where women are no longer oppressed, and use a social constructionist argument to explain how males and females are socially formed and that social explanation can be given as to why men are dominant. According to Seidman (1994) feminists would argue that “gender is not a fact of nature but a social fact” (p. 237).

While early feminist writers perceived that all women were unified, current understandings indicate that gender identity is not fixed, neither by nature or society, and may change over time (Marsh, 1996; Seidman, 1994). It can therefore be said that there is no one identity associated with females or males, but a multitude of identities an individual may subscribe to.

While there is a multitude of identities that an individual may adopt, society still endeavours to construct a socially ‘acceptable’ form of masculinity and femininity for individuals. Gender should therefore be viewed as a source of power and hierarchy. Feminists see this power and hierarchy in the idea that things are only of real value when ‘maleness’ is attached to it.

Contemporary feminists are turning their “focus towards men as the ‘new victims of gender’” (Zalewski, 2000, p. 142). This would suggest that a more contemporary view is that not only are women oppressed through gender construction, but men now are also affected.
In the context of physical education, the oppression of both boys and girls could stem from the value placed on physical ability. Gender, and the social pressures to conform to the dominant from of masculinity and femininity, could cause problems for a range of individuals, especially physically less able males, males exhibiting effeminate behaviours, females that are overtly masculine, and all other females in physical education.

While we may teach all students, whether they are girls or boys, the same things, this does not ensure that they will be treated or understood in the same way. As a physical educator, I can deliver what may appear to be programmes and practices that are socially just, but this may not prevent gender being constructed due to hegemonic practices and aspects of the hidden curriculum.

**Critical Theory**

In order to bring about the change there is a need to look to a more critical perspective. While social constructionist and feminist theories are used to explain the process and resulting effects of social construction, critical theory can be used to investigate the wider social, political, economic and historical influences issues in society. Critical theory argues that these influences inter-relate to form oppressive structures within a wider society. A characteristic of the critical paradigm is that it has a ‘big picture’ or holistic approach that examines the nature of social relations.

Critical theory has its roots in the Enlightenment period and in the philosophies of Kant, Hegel, and Marx. In the 20th century, it is advanced in the writings from the Frankfurt School of Social Criticism. The German philosopher/sociologist Habermas is the leading representative of critical theory today. Critical theory is a radical ideology that supports the conclusion that the structure of society is basically unsound and unfair and that it ought to be entirely changed (Levin, 1991).
While critical theory developed out of Marxism, with the focus on the exploitation of one class over another, contemporary critical theory has been used to explore and change many situations where there is dominance of one group over another. Critical theorists maintain that to better understand why a behaviour pattern exists in society one must determine who benefits from that pattern and how such persons maintain their position of power (Bassis, Gelles, & Levine, 1991; Knox, 1990).

The goal of critical theory:

...is to understand the patterns of belief and social conditions that restrict human action and to empower those being researched, to provide them with the insight necessary to demystify and critique their own social circumstances and choose actions to improve their lives (Lather, 1985 in Bain, 1989, p. 291).

A critical theory approach encourages thoughts and actions within a wider social, political and historical context, and endeavours to raise the consciousness of individuals. This emancipatory aim endeavours to enable people to “gain the knowledge and power to be in control of their own lives” (Sparkes, 1996a, p. 37).

In order to investigate and analyse how gendered ideologies are (re)produced in the beliefs and practices of physical educators, and the affects this has on learning, it is important to evaluate and analyse the oppressive structures of wider society. The critical research paradigm can provide a useful summary of philosophical beliefs. Griffin (1990) in (Sparkes, 1996b, p. 40) summarized beliefs inherent in the critical perspective. These have been adapted to express a critical interpretation of physical education by Gillespie and Culpan (2000, p. 87). Gillespie and Culpan suggest that:

- The physical education culture is made up of groups with power and privilege, and groups without power and privilege;
- Social structures within the culture of physical education perpetuate this power imbalance;
• The power and privilege people have in physical education involves a vested interest to maintain the status quo;
• The powerless and under-privileged in physical education have a vested interest in social change;
• The critical position in physical education asks questions that will lead to change. These are not designed for mere description, but for the raising of consciousness;
• Critical theorists believe that, in changing individual and group consciousness towards physical education, change will be forthcoming.

"The critical theorist studies the hidden curriculum to analyse its relationship to the larger society and to identify opportunities to transform society" (Bain, 1989, p. 291). The study involves a thorough investigation of the hidden curriculum evident in physical education, and its relationship to gender construction. I hope to develop understanding of the issue and change individual and group consciousness, in order to bring about change in physical education practice.
Chapter Two - Review of Literature

Introduction

This review of the literature has been structured in a way that first explores the debate surrounding the development of the individual. This involves two diverse theoretical perspectives: firstly the essentialist viewpoint, and the hegemonic ideologies that it supports; secondly, the counter perspective of social constructionism.

Once the social constructionist argument has been presented, the review then places gender in the context of social constructionism. This involves an exploration of gender as a socially constructed occurrence and the diverse and dominant forms it takes.

Lastly, the review moves from theoretical concepts to education and in particular physical education as a context in which gender construction occurs. The review explores the role of the school in the process of social construction before going on to explore the impacts of teacher beliefs, the hidden curriculum, and equal opportunity approaches. The review is concluded with a discussion surrounding avenues for changing physical education.

Essentialist Theories

An essentialist view attributes:

... the different social roles performed by women and men to underlying biological structures particularly, reproductive differences and hormonal differences and genetic make up (Marsh, 1996, p. 276).
These biologically based differences are seen by essentialists to influence the behaviours that determine the essence of masculinity and femininity, and are used to define what they would see as two distinct sexes.

Essentialist arguments grew out of the late 19th century. The findings of research done at this time have been used to justify the position of the dominant group within society and have resulted in continued social inequalities. As Shilling (1993) outlines:

Naturalistic views of the body are important because of the repeated attempts that have been made by the dominant society to justify their position with reference to supposedly inferior biological make-up of the dominated (p. 59).

The categorising of individuals into simplistic social categories (e.g. black/white, male/female) based on scientific ‘truths’ ignores overlaps in, and stresses the differences between, human bodies (Birke, 1986, 1992).

Sociologists (Marsh, 1996; Shilling, 1993) now challenge the idea that there are two distinct sexes, and propose that the ‘sexes’ themselves are socially constructed, both in their biological features and the behaviours that they exhibit.

Essentialism attributes all differences presented in the behaviours of men and women to their biological make up, and neglects to recognise the impact society has on human behaviour. For example, men are stronger than women due to their physiological structure, not because of their upbringing. However, Hubbard (1990) suggests that:

... if a society puts half its children into short skirts and warns them not to move in ways that reveal their panties, while putting the other half into jeans and overalls and encouraging them to climb trees, play ball, and participate in other vigorous outdoor games; if later, during adolescence, the children who have been wearing trousers are urged to eat like growing boys, while the children in skirts are warned to watch
their weight and not get fat; if the half in jeans runs around in sneakers and boots, while the half in skirts, totter about on spike heels, then these two groups of people will be biologically as well as socially different (p. 69).

The essentialist argument:

... also neglects how biological features themselves interact with the environment in which it is situated: socio-biology ‘massively underestimates the contribution of cultures and histories to that interaction’ (Bem, S [1993] in Marsh, 1996, p. 276).

Explanations based on biological differences or biological factors are inadequate. As Abbott and Wallace (1997) outline:

Feminists have argued that biological differences between men and women do not explain their social roles and that these need to be understood as socially constructed or in need of sociological explanation. While there may be anatomical differences between boys and girls, what is important is the way these are perceived, the way boys and girls are socialised into what is seen as appropriate gender behaviour and what behaviour is valued (p. 10).

A social constructionist critique of the essentialist perspective has lead to the development of ‘negation’ theory. Social constructionists view the bodies of men and women as being more similar than different. The extensive and skillful abilities and structures of the biological body are seen as similar for both men and women. Connell (1983; 1987; 1995) believes that the dominant group within society negates the biological similarities or distorts and exaggerates the superficial physical differences of the genders. This is in order to create social inequality, based on the socially determined criteria.
Far from being an expression of natural difference, exclusive gender identities are based on the suppression of body similarities and the exaggeration of body differences. Men and women are categorized as separate and unequal by converting the averages of the differences into ‘absolute’ differences (Birke, 1986, 1992). Statements are made such as ‘men are stronger than women’, when in fact there are women who are stronger than some men. These ‘truths’ surrounding gender, developed by essentialists, are being used as an ideological justification for this inequality.

Historically and in contemporary society, biological capabilities and constraints of bodies can and have defined individuals’ social, economic and political relations. Essentialist arguments produce and reinforce divisions within society by giving scientific ‘facts’ to support their beliefs of superiority, and by making challenges to these beliefs seem unsubstantiated in the face of the ‘truths’ presented. Birke (1986) and Shilling (1993) suggest that in following an essentialist view of the body, the inequalities of wealth, resources, legal rights and political power are defined or legitimised.

An essentialist view of the body allows the dominant group to use hegemonic practice to maintain their domination. Hegemony is a notion, developed in the late 1930s by Italian political theorist Antonio Gramsci, used to describe how the domination of one class over others is achieved by a combination of political and ideological means (Abercrombie, Hill, & Turner, 2000; Hall, 1996). Privileged groups in society are able, seemingly by consent, to establish their own cultural practices as the most valued and legitimate, whereas subordinate groups must struggle and fight against alternative practices and activities incorporated into the dominant culture.

A hegemonic ideology is:

... a system of interdependent ideas that explain and justify particular political, economic, moral, [religious] and social conditions and interests (Sage, 1990, p.2).
Hegemonic practices are the overt and hidden strategies used by the dominant group in order to replicate and legitimise their power and domination. Individuals who are not part of the dominant group have their constitutive principles, codes and common-sense consciousness manipulated as a result of hegemonic practices, to the extent that the subordinate unwillingly or unconsciously accept domination (Fernandez-Balboa, 1993).

Some feminists (Bryson, 1987; Dunning, 1987; Hall, 1996; Messner & Sabo, 1990a) have recognised the importance of hegemony and have turned it to the examination of gender relations, sport and physical education. We live in a patriarchal society in which the maintenance of gender roles and the domination of men over women is replicated and legitimised in institutions such as schools and sport. “Survival of a particular social system depends on the reproduction and legitimisation of its ideologies” (Fernandez-Balboa, 1993, p. 243). The historically scientific nature of physical education reflects dominant societal norms, beliefs and values, through which hegemonic ideologies and a patriarchal notion of society are maintained instead of replaced (Dunning, 1987; Fernandez-Balboa, 1993).

Physical education has become fragmented through the development of specialised areas for study, including exercise physiology, anatomy, biomechanics, sports injury management and exercise nutrition, all of which have a strong scientific base. Fragmentation is based on:

... scientific, technological, and economic principles geared toward developing an hegemonic ideology that serves the interests of privileged groups and maintains social relations of power of a ‘free market’ economy (Fernandez-Balboa, 1993, p. 239).

The ideologies that physical education in a scientific paradigm has come to represent, including essentialist ‘truths’ about the capabilities of men and women, may incorporate discriminatory practices and transmit gender based belief systems.
"Sport is a powerful institution through which male hegemony is constructed and reconstructed" (Bryson, 1987, p. 47; also see Messner & Sabo, 1990a). Male hegemony is constructed and reconstructed in sport and physical education, through the linking of maleness with highly valued and visible physical skills, power and competitiveness. Secondly, it links maleness with the positive sanctioned use of aggression, force and violence.

Important to hegemony are resistance and struggle; it is an ongoing process because alternative cultural forms and practices always pose a threat to dominant ones. Hence, hegemony established by the dominant classes is always incomplete. Sport and physical education:

... may be a cultural sphere that is dominated by the values and relations of the dominant class, but it does not fully strip working class participants of the abilities to think critically and reshape and redefine sport in such a way that it meets their needs or even becomes an arena for resistance (Messner & Sabo, 1990a, p. 8).
Social Constructionism

In an extreme opposite to the essentialist viewpoint, "social constructionists suggest that the body is somehow shaped, constrained and even invented by society" (Shilling, 1993, p. 70). According to Connell (2000) the key intellectual underpinnings of social constructionism are:

... the feminist analysis of gender as a structure of social relations, especially a structure of power relations; sociological concerns with subcultures and issues of marginalisation and resistance; and post-structuralist analysis of the making of identities in discourse, and the interplay of gender with race, sexuality, class and nationality (p. 8).

Social constructionism involves understanding that humans are born into a social world, and from their earliest moments their lives are inextricably bound to the social matrix.

Sociologists are aware that the way people understand the world they live in, who they are, and the way they are expected to behave reflect characteristics of particular social constructions of the society they live in and where they are located in that society (Gove & Malcom, 1997, p. 3).

Seidman (1994) goes on to suggests that social construction is the result of diverse social practices that give meaning to human activities, of social definition and self-definition, of struggles between those who have the power to define and regulate, and those who resist. Subsequently, social life determines not only what experience one will have as an individual, either personally or vicariously, but also how that experience will be interpreted.

The process of social construction occurs as individuals actively construct knowledge. Gendered behaviours are constructed through the complex interactions that make up a social environment.

That is not to say that children are sponges who simply absorb all information, however, if the hegemonic:

... messages about male and female stereotypes are consistent, regular and come from a wide range of sources, they will be received and internalised very early in life (Szirom, 1988, p. 15).

**Gender**

Gender is a social construct that is contestable, with both essentialist and social constructionists debating its definition. The term gender, a social constructionist term, is used to denote the psychological, social and cultural differences linked to males and females through particular social contexts, while sex, an essentialist term, refers simply to the biological differences which distinguish males from females by chromosomal, anatomical, reproductive, hormonal and other physiological characteristics. Whereas in the general population sex and gender are used interchangeably, the definitions outlined by sociologists (Abbott & Wallace, 1997; Giddens, 1997; Marsh, 1996), reflect that the terms mean two quite separate things. Gender, unlike sex, is socially constructed and the appropriate behaviour, interests, abilities, values and roles for males and females vary widely between societies and at different times within the same society (Abbott & Wallace, 1997; Szirom, 1988).

For the purpose of this study gender:

... refers to the socially constructed categories of masculine and feminine that are differently defined in various cultures and at different times (Bilton et al., 1996, p. 203).
While it is recognised that there are biological differences, there are more similarities than differences between males and females. What it is to be masculine or feminine is greatly dependent on the ways in which:

... those differences, whether real or perceived, have been valued, used and relied upon to classify women and men, and to assign roles and expectations to them (Ministry of Women’s Affairs, 1997, p. 7).

**Social Construction of Gender**

According to social construction theory:

... differences in the behaviour of men and women develop mainly through the social learning of male and female identities of masculinity and femininity (Giddens, 1997, p. 91).

Marsh (1996) reports that research has identified that there are:

... different practices or expectations in relation to girls and boys which encouraged or reinforced ‘feminine’ behaviour in girls and ‘masculine’ behaviour in boys (p. 280).

A range of social processes has been identified as sites where gendered categories of masculinity and femininity are constructed.

Prominent in the induction process of young males (and therefore females) are thought to be messages gleaned through the cultural stories that saturate mass media, schools, sports, peer groups and family (Hickey & Fitzclarence, 1999, p. 2).

It is apparent that in any situation where individuals interact there are opportunities for masculinity and femininity to be constructed.

Assumptions about gender and gender categories are based on socially constructed, historically specific, and cultural representations of the
social interactions that occur among gendered individuals through their relations to each other (Koivula, 2001, p. 2)

While there has been a move away from biological explanations towards a socially constructed perspective, Marsh (1996) and Shilling (1993) suggest that, while biological explanations are now marginalised within sociology, they continue to shape popular conceptions of the body and still abound in our culture. Shilling goes on to say that “this is especially apparent in the view that gender inequalities are the direct result of women’s ‘weak’ and ‘unstable’ bodies” (p. 41). Hegemonic femininity and masculinity are still based on traditional perspectives of males and females. This is supported by Walby (1990 in Marsh, 1996) who argues that:

Social learning theory still operates with a static and unitary conception of gender differences: femininity is one set of characteristics that girls and women learn and masculinity another set that boys and men learn. She argues that this takes insufficient account for the different forms that femininity and masculinity can take and hence it does not account for diversity among women and men (p. 285).

Diverse meanings of masculinity and femininity

According to Connell (2000) and Marsh (1996) there is a need to speak of ‘masculinities’ not masculinity and ‘femininities’ not femininity. Different cultures, and different periods of history, construct gender differently.

Trying to tie the meaning down is to give at best a false impression and at worst an example of the closure and the power which postmodernists attempt to expose (Zalewski, 2000, p. 25).

We might therefore expect that in multicultural societies there will be multiple definitions and dynamics of masculinity and femininity. Whitson (1994) indicates that femininity (and therefore it is assumed masculinity):
... is not an essence that all woman (or men) have naturally or even that some have more than others. It is rather, a product of discourses, practices, and social relations that construct the situation of woman (and men) in patriarchal societies in ways that typically dis-empower women in relation to men (p. 355).

**Dominant forms of masculinity and femininity**

While it is apparent that there are diverse forms of masculinity and femininity, this does not ensure that there are not dominant forms of masculinity and femininity, which subordinate or marginalise other forms. Connell (2000) suggests that:

In most situations that have been closely studied there is some hegemonic form of masculinity. The hegemonic form need not be the most common form of masculinity, let alone the most comfortable. Indeed many men live in a state of some tension with, or distance from, the hegemonic masculinity of their culture or community (p. 10).

It must be assumed that this is also applicable to femininity and that some hegemonic form is apparent in most situations.

While the awareness of femininity and expectations of women in relation to physical activity has shifted over time:

... underpinning this developing awareness remains a powerful reaffirmation of a 'femininity' which deems young women and women as weaker, less physically powerful, less aggressive than their male counterparts while retaining more grace, poise, finesse, flexibility and balance (Scraton, 1992, p. 59).
As Hickey (1999) goes on to suggest that:

... forged in the dominant story-line of what it means to be 'masculine', young males are overwhelmingly tolerant of aggression and confrontation. Nuanced on traditional cultural forms of maleness it is not considered manly to reveal weakness, show pain or seek comfort from others in the face of personal anxiety or distress (p. 9).

The discourses of masculine strength and feminine weakness continue to constitute both the expectations and self-expectations for individuals. Clearly, gender construction is very powerful and challenges to it can be upsetting. Once a gender is assigned, society expects individuals to act like 'females' and 'males'. It is in the practices of everyday life that these expectations are fulfilled and reproduced (Bourdieu, 1990; Lorber, 1994; Whitson, 1994). Marsh (1996) outlines that:

... cultural rules and expectations surrounding gender and sexual identity often become visible only when they are transgressed, when people break the rules (p. 271).

Because transgression challenges hegemonic masculinities and femininities, it carries punitive sanctions for those who do not meet expectations. "Men and women who defy gender roles by exhibiting behaviour associated with the other gender are subject to ridicule and suspicion" (Griffin, 1989, p. 224).
Education

Education is an institution that has a role in the process of social construction of hegemonic masculinity and femininity.

New approaches to gender in the sociology of education tend to emphasise the ways in which masculinity and femininity are produced as part of the education system, both through the formal organisation of schooling and through informal culture (Abbott & Wallace, 1997, p. 110).

Giddens (1997) and Abbott (1997) suggest that feminists view schooling as an integral part of the patriarchal system within which women take on subordinate positions, a system that structurally disadvantages women. This happens irrespective of the attitudes and values of individual teachers or the policies of individual schools or local education authorities. Schools, in conjunction with other social institutions, help perpetuate social and economic inequalities across the generations, as schools interact in complex ways with the influences of home, the peer group, the labour market and wider social and cultural forces.

While “feminists have argued that girls are disadvantaged in the education system, and learn to be subordinate and to accept dominant ideologies of femininity and masculinity” (Abbott & Wallace, 1997, p. 83), it could also be argued that many young males in the education system also learn to accept these dominant ideologies. According to Connell (1995):

Lessons about what behaviours and attitudes one must express to be a ‘real boy’ are instantiated in the language, curriculum, organisational strategies and relationships braced within physical education classes. The notions of masculinity supported in physical education classes are not only detrimental to girls’ participation but also limiting for male students themselves (in Burrows, 2000a, p. 35).
It is commonly agreed by researchers that physical education is a powerful site for the visible demonstration and social construction of male and female differences (Scraton, 1992; Shilling, 1993; Talbot, 1993; and Wright, 1996). Society continues to view women’s bodies as inferior, due to an essentialist construct of the body based on biological differences. This is reinforced within physical education and sport, where the bodies of women are viewed as inferior to men. In a society which values strength, speed and power of movement, schools will continue to reproduce the inequalities and dominant ideologies of society. Prevailing discourses of femininity and masculinity has positioned boys as strong, vigorous, and competitive, and girls as passive, preoccupied with their appearance, and mostly concerned with deriving their feelings of worth and confidence from interpersonal relationships. As the works of Chambers (1991, 1992); Bradbury (1989); Mitchell (1992); and Sands (1991) have shown:

... these cultural expectations of masculinity and femininity have prevailed, in gender differentiated language, expectations and organisational practices of some mid to late 20th century physical educators in New Zealand schools (in Burrows, 2000a, p. 33)

Physical Educators

While it is recognised that there is a range of factors both in education and in wider society that contribute to the construction of masculinities and femininities, teachers play an essential role within the education system.

Feminists have demonstrated that teachers have stereotyped attitudes to boys and girls and that the school reinforces rather than challenges gender divisions in the wider world (Abbott & Wallace, 1997, p. 95).

From her interview material Scraton (1987; 1992) suggests that common-sense assumptions and stereotypes concerning girls’ and boys’ ‘natural’ physical abilities and capabilities have significant consequences for the teaching of physical education and
result in gender differentiated practices. Physical education provides a platform where physical differences are unmasked and often accentuated.

As Scraton (1992) outlined, the majority of teachers viewed the characteristics as biologically determined or ‘natural.’ Secondly, teachers identified “social traditional and cultural determination as creating gender differences in physical ability and capacity” (p. 47). These perceptions of males and females fall into two perspectives, the essentialist and social constructionist.

This dual perspective, dominated by biology, has serious implications in the teaching of physical education. As Talbot (1993) argues, physical education is gendered in content, ideology, and teaching methods. Teachers may espouse equality of opportunity for all children, but their beliefs, teaching behaviours and practices reveal entrenched biological views, which reflect ‘common-sense’ notions of what are suitable behaviours, levels of participation and expected abilities for girls and boys.

Physical education teachers have an occupational culture that on Skelton’s (1993) autobiographical account centres on a conventional masculinity that is “not only dominant, but neutralised as natural and good, part of the expected and unquestioned nature of things” (p. 297). According to Brown (1999):

The gendered expectations placed upon physical education teachers remain pervasive. There is a very real concern for controlling classes and trying to fit into such a strongly regulated institution such as a school. Children, teachers and parents often demand strongly gendered displays from male physical education teachers if they are to be considered legitimate and worthy. Given this combination of factors, even well meaning male physical education teachers are likely to be drawn towards demonstrating complicit masculine teaching identities, and so remain active intermediaries in the reproduction of the gender order existing in physical education and school sport (p. 12).
Teachers concerned with the maintenance of high standards of behaviour, in keeping with their notions of the appropriate behaviour for young women, in turn constrain the possibilities for movement. As Scraton (1992) argues:

... this combined with the restrictive rules of many girls’ sports, ‘encourage young woman to learn that their bodies need protecting and they must remain enclosed within personal space (in Wright, 1996, p. 54).

Many young women told Flintoff and Scraton (2001, p. 12) about teachers who were sarcastic about their skill level, or held low expectations of them, or who just did not seem to care. Their research showed that young women were very aware of gender relations, and the contradictions and ambiguities raised for them, and were also very realistic in recognising that many teachers do little to challenge or change this.

The Health and Physical Education in the New Zealand Curriculum document (Ministry of Education, 1999), encourages teachers to:

... address issues that specifically effect the learning experiences of girls and boys and to select learning outcomes that are equitable, regardless of gender (p. 50).

As Acker (1994) suggests that there is a:

... hidden curriculum of gender differentiation that continues to operate and influence the school processes despite the apparent gender neutrality of the official curriculum (in Abbott & Wallace, 1997, p. 94).

The curriculum may indicate a need to address gender related practices in physical education, however the hidden curriculum is a means for the reproduction of the existing social order.

While the formal curriculum in schools, apart from participation in games, no longer distinguishes in any systematic way between boys and girls, there are various ‘points of entry’ for the development of gender differences in education. These include teacher expectations,
school rituals and other aspects of the hidden curriculum” (Giddens, 1997, p. 411).

The hidden curriculum may be defined as anything that is learned, including all implicit values, beliefs, attitudes and assumptions, in educational institutions that is not explicit in the official curriculum (Bain, 1985, 1989; Fernandez-Balboa, 1993; Jackson, 1968).

The learning of the hidden curriculum occurs as interactions occur between teachers, administrators and students across the day and throughout the year. Bain (1990) notes that because the hidden curriculum is unspoken and can be repetitive, the messages are perceived as ‘truths’, and may be more powerful because of this. The hidden curriculum can involve both the inclusion and exclusion of particular messages, either through deliberate and intentional or through unintentional and incidental practice (Dodds, 1985). Hence, messages surrounding gender can be gleaned by either direct comment or subtle practice within the school and classroom environment.

In a sense the hidden curriculum acts as a highly selective, powerful screen that filters what we pay attention to and what we ignore, thus creating a single contextual world (Fernandez-Balboa, 1993, p. 231)

The hidden curriculum in physical education:

... emphasises roles where men are supposed to be strong, aggressive and unemotional while women are supposed to be weak, submissive and emotional (Hoferek, 1982a, p. 83).

Through the hidden curriculum schools enhance the learning of masculinities and femininities. Connell (1995) indicates that schools and competitive sports harbour patterns of knowing and behaving that are deeply entwined in the (re) production of hegemonic masculinity.

The cultural messages, both overt and hidden, that emerge from arenas such as sport and physical education typically valorize versions of masculinity forged on strength,
aggression, mateship (solidarity), courage, independence and commitment, force and violence (Bryson, 1987; Hickey & Fitzclarence, 1999). In terms of being ‘physical’, Scraton (1987) indicates that the expectation for females is quite distinct from that for men in that it is an expectation “of inactivity, passivity and neatness (reinforced through socialisation)” (p. 172). Fifty seven percent of female athletes surveyed by Messner (1988) agreed that:

... society still forces a choice between being an athlete and being feminine, suggesting that there is still a dynamic tension between traditional prescriptions for femininity and the image presented by active, strong, even muscular women (p. 71).

He goes on to suggest that:

Attempting to be viewed as feminine involves accepting behavioural and physical restrictions that make it difficult to view oneself, much less be viewed by others, as equal with man (Messner, 1988, p. 72).

Activities labeled as feminine:

... seem to be those sports that are considered appropriate for woman to participate in, that is, sports that allow women participants to remain true to the stereotyped expectations of femininity (such as being graceful and non-aggressive) and that provide beauty and aesthetic pleasure (Koivula, 2001, p. 2).

Sport and physical education have been shown to be an important site for the reproduction of hegemonic masculinity (Messner & Sabo, 1990b; Scraton, 1992).

It must be acknowledged that dominant heterosexual masculinity subordinates women, and other subordinate masculinities, through its structural location in patriarchal power relations, and is not simply attitudinal (Scraton, 1993, p. 146).

Physical education and the hidden curriculum within it provide avenues for hegemonic masculinity to subordinate all others.
Where dominance and subordination exist so does elitism. "Elitism is based on the [essentialist] assumption that all 'men' are not created equal" (Fernandez-Balboa, 1993, p. 234) and this leads to the formation of hierarchies within physical education classes. Hierarchies in physical education that are based on physical ability result in differential and sometimes unjust treatment of students, both by teachers and peers.

Elitism in education is reinforced by a meritocratic system based on the notion that all students are educated on a 'level playing field'.

Meritocracy, however, serves to justify the application of double standards (Giroux, 1988a). The most common result of this system is the exclusion and failure of those who are considered less economically, intellectually or physically 'gifted'" (Fernandez-Balboa, 1993, p. 235).

According to Humberstone (1990) "the organisation of pupils into co-educational groupings provided the context in which it was possible not only for girls but also for boys to challenge gender stereotyping" (p. 11) and all other dominant ideologies. However Connell (2000) questions "whether the masculinising agenda, that has been muted by co-education, has actually been eliminated?" (p. 155). Co-educational schools typically operate with an informal but powerful ideology of gender difference, and do put pressure on boys and girls to conform to it. Teachers argue that in a co-educational institution that they treat everyone the same. This is no better according to Talbot (1993) who states that "the equal treatment claim ignores the pervasiveness and power of expectations of girls and boys, women and men" (p. 81). Miles and Middleton (1990) point out that "equal access to a common curriculum does not guarantee equal treatment in the classroom or wider society" (in Abbott & Wallace, 1997, p. 93). While Humberstone (1990) goes on to indicate that girls in mixed-sex classrooms where boys dominate are marginalised, their abilities are underrated and they maybe turned off certain subjects. As Scraton (1986) outlines:
An ‘equal opportunities’ approach tends to encourage equal access to this ‘male domain’. Not only is equal access problematic for girls and women, while stereotypes of femininity and masculinity prevail, but there is a danger that giving equal access to an unequal situation will reinforce these stereotypes. Mixed soccer may serve only to prove to many girls/young women that they are less physically capable, unable to play in competitive teams and are less suited to what is predominantly a ‘male’ activity (p. 89).

As Burrows (1996) suggests change to the mixed sex organisation has not often been accompanied by a shift to mixed-sex teaching strategies and unless teaching styles are adapted, efforts to create more equitable learning environments are destined to remain at a surface level only.

It would appear that equal opportunities approaches and the introduction of co-education classes has done little to break down the hidden curriculum and the supporting hegemonic practices that maintain structures such as hierarchies and elitism in physical education.

**Where to from here?**

Challenging the masculinising agenda and the hidden curriculum of physical education remains an important issue for the professional. This will not only benefit girls, but also many boys. This can not be achieved simply by the development of better pre-service programmes. As Henning (2001) identified, “staff development and teacher education do not prepare teachers to identify the unintentional gender biases in a classroom” (p. 13). In discussion surrounding trainee teachers, Brown (1999) found that while it was unintentional, teacher training institutes’ actions in context suggest a cycle of gender reproduction in which these teachers provide the living links. The dilemma trainee
teachers’ face is that in spite of a desire to change the order of physical education, they are in fact a living part of it.

To bring about changes physical education teachers need to “understand the politics of gender and sexuality and how these impact on their teaching before they can begin to challenge these” (Flintoff & Scraton, 2001, p. 18). According to Wright (1996) and Scraton (1992) the challenge then is to think beyond the boundaries set by patriarchal constructions of physical activity and use the unique position physical education has within schooling to challenge the structural and social arrangements of oppression and inequality.

Physical educators need to be pressed to:

... frame the compelling issue of difference in terms that give it an emancipatory grounding, identifying the differences that promote inequality and those that do not. This is a tall order for physical educators habituated to traditional views of ‘appropriately’ gendered physical education and sports (Vertinsky, 1995, p. 231).

Change will only come about as physical educators move beyond their comfort zones, critically analyse the programmes they construct, and critically reflect on their own practices, beliefs and assumptions.
Summary of the Literature

Differences with respect to males and females are evident in every aspect of society. However, the range of social behaviours and individual identities that are apparent within societies indicates that factors other than biology are implicated in their production. The social constructionist perspective offers a plausible argument to explain the development of gendered identities.

The literature relating specifically to the gender construction in physical education in the New Zealand context is limited. However, international research clearly demonstrates that gender remains a social justice issue in many societies.

It must be recognised that students bring to school expectations of appropriate masculine and feminine behaviours, skills and abilities, based on their gender, culture and ethnic identity. However, schools and teachers, in conjunction with other institutions, play an important role in the replication and legitimisation of gendered ideologies. Whether teachers consciously or unconsciously present messages through the way they structure their classes and student activities, or through their dealings with students, it is apparent that teachers contribute to the construction of gender in physical education. The historical legacy of physical education, together with powerful contemporary commonsense assumptions, result in the institutionalisation of gendered beliefs, practices, priorities, and the continued maintenance of socially constructed forms of masculinity and femininity.
Chapter Three - Research Methodology

Research Design

As Cortazzi (1993) outlines, improvements in educational systems and classroom practice will come about with a greater understanding of teacher perspectives, of how teachers see their situation, how they think and what they believe. One way to develop a better understanding of what teachers believe is to talk directly to them and their students. Through hearing teacher and student views and their understanding of issues within their class environment, it is possible to explore meanings associated with teacher practices, and develop a clearer understanding of what is taking place in the physical education environment.

This research utilised a narrative approach. Traditionally this involves analysis of biographical ‘stories’ or written journals. I have opted for a semi-structured interview approach, in an endeavour to elicit narratives, ‘accounts’ or ‘stories’ of classroom experience, from both teachers and students of physical education. “All forms of narrative share the fundamental interest in making sense of experience, the interest in constructing and communicating meaning” (Chase, 1995, p. 1).

The aim of narrative research is not to analyse all sorts of narratives and stories, but to examine various kinds of materials from the narrative (Mishler, 1999). This research follows the logic of analysis of narrative. The empirical grounding of the analysis is based on teachers and student accounts of their experience of physical education. It is important to make a distinction between analysis of narratives and narrative analysis. In the former type, researchers gather stories as data and analyse them according to paradigmatic reasoning: they classify particulars as instances of general concepts and identify the relationships that hold between the established categories. The aim is to describe common themes or taxonomies of types of stories, characters, or settings found
in the database. In contrast to this, narrative analysis follows the logic of narrative mode of thought. Researchers collect descriptions of events and happenings, and configure them into a story or stories. In other words, the aim is to discern a plot that unites and gives meaning to the elements in the data as contributions to a specific goal or purpose. As Polkinghorne (1988) suggests the analysis of narratives moves from stories to common elements, and narrative analysis moves from common elements to stories.

While it may have been ideal to undertake the ethnographic approach of participant observation, combined with in-depth interviews, the contextual considerations, in particular the resources and time available to me as a researcher prevented this. I recognise that this decision has meant that some detail and depth has been sacrificed. However, the narratives offered by the students and teachers in this study help to make sense of the gendered beliefs and practices that are inherent in physical education classes. Secondly, I looked to use these narratives to illustrate theories surrounding the gender construction in physical education and give these theories relevance in a New Zealand context.

“The point of research is not to tell people what they already know. The point is to help our subjects and readers understand more broadly and deeply their experiences” (Baptiste, 2001). By using teacher and student narratives, one hopes to gain a clearer picture of what beliefs influence and dictate physical education practices. In increasing the depth of knowledge surrounding physical education practice, I hope to raise consciousness and push for change in the field.
Sample/Settings

Fourteen invitations went out to principals of co-educational secondary schools in the Canterbury region, inviting them to be part of this study (appendix one). From this initial invitation, four schools indicated an interest in being involved. Other principals and heads of physical education were reluctant to be involved due to heavy workload demands and the ongoing industrial action that added additional pressure to physical education staff. The lack of willingness to be involved was disappointing but did not effect the study in any way.

Of the four schools that responded positively to the invitation, one school was situated in a rural settlement, another in an area on the outskirts of the city, while the other two were both suburban. Of these two suburban schools, one was a state secondary school, while the other was the only independent school involved in the study. It must therefore be recognised that each of these schools is unique.

In order to ensure an unbiased spread of ‘accounts’ and to gain the broadest view of the issue, the teachers interviewed consisted of two females and two males, each from different schools. All were graduates of Otago University’s Bachelor of Physical Education programme, and experienced teachers, having taught for a minimum of six years. While their qualifications are similar their experiences as teachers differ, depending on the types of schools they have taught in, their age, gender, and family backgrounds.

I randomly selected students in conjunction with an administrator from the school. For each school three males and three female students were selected to participate in a focus group discussion. These students, ranging from year nine to thirteen, were taught by the corresponding physical education teacher that school had selected to be involved in the study. Due to illness and other unforeseen circumstances, there were some occasions when not all students attended the focus group discussion. However, the minimum
numbers at any one focus group session was four. A total of eleven male students and nine female students were interviewed across the four schools.

Collection of Data

Before collecting any data for analysis I scheduled and participated in two practice interviews and focus group sessions, utilising staff and students from my place of employment. This allowed me to refine both my interview and focus group schedules, enhance my interviewing, and develop my field note-taking skills.

Teacher Interviews

Each interview began with an outline of the purpose and process of the study, followed by an opportunity for the teacher to ask any questions she or he had. Once the participant felt fully informed regarding the study, a semi-structured interview took place. Teachers were all interviewed at length about their beliefs, expectations, and practices as they relate to student groups and gender within their classes.

Although my experience as a teacher contributed to the strength of my interpersonal skills, I undertook several actions that were intended to:

- promote my rapport with the participant;
- reduce my control during the interview that might lead to biased data collection;
- help the participant share the stories of their experiences.

I met each participant before the interview for a relaxed conversation. This gave both the participant and me the opportunity to develop a conversation relationship that made for a better interview. During this time I endeavoured to present myself as open, genuine and nonjudgmental, which I feel gave the participant more confidence and willingness to speak openly and honestly.
During the interviews, I attempted to provide the teachers with plenty of opportunity to tell their stories and experiences in the physical education class. Each semi-structured interview was conducted in a way that elicited narratives from the participants about their practices and beliefs, in their own language and from their perspective. Each interview was initiated with a general question relating to their thoughts surrounding co-education, and the positives and negatives of it (e.g. Why do you think mixed is better than single sex or visa versa?). This allowed the participant:

… to practice talking in a relaxed atmosphere while at the same time providing valuable information about how the participant viewed the general characteristics of the context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 270).

From the answers that were provided the interview progressed through a series of open-ended questions, that were outlined in an initial interview schedule (appendix five).

Questions were developed in order to help me “check out sociological understandings” through the reality of the participants’ experiences, (Chase, 1995, p. 6). To support this I used a range of open-ended questions to clarify the participants’ narratives and allow them the opportunity to articulate their experiences in detail.

The interview guide was not fixed, so provided an outline for a constantly evolving set of questions. The initial interview guide was generated from my general knowledge, from what informants in the practice interviews told me and from a review of the literature. An interview guide was used to allow the interviewer to ensure that all areas were covered.

While the interview guide provided an outline for questioning, it was difficult to balance the flexibility needed to allow each teacher to express his/her story, and the desire to gain consistency in data collection. Consistency in the questions that were asked, the level of detail and the extent of the exploration of the experience was necessary for the emergence of common themes from a range of viewpoints. The trigger questions guided, but did not dictate, the interview process. There was more than one occasion when questions that
appeared at the end of the guide were discussed earlier than the interview schedule suggested. The trigger questions supported the requirements for flexibility and consistency. Flexibility was also supported by adjustments made to the timing, structure and intensity of the interviews, in response to the participants' verbal and non-verbal cues.

When all areas covered in the interview guide had been covered, I briefly summarised the conversation and invited the participant to make any final comments. Often the comments made at this stage provided some of the most valuable information. On one occasion the discussion that took place on the walk from the interview room to the car park provided some interesting information, this information was quickly recorded in my field notes.

The interviews were formally terminated when the participants indicated that they had nothing further to contribute, and I had nothing further to ask. Each interview was recorded on audiotapes, with me taking field notes immediately after the completion of the interview. An external transcriber (see ethics for protection of confidentiality) then transcribed the material from the recordings. All teachers were then given the opportunity to review the transcribed material, verify that it was an accurate record and make further comment.

Student Focus Groups

Kreuger (1994) defined a focus group as:

... a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment (p.6).

In this study, I conducted focus groups to allow me to enhance my understanding of student experiences in the physical education setting and provide confirmation, clarification or contradictions of their teachers' perspectives. According to Kreuger and
Casey (2000) focus groups allow interaction between members. This permits the development of individual viewpoints and allows for the production of information possibly beyond that that a one on one interview may achieve. In contrast Carey (1994) cautions that members of focus groups can respond by “confirming” (p. 236), or tailoring their discussion to fit to the general view of the group leader. Carey also warns that a participant may withhold information, usually due to lack of trust in the group or researcher. Kreuger (2000) suggests that optimal discussion occurs when participants are not familiar with one another, have some degree of familiarity with the researcher or are homogeneous. In this study, there was variation in the degree to which the participants had had previous contact. While it might be expected that the inclusion of both senior and junior students in one focus group would diminish the homogeneity of the group, in fact learner maturity and common experiences with the same physical education teacher appeared to support homogeneity.

In an effort to promote honest discussion during the focus group, the discussion was opened with a welcome, clarification of the process, and comments surrounding group conduct. To ensure each person would be listened to respectfully, be provided with an opportunity to contribute, and that all contributions would be valued equally, groups agreed to show respect, and be supportive of other participants.

Discussion was stimulated by an invitation to comment on either their views about physical education or on their views about teachers. This stimulated discussion that lead to open-ended questions (appendix six) relating to their physical education teacher and the practices, expectations and beliefs they hold. Questions were “phrased in everyday language rather than sociological language” (Chase, 1995, p. 3), as this allowed me to gather the students experiences, thoughts and feelings of physical education class without having to explain the sociology of the problem under investigation. Questions were presented to allow the students to confirm, clarify or contradict the views that their teachers had expressed as part of the interview. Students had the opportunity to present their own narratives and perceptions about the classroom environment, their teacher and
their learning and access to learning. Students supplemented the teacher findings and provided further insight into gendered ideologies in the physical education setting.

Each student was given the opportunity to contribute to the discussion. As with the teacher each interview, focus groups were recorded on audiotapes, with me taking field notes immediately after the completion of the interview. An external transcriber (see ethics for protection of confidentiality) then transcribed the material from the recordings. Students had the opportunity to review the transcribed material, verify that it was an accurate record and make further comment.

**Field notes**

The completion of field notes occurred following each interview and focus group. This process included thoughts and feeling regarding the interview process and the details of any stand-out discussion that occurred between the participants and me, both during the interview and after it was completed. The field notes provided allowed the opportunity to recreate mentally the context of the interview and to assist in the critique and modification of the interview process.

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis in this study was guided by the process of constant comparative analysis developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967; 1997). This strategy combines inductive category coding with simultaneous comparison of all incidents observed. As social phenomena are recorded and classified, they are also compared across categories. Thus the discovery of relationships begins with the analysis of initial observations, undergoes continuous refinement throughout the analysis process, and continuously feeds back into the process of category coding.
After an overall sense of the information is gained, the analysis process works toward the two main tasks of data analysis in interpretive description, specifically “identification of themes within coding categories” and “identification of themes across coding categories” (Knafl & Webster, 1988, p. 197). These tasks are supported by two basic analytical procedures, that is, “making comparisons” and “asking questions” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 62). The use of my sociological imagination was essential in this phase of the research.

In this study, the process of data analysis began with the reading of each teacher’s transcript, until I had a feel for the whole data. After this, each transcript was read again, this time with the intent of identifying and coding sections of information. Initially sections were simply identified if they were relevant to the research questions or simply if they were interesting for any reason. Sections of information were compared with one another, within one transcript, and coded to reflect their similarities or differences. This gave rise to the development of categories.

As successive interviews were analysed, sections of information and categories were compared across transcripts, again looking for similarities and differences and assigning codes appropriately. When several tentative categories had emerged, properties of each category based on my existing understanding were identified. This process supported a clearer definition of each category, and resulted in the abolishment of some categories and the development of other categories, and sub-categories. This provided a beginning to the understanding of the relationships between categories.

It follows that the analysis did not deal with the personal narratives of individual students and teachers but instead focused on the socio-cultural level through examining the core narratives appearing across the data, thus reflecting different students’ and teachers’ collective beliefs, expectations and practices or experiences regarding gender in physical education.
To provide some validity to the research, a colleague was utilised to explore the interpretation of the data, and to verify the categories and relationships that I had identified. This process resulted in the development and rearrangement of additional categories and sub-categories.

This process was then repeated for focus group interviews, and lead to the emergence of relationships between the categories presented within teacher and student transcripts. This emergence of relationships provided the basis for a tentative descriptive conceptualization of the questions under scrutiny.

**Trustworthiness**

Neuman (1997) suggests that fieldwork is virtually impossible to replicate, as essential aspects of the field change. These include contextual differences, different participants, and differences between researchers. However, it is still essential for field researchers to present reliable, trustworthy and authentic data and conclusions.

Trustworthiness provides "a detailed description of the research process and outcomes" to judge "the credibility of a study ... an essential requirement for qualitative researchers" (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p. 145). It means "that the processes of the research are carried out fairly, that the products represent as closely as possible the experiences of the people who are studied"; furthermore, "the entire endeavour must be grounded in ethical principles" (Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, & Steinmetz, 1991, p. 93). The notion of trustworthiness is, therefore, an important aspect of qualitative research methodology, more appropriate to the nature of investigation than the notion of validity (Goetz & Le Compte, 1984; Neuman, 1997) traditionally applied to experimental and survey research.

Authenticity and trustworthiness have entered the lexicon of qualitative research as sets of evaluative criteria (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The narrative inquirer must demonstrate
trustworthiness by being true to the situation of the teller by recognizing, constructing, and establishing linkages between events.

Several measures were taken to establish trustworthiness within this study.

1. Research procedures and their rationale were systematically documented to provide a trail of evidence, (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994; Miles & Huberman, 1994) as a contribution to the 'authenticity' (Ely et al., 1991, p. 95) of the research account. Thus, the processes and justification of case selection, data collection, and data analysis were carefully recorded.

2. The interpretation of the findings was always going to be dependent on the perspectives and intentions of me as the researcher. To assure that the research was grounded in data, it was important to clarify my assumptions and perspectives. These are made clear in this paper through the theoretical framework and detailed accounts of methodological decisions. The full research thesis attempts to describe professional experience and beliefs, justify the research questions, and provide credibility through a detailed trail of evidence.

3. A final aspect of trustworthiness was respondent validation or member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), in which aspects of the research were made available to students and teachers involved. This process was important in terms of 'being credible' (Ely et al., 1991, p. 165) and maintaining relationships which would be productive for research.
Ethical Considerations

Informing ethical considerations were ethical guidelines adopted by the Christchurch College of Education, from the New Zealand Association for Research in Education.

Once schools had offered to participate in the study, a letter explaining the study and inviting participation was given to the interested teacher and a group of their students (appendix two). The letter also explained the process by which the students could contact me to ask questions or to indicate interest in participating in the study.

Before data collection took place, both the teachers and the students were required to complete consent forms (appendices three and four), with the students also requiring parental permission. In addition to the consent form, the following measures were taken to ensure protection of both the researcher and participants on ethical grounds.

Each interview or group discussion was audiotaped, and participants were able to ask to have the tape recorder turned off and the tape erased at any point. Confidentiality was be maintained by the identification of all participants with a code number. This was used on audiotapes, transcripts, within this thesis and will continue to be used in any presentation or publications of this study. In addition, any quotations used in publication will be unattributable. The researcher is the only person who knows both the identity and the code number of the participants.

Transcription services supervisors and examiners had access to transcripts but were not made aware of participants' identity, as their code numbers only were identified. At no point in the research or presentation of information have the teachers had access to student comments.
Chapter Four - Findings

These findings are an amalgamation of teacher and student accounts. They reflect the perspectives these groups hold on the beliefs and practices teachers' exhibit in secondary school physical education classes. While the sample involved in the research is small, and limits the extent to which generalisations can be made, I believe it provides an informative picture of teacher practices and beliefs in physical education.

The findings attempt to address the research questions posed, and have been grouped according to the recurrent themes that appear within the teacher and student transcripts. The findings start with the exploration of teacher and student beliefs in relation to how gender identity develops. Following this is a detailed account of expectations, and practices that occur as part of physical education classes within the schools studied. This section includes a close look at gender differentiated beliefs and practices, the reproduction of groups, behavioural and achievement expectations, the support teachers offer students, the way teams are selected with classes, and the overt messages that teachers send as part of their classroom practices.

Beliefs and practices that contribute gender construction are not restricted to the classroom environment, but are influential in the programming and content that teachers implement. This is dealt with in the next section of the findings. As part of the teacher interviews there were conversations regarding the possibility or more accurately the impossibility for change. This makes for interesting reading and is included as separate section.
Teacher Philosophy

Social Constructionism versus Essentialism

In order to understand how teachers may contribute to the construction of gender it was necessary to establish the theoretical perspective that the teachers interviewed held in relation to the development of gender identity. All four teachers recognised that society plays a significant role in the development of gender, however I was not surprised that they were also adamant that there are distinct biological differences between males and females.

“So somewhere along the line, whether this is a social construction which I think it is, ... but there is possibly something innate as well” (Teacher A - Male).

“I actually feel that quite strongly that they are quite different. ... My training would tell me that it is the environment. Everything that I was ever taught professionally would say that. My experience as a parent would tell me that they are born like that... I do think that there is an inherited biological difference there” (Teacher C - Female).

“I think it is a combination of both, nature, born like that, and I think nurture has a huge role to play in some of the issues we see” (Teacher D - Female).

“I think it is probably a combination. I think um boys obviously have advantages in strength, being physically stronger gives them an advantage in some areas. You could argue that girls perform better in subjects maybe like gymnastics or dance where flexibility gives them an advantage” (Teacher B - Male).

While the student groups were clearer about the physical differences, they also reflected on the upbringing of an individual and its influence on physical ability.

“It’s the way you have been brought up for a start, like if you have got sporty parents then they are more likely to play sport and their parents encourage them more” (Student Group A).
“If you are taught to do something properly when you are little you will obviously do it when you are older, it depends on your family as well and social background” (Student Group D).

“I think they have like more upper body muscle and stuff”
And they have better skills because?
“They play more sports, they are more active” (Student Group C).

While individuals recognise that identity and abilities are in some ways constructed by society, popular beliefs are still bound in essentialist explanations.

Gender differentiation

“I think there is probably an element of expectation of what boys should do and what girls should do, but it is not necessarily something that I encourage but I think that is possibly something that can be influenced by parents or by peer group and so on”.

Teacher B points out that there are some different expectations for males and females, and he indicates that this is not exclusive to physical education or his practice. Information gained, in response to research question two, from interviews with teachers would suggest that there are clearly different views of males and females.

According to teachers boys are physically more able than girls.

“The boys still dominate in physical prowess if you are playing some sort of games. For example the boys will jump higher and shoot more goals on average. The boys are probably more dominant, well not dominant, but more happy to lead in the ball related activities because that is what they have been exposed to more I guess” (Teacher B - Male).

“Boys tend to be more physically able than the girls. In relation to dominant males...Very competitive, concerned about the winning nature of the game and not about the people who miss out... Boys want to get out there, they are the first changed, they want to get out there, they want to get started” (Teacher A - Male).

“I think they (boys) are probably more skilful. There is a larger group of them who have had more experience and they do they come in and
they do an assessment straight away get good results ... and there is a bigger group of boys who come in with more skills so they are good at the start and are still good at the end and there is a few girls who come in good and they improve only a little bit” (Teacher D - Female).

They have “Very good physical skills” and “when playing a game like soccer are still miles better than most of the girls” (Teacher C - Female).

Boys also appear dominant in other aspects of the class environment.

“Boys were dominant in their misbehavior” (Teacher D - Female).

“Boys seem to be more boisterous, now whether, I suspect we contribute to it as well. I think in terms of emotional and psychological things boys are really quite dominated in many ways. I think that they are more aggressive and tend to enjoy physical activity more, they tend to not like health so much because it is more talk orientated. I think boys tend to be more up-front and honest and personally, I like that. I love their energy. I love the way they just totally commit to Phys Ed” (Teacher C - Female).

“In most cases they (dominant boys) are good at a range of things, they are not just good at one thing, and I guess they have fairly good social skills as well” (Teacher D - Female).

Girls, it is perceived, display very different characteristics. Girls are more dominant in the interpersonal area.

“Girls are dominant in a different way, the girls were dominant vocally in discussions”
Other ways in which they are more dominant...
“Sort of organizational kinds, like telling me where they need to be and what they need to be doing and sometimes more in discussion... I was just thinking of the last couple of years I have had a group of girls who have achieved in those senior classes, not necessarily because of their physical abilities. Probably not necessarily or not always the best ideas and the best concepts but the best reputations and the time spent working just about always comes from the girls” (Teacher D - Female).
They have “better interpersonal skills, more supportive skills. I mean is it the mothering skill, is it the mothering instinct?” (Teacher A - Male).

“Girls want you more as their friend in some ways than boys do, or they want your approval perhaps that might be better, they want approval more” (Teacher C - Female).

Some teachers also indicated that certain activities lent themselves to the strengths and ‘likes’ of the girls more so than to the boys.

“The girls are certainly better at expressive movement type situations because they have I guess been traditionally exposed to dance and things like” (Teacher B - Male).

“Well I think sometimes when we have dance classes and gymnastics classes, like I don’t teach any rhythmical gym here because it would just be a disaster with the boys, ok. ... Um and then the flip side is when you do things like that require those sorts of more sports orientated skills like soccer and hockey and stuff like that where as you say even though you feel as though you treat them all the same way, the boys are still bound to be better than most of the girls” (Teacher C - Female).

The social skills and desires of girls and their less physical nature raised some issues for teachers.

“Where if there is going to be a group that will come in later to the class, it will tend to be a group of girls, it could involve those quite strong leaders but they will be, as well as getting changed, will be socialising and they will come out together” (Teacher A - Male).

“The girls are traditionally, I don’t know if it is traditionally, but the girls are slower to get changed, alright and they will come out, I guess you could call this girl behaviour...Generally speaking the girls tend to hang around and wait for each other and if they are going to be late they are all going to be late rather than one or two” (Teacher B - Male).
And as for the physically able girl...

"No they don’t fit (into either the sporty group of boys, or the middle group of girls)" (Teacher D - Female).

While it is evident that there has been a move in people’s perceptions of what each sex is capable of in recent years. This research indicates that there are still clearly perceived differences between males and females.

**Group Construction**

Teachers perceive differences between the boys and girls in their classes, however, groups within physical education classes appear to be based more on physical ability than on gender. These groups were created by students and remain because of both student and teacher practices. These groups were generally made up of gender specific groups, but it was clear from the students that gender was not the major reason that groups were established as they were. For some individuals, the edges of the groups were very blurred, in that some students could fit into more than one group.

Students and their teachers outlined the groups within their classes and gave clear descriptions of the make up of different groups. Student groups and teachers provided a collective view of the different groups that exist within physical education classes across all four schools. All schools had a:

"Sporty, yeah"
"Nerdy"
"And there is a middle group as well" (Student Group A).

"There are more able, like more physically challenging than others"
"There’s the sporty males and there’s the guys that just do PE, girls ... who chat"
"Then there are girls who do not want to do it and then there are just people who are really late in a different group" (Student Group C).
“Like people who are very sporty”
So there is the sporty people and the unsporty people?
“They just like sit round and they don’t do that much” (Student Group B).

Groups common across the four schools were the “sporty group” the “middle group” and the “nerds” or “lower group”. The “nerdy, lower group” were made up of what could be described as the physically less able. Often they were the students who did better in the academic side of the physical education course, but appeared less interested in the physical side.

“I would see a group of people who are minimalists, who look to do as little as possible. Generally to me as I see it their interpersonal skills are poor, which comes first I don’t know. They tend to have poor motor skill ability but you also get some other students in another group whose interpersonal skills are very good and are very involved with what they do and they don’t necessarily have to be very good at the skills of what they do. So you get a group of kids like that” (Teacher A - Male).

“Mixed, boys and girls”
“Lazy. Not very athletic”
“Like good at school work, like real brainy”
“Yeah computer”
The lower group is more successful in the non-practical?
“Yeah because they are more into the books than the actual physical side of PE” (Student Group A).

While the lower group was seen, by students groups, as the bottom of the pile, the sporty group was seen as most desirable. When asked which group is the most admired, students were adamant that it was the:

“Top one”
“The girls probably want to be in the middle because they want to be like everyone else, so they don’t participate. They want to be with their friends” (Student Group D).

“Top”
“Top”
“Definitely top”
And who are they most admired by?
“The middle”
“The lower people and the middle people” (Student Group C).

The top/sporty group consisted of:

“Mostly guys probably and some girls” (Student Group A).

“Then there are another group of people who traditionally tend to be boys who are very focused on the movement aspect of it and aren’t particularly concerned about the relationships that are occurring in there” (Teacher A - Male).

“There is a stream of dominant boys and they probably don’t achieve very well academically but they may achieve well sporting wise” (Teacher D - Female).

To be in this group the prerequisites involved being a male or being very able. One student group indicated that the only woman that would make the sporty group would be:

“… a tough hard woman” (Student Group A).

While a teacher recognised that there were differences in requirements for male and female inclusion in this group.

“The sporty group and on a whole that tends to be the group of boys with the occasional sporty girl and for those girls to be dominant in the same way they have to be very able” (Teacher D - Female).

One teacher indicated that girls were unlikely to be amongst the “top ones” as can be seen by this statement;

“I am actually aware more of the girls taking a step up to do activities which they probably wouldn’t normally do and they are doing them because of the modeling of other kids behaviour in the class, other girls and boys encouraging them. If you make your activities as inclusive as possible then you are going to get girls being more physically able and you are also going to get the weaker boys achieving higher too.
Whether that means the top ones come down a step may happen”
(Teacher B - Male).

The males that make up the majority within this sporty group could be described as displaying characteristics of hegemonic masculinity. When asked to describe that sporty male that is in that dominant group responses included:

"Cocky”
“Fast”
“They are confident”
“Toughness”
So they are obviously quite skillful as well, are they …
“Yeah. They play better than others and sometimes they are arrogant”
(Student Group A).

“They are very confident, they are really into it so they are the first ones up, the first ones going and they might be a little bit bossy so that they tell the others where they should be going. Competitive and they want to win so if they see a weakness in that team they may avoid that weakness. And I think they also get frustrated when those people won’t have a go and they can’t see that they are not having a go because they are not confident about it and if they don’t see the other side of why they aren’t having a go they just think they are lazy and they won’t try” (Teacher D - Female).

The make up of the top and bottom groups were consistent across all four schools, however the middle group had distinct characteristics within each environment.

“That group tends to be girls, there are a few boys but that group is predominantly girls” (Teacher A - Male).

“Probably like the cool girls. Average”
Cool girls and some average boys?
“Yeah”
“Yeah” (Student Group A).

“You get these guys who are just in there and they don’t like it and the same with the girls” (Student Group C).

They also displayed different characteristics to the other students in the class.
“You get another group who are natural leaders and into everything and want to support and encourage ... the group of people who make the difference in the class is the group of girls generally and the odd boy who fits in there who has got very good interpersonal skills and you make sure you always separate them and intermingle them amongst the groups so your groups are functioning well” (Teacher A - Male).

“Average at everything, average at bookwork and at sport”
“They pass it to more people than the other group because they just stay like in their own little team”
“They have probably got more people skills, probably get on with more people. More sociable” (Student Group A).

However, this group explained that in their case the girls in this middle group also had additional characteristics. They involved the girls being more:

“Laid back”
“Want to look after themselves before doing anything else”
“Yeah. Like make sure they look all right” (Student Group A).

It also became apparent in one focus group that perceptions of the groups within the class were not always based on ‘truths’.

“In my class like we have about three groups sort of thing, I am in the group with all the sporty people kind of thing, then you get these guys who are just in there and they don’t like it and the same with the girls”. In response a male stated...
“The first I knew they didn’t like it” (Student Group C).

Where the ‘sporty’ student suggested that there was a group of boys who did not like physical education, one of the individuals in the focus group who would identify with this group was adamant that he did actually like it. This is an indication that student perspective can be skewed.
The Classroom Environment

The following sections identify some of the expectations, beliefs and practices that become evident as students and teachers talked about their experiences in the physical education environment. They provide evidence that relates to all the research questions.

Standards for Achievement

While both teachers and students, in response to research questions two and three, perceive differences between groups and genders, students believe that their teachers have fair expectations of all participants in physical education. Students realise that there are different expectations for achievement presented by their teachers. Students suggest that this reflects the diversity of abilities within their classes.

"Everyone is different"
"He tries to get everyone involved" (Student Group D).
"She knows we are all different and we can't all do the same kind of work so she knows what we are capable of and she expects that" (Student Group B).

"She realises that some people have got better skills than other people. She just tries and helps the other people out"
"She just wants everyone to do their best, yeah" (Student Group A).

"There is always the whole thing that the boys are meant to be stronger than the girls and do better but I think she recognises that some girls are better than boys and vice versa" (Student Group B).

Teachers and students recognise that there are biological differences, and differences in physical abilities due to prior experience. Consequently, comments relating to expectations for achievement reflect different approaches.

"I would want to say to my dominant skillful person 'you have got a major role there and you have the skills and you can demonstrate the
skills and you can show the skills, I would like to see you help someone and use those skills better,’ to my good leader who is off task I would like to say ‘well hold on you have got some people in your group who are more skillful than you but … don’t have the leadership skills so maybe you could use your leadership skills and their ability for the overall good of the group.’ Expectations are the same but their role could well differ” (Teacher A - Male).

“If there was any sort of assessment, like for example for assessment of practical things if we had standards based assessment then we obviously drew up standards to match girls achievement and the boys as a separate one, acknowledging the fact that girls achievements in some physical things are going to be different to the boys and vice versa” (Teacher B - Male).

The difference in standards is based both on gender and on ability, in this instance to a level of clear disparity.

“Girls standards are different from the rest”
“Yeah”
“Yeah”
So the girls’ standards are different in most things that you do?
“Yeah”
“Yeah, in all the tests and stuff”
“Yeah. Like us more able girls, sort of like the same as with the less able guys except better” (Student Group C).

When different standards are set messages surrounding capabilities and status must be received by students, even if they are unaware of this process.

Expectations of Behaviour

Generally, students and teachers believed everyone was being treated equally. However, there was the odd contradiction, and some debate amongst the students surrounding different expectations of behaviour. The following provides evidence, for research questions two through five, which indicates that teacher expectations and practices are different for different gender groups.
When students were asked how their teachers' treat the boys and the girls, all groups gave a response similar to that of Student Group B.

"Yeah"
"Yeah. I think she expects us to behave the same" (Student Group B).

In their initial response all students believed their teachers expected everyone to behave the same, however as discussion progresses it became apparent that in more than one instance girls tended to get away with more misbehaviours than boys.

"I think she lets the girls away with a bit more than the boys"
What sort of things?
"Like not doing activities sometimes when they don't want to... She sort of targets the boys a bit"
"No she doesn't, she makes the boys do exactly what the girls do, or the girls have to run as much as the guys do, she treats us fairly"
You are disagreeing, why?
"Cause whenever the girls do something they don't get into as much trouble as the boys do"
"He's lying"
You think he's lying, give me an example?
"Us boys are a bit loud and like we get in trouble for it and then when the girls do it they just don't get in trouble for it"
"That's because we are allowed to be loud, we are girls"
So you think the girls are allowed to be loud but the boys aren't?
"Yeah, no but apart from that she normally does treat us the same" (Student Group A).

What do you think the girls get away with that the boy's don't?
"A lot of stuff that I don't get away with. Talking, talking and stuff"
"If you are talking while he is, the girls you just get a stop, while the boys get told off"
"He wants everyone to be good, but the girls don't have to be as good"
"Yeah"
"Yeah"
Do you think he punishes people equally, like everyone is punished in the same way?
"No"
"No definitely not" (Student Group C).
One teacher recognised that while his practices in relation to behaviour were intended to be equal for all, that he was not infallible.

"I would like to think that I treat kids equally and the same, however if a kid comes in late and it is a boy or a girl and one has got better interpersonal skills, my response will favour the kid that comes in with the better interpersonal skills and deals with the situation better. Now that would probably mean that overall a girl would get away with being late more than a boy because they would handle the situation better, instead of coming in and grunting and not dealing with it" Because part of the feminine skills that girls have?
"The nurturing skills" (Teacher A - Male).

There are some disparities in the treatment of students, and it is interesting that it appears that girls get away with more than boys, regardless of the gender of their teacher.

**Team Selections**

The selection of teams or groups within a physical education class has always been a sensitive issue. As is evident from teacher and student comment, teams are now more fairly decided upon.

"So I have spread my people with knowledge, I have spread my good leaders, I have spread my off task people, I have spread them all out through groups, I don't want these two working together because they don't work well together, they do their own wee thing, so I have spread them out to make my groups more functional" (Teacher A - Male).

"Just like numbers you off, just points and gives you a number" "Yeah, puts people on the same kind of sports level on opposite teams" (Student Group B).

"Even groups, like some girls and some boys"
"Mixes them up as well. Like she doesn't put all the sporty people in one group, puts them in all different ones" (Student Group A).

"He mixes different people with people who can't do it so that like they can teach them and stuff"
“Mixes up the groups, say like if you have got somebody who can kick and someone who can’t, he mixes them up so they can teach you. Giving everyone a fair turn” (Student Group D).

Students themselves make selections based on preconceived ideas of ability, as Teacher A - Male highlighted.

“Who’s going to be the leader in your group, so they will look at someone and if there is a boy there that has good skills they will say that you can be. The motor skills, they are not looking at the leadership skills and often you can have someone there who is a good leader who is not necessarily a good motor skill person, but with that gender stereotype is carried through”.

While teachers in response to research question one, perceived they achieve gender equity because of their practices, students felt that teacher actions did not necessarily do this. The mixing up of groups for activities was perceived by teachers and students to be done fairly, and that this provided the opportunity for more equitable outcomes, students believed that the dominant still maintained the power and privilege in the class. There are two distinct views on how this occurred.

So how do the sporty boys treat the middle group as you called it?
“I don’t know but the last group they probably treat differently”
How do they treat that last group?
“Like they are not even there basically”
So they just ignore them?
“Yeah”
Do they pay them out at all.
“Don’t basically involve them in the games that we are playing”
Do you think that those groups would get equal opportunity to be successful.
“No, the sporty group would probably get more” (Student Group A).

“Eventually you give up though, like you try. You try. And you are with them for a whole year and you can try for even maybe two terms and after about I dunno 20 periods of doing different sports where there must be something that they are gonna like and they are still not taking part and they are just you know dodging the ball so that they don’t have to touch it and not doing anything, you just give up because you get sick of trying to make them feel includes”
Why are we not accepting of them?
"Because they are not getting involved. They are not getting accepted because they don't ... they don't talk to you or anything else like so it makes it hard to try and communicate with them"
"Yeah they come across as not wanting to be part of the group, like its not that we are rejecting them and they have to stay over there, but you eventually get sick of trying to make them play with the group and they just keep rejecting the group"
"They just keep to themselves. Sitting there like zombies or something just like not wanting to do anything and we are trying to like say come and do something" (Student Group B).

"Yeah one of the annoying things is when we play a game like the whole class is split into teams and one team is definitely worse than the other and there are a few really really good players in that then the good players always get the ball or whatever and the other players sort of get left out and the teacher doesn't do anything about that. He doesn't really acknowledge it" (Student Group C).

Students saw their teachers powerless to do anything about the discrimination in the class. Either because they had done everything they could and had ‘given up’ on trying to change it after no response, or in the case of the dominant group leaving them out the teachers had tried to encourage the dominant to involve everyone by changing the rules but students still stuck to there own patterns of behaviour.

So do you think she treats everyone the same?
"She does, but the unsporty ones just don't want to help themselves so. She can't really do anything”
"She tries to get them involved and things like that but they just don't want to help themselves sort of stuff and it makes it hard. And that probably makes her come across that she does treat them differently but it is because if they are not going to help her and help themselves, then she can't do anything for them, whereas if the other people are going to do it then that is who she is going to spend her time with because that is who she is going to get something back from” (Student Group B).

She expects everyone to cooperate?
"Yeah"
"Yep. Not being nasty”
So what sort of things could your teacher do that would mean that those nerdy people as you put, it get equal chance?
“Make us let them play. Cause she is always saying pass the ball to them, pass the ball to them, oh no I’d rather not and you just chuck it to someone else”
So she tries to encourage you to get them to be involved?
“Yes but we don’t let them get involved” (Student Group A).

“Everyone gets equal opportunity but not everyone wants to. He makes it and it is up to people if they want to get involved and he can’t really change”
“He always makes everybody play, he always makes everybody participate”
“He gets everyone to play but he doesn’t care how much they get involved”
“Yeah I think he needs to change that” (Student Group C).

It is interesting that while students perceived power structures within their classes, to one of the teachers there was no sign of these within the class.

“It is interesting that in those coed classes there is never, that I am aware of, any dispute between the genders, they seem to accept it because they can all achieve and it was highlighted today when I did a pentathlon when they had to be in mixed teams, mixed gender teams and um each participant brought in so many points and um the girls were right up there, in fact they were achieving more but there wasn’t any dispute over it, there wasn’t any comments like ‘oh their standards are easier’” (Teacher B - Male).

What is of real concern was one teachers comments surrounding the issue of student treatment of others. Here the teacher outlines what he perceives as acceptable social behaviour, and in doing so displays a lack of tolerance towards difference.

Is it unacceptable for boys to be less masculine, are they put down by others?
“No I think that’s changed significantly at this school. I think there will still be put downs if someone perhaps shows any overt femininity, or a girl who shows any overt masculinity now, but that is pretty rare because kids know that is sort of outside the parameters of normal social behaviour. I think that has changed significantly. I think there is a much more tolerant attitude” (Male Teacher B).
He goes on to outline that inclusiveness is fostered by the teacher.

“It depends entirely on the teacher and if the teacher makes it obvious from Day 1 that you want your class to be inclusive ... so if you make it an issue from the very beginning that you are going to make your classes inclusive then I don’t think you face that so called perceived problem which people might have” (Teacher B - Male).

Inclusive practice must be difficult to foster and maintain when as a teacher he puts restrictions on acceptable masculinities and femininities.

Overt Messages

While teachers may hold such beliefs, students did not feel that they got any messages from their teachers, about the way males or females should behave. However students had the ability to read into rules changes and modified games, and take out disparities in their teachers views of gender and ability. For one group of students, contact sports sent a clear message that girls could not hack the roughness.

“When we like play touch games and there two guys teams playing, we will make a tackle and he is cool with that, but if there is two girls teams playing he would be like real light touches and if we run at them and then hit like touch them because we have got some speed he like tells us not to be so hard”
What sort of messages does that give you about the differences between men and women?
“They can’t handle it, we have got to treat them better because they obviously can’t - don’t like it or something”
A huff of disagreement from a female respondent (Student Group C).
Programming and Content

Activity Selection

Teachers and students felt that careful selection of activities by the teacher, or the students being given the option to choose activities allowed for a more inclusive programme.

“She will just give us a selection of things, just put your hands up so everyone will get to say what they kind of want to do”
Those activities that she selects that you can choose from, do you think they are activities that everyone would be able to find something that they could do?
“Yeah”
What sort of things does she select?
“Just like crash pad cricket or just want to go out and do some running and play basketball or something like that” (Student Group C).

“You may have a dozen girls and 30 boys for example and that can be boy dominated if you are not careful, but if you design a programme that is not just a mass all in brawl where you give kids options of things that they can do then that is not such a factor” (Teacher B - Male).

“Soccer is an interesting example because to be able to kick the ball a reasonable distance requires strength and the vast majority of boys can kick the ball a reasonable distance and so girls perhaps, unless they have had a lot of exposure to soccer are probably more prone to feeling or showing that they are inadequate in terms of how far they can kick or it something like that. As opposed to basketball or some thing like that which is not so obvious” (Teacher B - Male).

Students also suggested that their teachers pitched activities at the middle group, or adjusted the rules in order to make activities more inclusive. However, for some groups, this did not ensure that equal opportunities or outcomes exist.

Are the activities you do in class more suited to the sporty group, or to the middle group or to the nerdy group?
“Probably the middle group so everyone gets a go at it”
“Yeah”
Do you think everyone has equal opportunity to do well?
"Yeah"

What sorts of things give you the message that everyone has equal opportunity to do well, what sort of things?
"Is it just the way the teacher encourages you or the actual activities or change the rules so that things are easier" (Student Group D).

Does he ever change the rules or situations so that everyone has to be involved?
"Sometimes"
"Sometimes"
"Yeah"

Yeah, anyone got an example?
"Well when we play a Frisbee like game we just had the two teams and we just made it so that almost everyone had to touch it before you scored a goal"
"Yeah, he does. I think its fair but some of the other games like basketball, the good players just take the ball and the others get left out"

So do you think that, I guess while it said that everyone got a chance to do basketball... Do you think that everyone got equal chance to do basketball?
"No"
"No"

"No. It's different for different games. With group making activities he makes everybody different (mixes the groups up) but for just like sports and like play, summer or winter sport he doesn't do anything"

So do you think across everything you have done so far that everyone has had equal opportunity to do everything?
"No"
"No"

You guys are telling me that everyone gets a chance but the outcomes are different.
"Yeah"
"Yeah"
"Yeah" (Student Group C).

"Like usually at the start of something like basketball he sort of makes new rules so that they suit everyone and like you might not have any ability, but you still can play"

Do you think that the activities that your teacher chooses means that, does she choose activities that are more suited to the upper group, or the lower group?
"The middle"

"The middle. So we can all do it"

So what sorts of activities are for the middle group?
“Probably a bit of basketball or something” So when you play this
game of basketball, who dominates the game?
“Our group (a student who perceives herself in the sporty group)”
The top group, so when you say it is an activity that suits the middle
group, who actually takes over?
“The other group”
What you were saying is that she chooses activities for the middle
group but then when you do those activities it is the upper group that
rules. So how often do you think that happens in your classes that the
upper group takes over?
“Most of the time”
“All the time” (Student Group A).

So when you do get those options of what you want to do and you said
that earlier, how often do those people (the unsporty group) get to
actually say what happens?
“Not very often because there will be little group of people who will
want to do one thing and if they have got the majority then that’s what
they’ll end up doing” (Student Group B).

Students believed a wider range of choice would get more students involved – however,
if you look at selection of activities and who controls this then a wider range may still not
work. Students identified some things PE teachers could do that would make it better.

“More team games definitely more team games. Where everyone has
to get involved. Not like basketball or something like that. Something
like where even the Frisbee game everyone has to get involved for a
team to win” (Student Group C).

Teacher may be aiming for inclusive practice and have a desire to meet individual needs.
However, the evidence, would indicate that this is not truly happening.

**Programme Content**

In response to research question one, teachers see that the change in focus and assessment
(partially due to the curriculum) from all physical ability to other skills has made for a
more equitable classroom.
"I guess what we have done is tried to blend the course so that it caters for both boys and girls, so that the girls could achieve as well as the boys could achieve. The measurement or the assessment of boys practical skills was a heavy focus of physical education historically, I suppose, but the change to the interpersonal sort of behaviour in relationships and so on, reflected in the new curriculum, has changed things" (Teacher B - Male).

"It is the same kind of thing, whereas with the traditional old focus was on motor skills. But now because they are working in teams and competing as a team they all have to be equally involved and it is not necessarily popular with the top boys because their competition has been linked with those people but they are starting to realise that they have to help them out for the good of their team" (Teacher D - Female).

"When we were giving out our Year 11 awards for physical education, 10 awards, we would look at a class and we would do all our assessment and we would say where are the boys in the top of this class, but then again that reflects our assessment because we don't value highly the level of attainment of motor skills. It is not a high criteria for when we are assessing the kids" (Teacher A - Male).

Programmes that are more equitable are the result of more than the content decisions. The evidence provided within the classroom environment section would indicate that there are other areas that need change if physical education is to eliminate the reinforcement of 'traditional' expectations and become a truly equitable environment.
Moving towards Change

Loss of Hope

While it is heartening to hear teachers talk about the need to change, most teachers believe that there is little chance of ever having a truly equitable physical education environment and saw the problem as much bigger than physical education.

“I don’t think it will ever be equitable. No I don’t think it will be. I think you can raise the issues, you can talk about the issues, you can set up scenarios, you can record information but it is all artificial. It’s part of the situation and if you make a difference that’s great but I don’t think you will ever – I don’t think we will make them equitable. I think there are too many intangible things, there are too many different race cultures” (Teacher A - Male).

“I just think there are really powerful forces at work and we are only a small one of them, perhaps if we know how we construct our gender or we can work it out how we do it and we can actively do it, we may like you know realign some of those powerful forces” (Teacher C - Female).

Do you find that hard to do anything about?
“Effectively and long term probably yes” (Teacher D - Female).

Teacher A - Male identified one problem that may prevent real change ever taking place.

“I think there is one of our biggest problems as physical education teachers in that we value our athletes, especially our rugby players, we rate them so highly, it is so important in our society and yet there are a lot of people who do a lot more good that we don’t rate particularly highly. We value sporting ability. We talk about the importance of participating and this wonderful thing that sport is supposed to do for our society, but in reality we value our teams that win”.

While it is recognised that the problem is bigger than physical education, some teachers interviewed recognised the need for change and suggested ways that could start the process.
Change

Teachers felt the need to explicitly address issues such as gender and discrimination. Two teachers suggested that there was a real need to challenge the students and put the issues in front of them.

"I think we need to be working at changing what we teach and do more unit evaluation. I think raising awareness is a good starting point for accepting differences and encouraging inclusion" (Teacher D - Female).

"I think we have got to raise the issues. I think we have got to talk about those issues and discuss them as part of our programme" (Teacher A - Male).

Some teachers see that the curriculum, if successfully implemented, is a move towards change.

"I would hope that as our curriculum we get better at doing what we do and more people do what I think they should be doing" (Teacher A - Male).

"I would like to think that if schools are taking on board the principles of the new curriculum as much as they should have, and I know we have still got a way to go on that in terms of making sure everybody is aware, then it ultimately should achieve a more equitable environment. But so much depends on the teacher and their preconceived ideas" (Teacher B - Male).

"We have got a lot more reflection on what we are doing now and students do a lot more reflection on what they are doing and why they are learning that and there are totally different aims for the units. Our expectations have moved from teaching you how to do this to process" (Teacher D - Female).

So there is hope, even if it starts with only a small number of teachers, the process for change can begin.
In Summary

The evidence presented represents the collaborative ideas of four teachers and twenty students. The findings support the investigation of how teacher beliefs, programmes and practices contribute to gender construction, within co-educational secondary schools in the New Zealand context. The evidence recognises physical education teaching practices that support and reinforce socially desirable forms of masculinity and femininity, while also highlighting how teachers viewed the possibility for change as limited. The influences and implications of these beliefs and practices are discussed in detail in the next chapter.
Chapter Five - Discussion

This study investigates how teacher beliefs, programmes and practices contribute to gender construction within co-educational secondary schools in the New Zealand context.

Firstly, the discussion explores teachers' theoretical perspectives on the development of gender, as these shape their beliefs, practices and pedagogies of teaching and physical education.

The discussion then moves to how the hidden curriculum is used to replicate and legitimise gendered ideologies, and support and reinforce socially desirable forms of masculinity and femininity. This is achieved with an explanation of how perspectives of masculinity and femininity, the existence of hierarchies, the 'facade' of meritocracy, biologically determined levels of achievement and behavioural expectations, and programme content contribute to the reinforcement and reproduction of gendered ideologies and constructions.

This is followed by explanations as to why the hidden curriculum is maintained and goes unchallenged. Lastly I explore the potential for change in physical education and the elimination of gender differentiated beliefs and practices.

A Dual Perspective

Marsh (1996) and Shilling (1993) suggest that there has been a move away from biological explanations of gender, towards a socially constructed perspective. While biological explanations are marginalised within sociology, they continue to shape popular conceptions of the body and still abound in our culture.
Biological explanations are entrenched in the programmes and practices of physical educators. The scientific nature of senior physical education involves the study of the differences between men and women in musculature, heart size, heart rate, lung capacity, hemoglobin, red blood cells count and percentage body fat, etc. Study of the sciences associated with movement and the body are used by physical educators to reinforce the differences between the sexes.

One effect of the scientisation of physical education has been the use of biological arguments, by physical educators, as justification for the differential treatment of male and female students. The negation of biological similarities and a focus on the physical differences between men and women, by physical educators amongst others in society, act as reinforcement of essentialist arguments, gender inequality and power structures in schools.

While the scientisation of physical education programmes has reinforced and supported an essentialist perspective, teachers interviewed for this study did recognise that characteristics of males and females are not solely determined by biological factors. Teachers hold a dual perspective in relation to how an individual’s gender is shaped. Their beliefs reflect both essential and social constructionist viewpoints, with teachers talking about gender as “a combination of both”. By both they included “nature, born like that” and “something innate” as well as indicating that “nurture has a huge role to play in some of the issues we see” and “whether this is a social construction, which I think it is” or something else.

This supports Scraton’s (1992) research that found that teachers’ viewed female and male characteristics as both ‘naturally’ and socially constructed. While teachers have moved towards understanding gender development as a socially constructed phenomenon, it is evident from descriptions of their students and the practices they describe that they are still bound by essentialist arguments. For example, one teacher told of boys being “stronger” when this is not always the case. Further evidence and explanation of
practices bound by essentialist arguments will be provided in the discussion surrounding the hidden curriculum.

This dual perspective is a result of the individuals actively constructing knowledge from the complex interactions that they have experienced as part of the social environment. Students outlined how they believed that "the way you have been brought up for a start" and "your family as well and social background" influenced individual development. Life experiences, pre-service and in-service teacher training and "messages gleaned through the cultural stories that saturate mass media, schools, sports, peer groups and family" (also see Franklin II, 1991; Hickey & Fitzclarence, 1999, p. 2) lead to the social construction of beliefs and knowledge based on essential perspectives.

Kirk (1996) and Culpan (1996/97) suggest that the scientific nature of physical education has enhanced physical educators' claim to academic credibility and status. However, the essentialist, scientific perspective has also provided the opportunity for physical educators, both consciously and unconsciously, to reproduce and legitimise patriarchal ideologies, and hegemonic masculinity (Bryson, 1987, p. 47; Dunning, 1987; Fernandez-Balboa, 1993; also see Messner & Sabo, 1990a).

So while the teachers studied indicate that they understand that gender is not simply biological but is socially constructed, this does not ensure that dominant ideologies are not reinforced. The hegemonic nature of a patriarchal society ensures that dominant ideologies of gender are replicated and legitimised, through coercive and covert practices, evident in the hidden curriculum of physical education.
Hidden Curriculum

The environment established within a classroom has a profound affect on learning. The practices, expectations and beliefs that the teacher displays not only impacts on the learning of content, but also has a significant role in the learning of identity, understanding of self and the establishment or reinforcement of dominant ideologies and relationships within the class.

Talbot (1993) argues that physical education is gendered in content, ideology, and teaching methods. The hidden curriculum includes all implicit values, beliefs, attitudes and assumptions in educational institutions that are not explicit in the official curriculum (Bain, 1985, 1989; Jackson, 1968). It provides an avenue for dominant ideologies of gender to be constructed, replicated, reproduced and legitimised.

The hidden curriculum can involve both the inclusion and exclusion of particular messages, either through deliberate and intentional or through unintentional and incidental practice (Dodds, 1985). Messages surrounding gender can be gleaned by either direct comment or subtle practice within the hidden curriculum of the school and classroom environment.

The hidden curriculum works in such a covert way that those involved, both deliverers and recipients, are unaware of its existence. This is evident in the way students and teachers view physical education classes. Teachers and students suggest that there is equality of opportunity for all participants, with statements such as, “I would hope to think that my expectations are the same” or “she just wants everyone to do their best, yeah”.

Overt and hidden strategies that reinforce dominant constructs of gender are entrenched in the hidden curriculum of physical education. While the official curriculum may reflect non-gendered ideologies, messages regarding ‘acceptable’ or ‘expected’ masculinity and femininity are evident in the stories presented by both students and teachers.
The hidden curriculum is delivered to students through the structuring of physical education based on a unitary concept of masculinity and femininity. This is supported by the existence of hierarchies, the 'facade' of meritocracy, different levels of expected achievement and behaviour, and the content of physical education programmes. Each of these is discussed in more detail below.

**Femininity and Masculinity**

The hidden curriculum supports the construction of gender based on 'socially desirable forms' of masculinity and femininity. The characteristics of male and female students, described by the teachers interviewed, support Walby's (1990 in Marsh, 1996) notion of a unitary concept of gender difference. Walby argues that "social learning theory still operates with a static and unitary conception of gender differences: femininity is one set of characteristics that girls and women learn and masculinity another set that boys and men learn" (p. 285). In western cultures "to be 'masculine' means to have authority. Further, it means to be active, independent, efficacious, and strong. 'Femininity' on the other hand, is associated with protectibility, passivity, dependence and weakness" (Richardson, 1991, p. 82). Scraton (1987) found that physical education teachers in Britain perpetuated constructions of men as active, powerful, and strong, and women as 'bodily firm' but weak, inactive, and concerned with their appearance (in Alton-Lee & Praat, 2001).

In describing boys, teachers placed a lot of emphasis on the physical aspects that constitutes the 'typical' male student. Boys are viewed by teachers as "dominant in physical prowess", "more physically able", "more skilful" and having "very good physical skills", and "advantages in strength". Boys also came across as dominant in "their misbehaviour", "competitiveness", boisterousness and levels of aggression.

Girls on the other hand are perceived to display very different characteristics. Girls are described as more dominant "in the interpersonal area", display "better interpersonal
skills, more supportive skills”, are better “vocally in discussions”, and at “sort of organizational kind of stuff” and spend more time working. When it came to physical skills, that were so identifiable in the males of the class, girls’ physical skills appear to be based on traditional “common-sense” assumptions based on the perceived strengths and likes of girls. No teacher indicated that a dominant characteristic for any girls was their physical ability. This is in sharp contrast to the teachers’ views on the characteristics common amongst male students. When students were asked about ‘typical’ male and female traits, they moved the discussion to the hierarchical nature of physical education classes as opposed to the gender dynamics.

Within the physical education classrooms studied both in this setting and those researched by Scraton (1992), there remains:

... a powerful reaffirmation of a ‘femininity’ which deems young women and women as weaker, less physically powerful, less aggressive than their male counterparts (p. 59).

While femininity is understood to mean being less able, for a young male the evidence, “physical prowess” and “more skillful”, points to the importance of physical ability in attaining masculinity.

The images of the young male in the physical education classes outlined by these teachers reflect dominant cultural messages that valorise versions of masculinity forged on strength, physical ability, tolerance of aggression and confrontation, courage, independence, leadership and authority. On the other hand, teachers and researchers associate femininity with passivity, dependence, weakness and supportive, nurturing and emotional abilities (Hickey & Fitzclarence, 1999; McKay, 1991; Richardson, 1991).

One focus group alluded to an experience where they felt that their teacher clearly demonstrated discriminatory practice and reinforced ideas of what it was to be feminine and masculine. They explained how the teacher changed the nature of the touch game dependent on the whether females were involved. When females participated, the game
involved “real light touches” as opposed to “tackle” when boys only were playing. For this group of students, contact sports sent a clear message that girls could not “hack the roughness”. At the same time the teacher was “cool” with two guys’ teams turning a touch game into tackle, and did not appear to account for the males that did not feel comfortable in this situation. This example provide clear evidence that students do believe that their teachers’ actions do reinforce gender stereotypes, as asked in research question four.

As this example indicates sport and physical education links:

... maleness with highly valued and visible skills and second it links maleness with the positive sanctioned use of aggression/force/violence (Bryson, 1987, p. 48).

Physical ability and the ability to “hack the roughness” are perceived as ‘ideal’ for the young male.

The value placed on physical ability and strength are evident in the teacher descriptions of students, and this group of students’ account of touch. However, it would appear that there is a hierarchical nature offered in the range of physical abilities outlined. Primacy is given to aggression, strength, and large muscle movements, over flexibility, and gracefulness of movement. This reflects essentialist views, which dictate that ‘male’ abilities (e.g. strength) are more valuable than ‘female’ ones (e.g. flexibility).

As Humberstone (1990) indicates girls in mixed-sex classrooms where boys dominate are marginalised and their abilities are underrated. In the physical education settings explored in this research, value is placed on masculinity, and an ‘ideal’ set of physical abilities. This does not account for the variety of masculinities and femininities that exist within society and physical education classes.

Hegemonic masculinity, in the context of physical education classes described, is based on superior physical ability, competitiveness, strength and aggressiveness. This
hegemonic form of masculinity may be perceived as the ‘ideal’ form of masculinity, although it was not necessarily the most common. It is a case of acceptance and reinforcement of a form of masculinity that is the “most honoured and desired” (Connell, 2000, p. 10) both in sport in our society and in physical education classes. Boys who are physically capable have profited from the status this brings.

Meanwhile, other boys - small or awkward boys, scholarly or artistic boys get turned off from sports (or who never develop an interest in sports) - have come to their own terms with sport and find other ways to stake their claims to masculinity (Whitson, 1990, p. 19).

Whitson’s argument itself makes some stereotypical assumptions, in that it assumes that “other boys” do not ever achieve physically. This does not account for range of sports and activities in physical education where domination is not solely determined by physical prowess.

However, “less able” boys still are subordinate to the ‘dominant’ males within physical education classes, due to the masculinising agenda of programmes. They are expected to participate in the masculinised version of activities, such as the “tackle” version of touch rugby.

It must be acknowledged that dominant heterosexual masculinity subordinates women, and other subordinate masculinities, through its structural location in patriarchal power relations, and is not simply attitudinal...Gender relations incorporating a subordinate femininity and a dominant masculinity are structurally located in PE teaching (Scranton, 1993, p. 146).

Hegemonic masculinity and the reinforcement of patriarchal dominance that comes with it, result in both overt and hidden practices in the physical education classroom that marginalise femininities and all other forms of masculinity.

Gender construction in physical education occurs as a result of teacher practices that support and reinforce socially desirable forms of masculinity and femininity. When
teachers view males as "dominant in physical prowess", stronger, "competitive" and "skilful", while females remain "more supportive" of others and less physically able, a clear message of the socially expected and acceptable forms femininity and masculinity are reaffirmed for students.

Gendered ideologies are reaffirmed by teachers adapting situations to fit the stereotypical expectations for participation and giving primacy to some physical skills over others. Expectations associated with masculinity include the necessity and desire to be involved in the physically aggressive and rougher version of physical activities, while it is perceived as unfeminine to be involved in such activities. Teachers who alter activities dependent on the gender make-up of the group involved reinforce gender ideologies that dictate that woman are weaker, less aggressive, less skilful and unable to "hack the roughness" of some physical activities. This evidence suggests that the answer to research question two is a resounding yes. Teachers of physical education do have different expectations of different gender groups in their classes.

This supports Scraton's (1992) findings, based on studies that occurred in the United Kingdom. While her study focused solely on girls' physical education, and did not involve co-educational settings, she found that physical education "is a significant element in the process of the reinforcement and reproduction of gender ideologies" (p. 86). For this to also be found in New Zealand is not surprising. Patriarchal dominance is not isolated to the United Kingdom. Wherever a patriarchal society exists, for example in New Zealand, there will continue to be structures and hegemonic practices built into institutions, such as schools, that enable it to be maintained. Along with this the processes of globalisation has allowed for a capitalist worldview to infiltrate all aspects of society, schooling and physical education included. Critical theory alerts us to the fact that built into the structures of physical education are a scientised, masculinised agenda, that supports hegemonic masculinity and patriarchal dominance.

The ideologies and expectations reflected in teacher practices do not account for or foster an acceptance of a diverse range of masculinities and femininities. Instead, they
contribute to the replication and legitimisation of a patriarchal society, in which one
group dominates others.

Hierarchies

Hierarchies in physical education instruction contribute to the unjustified differential
treatment of students because of their gender, physical ability, race and/or socio-
economic status (Fernandez-Balboa, 1993). The existence of hierarchies, within the
structures of physical education classes, consistently leads to the domination of one group
over others. While hierarchies are not ‘officially’ identified they exist in all
environments in which people are organised according to certain characteristics, and are
therefore a dominant characteristic of any hidden curriculum. Hierarchies exist where
there is a “top” group that maintains power and privilege, and where all other groups
become subordinate.

Physical education provides for the dominant masculinity to subordinate femininities and
other masculinities. It is evident that physical ability, based on a limited range of
physical characteristics, is the cornerstone of masculine domination in physical
education. In the physical education settings explored in this research it is evident that
hierarchies exist, based on physical ability and gender, through the terms used to describe
the different groups that make up physical education classes.

The group most valued by the students involved was the “top” one, which was otherwise
defined as a “sporty” group. This group consisted of “some girls” but “traditionally
tended to be boys” who exhibited skills and behaviours associated with the hegemonic
form of masculinity. However, it was recognised by both teachers and students that to be
female and fit into the “sporty” group you had to be either “very able” that is as able as
the boys, or “a tough hard woman”
Males dominate the “top” or “sporty” group, which is represented in each account of physical education. The characteristics of the males that make up this group reflect traditionally valued characteristics of the ‘ideal’ male. These ‘dominant’ students were termed “very confident”, “competitive”, tough and “fast”, and had the ability to “play better than the others”. However, all characteristics were not appreciated by other students, as these “top” males also “might be a little bit bossy” at times, “sometimes ... arrogant”, “cocky” and they avoid the weaker members of the class and “get frustrated” by people who will not have a go.

While characteristics of the “sporty” group were not seen as all positive by the focus groups this “top” group were still perceived to be the “top” of the class, and were most valued and admired by their peers. While the subordinate, “less able” are aware of the status afforded the “top” group they appear to not seek there own status or equal status, but instead aspire to be like the “top” group. This reflects Bain’s (1990) interpretation that suggests that students “appear to believe that athletes have earned their higher status based on a meritocratic system that rewards outstanding performance” (p. 27).

**Meritocracy**

As is evident from the physical education classes studied, hierarchies exist and reinforce the patriarchal structure of society, where men dominate women. Consequently, schools can not be seen as providing a ‘level playing field’. While we have an illusion that the education system is meritocratic, in reality it appears to be quite different. A meritocratic education system is based on the notion that all students are educated on a ‘level playing field,’ where hard work and diligent application to study determine student success.

Where teachers and students value hegemonic masculinity, those that do not achieve the characteristic or behaviours associated with this are excluded or dominated by those that do. The dominated do not have the opportunities to achieve the success that a meritocratic education system should allow them. Once a gender is assigned, society expects individuals to act like ‘females’ and ‘males’. Marsh (1996) outlines that “cultural
rules and expectations surrounding gender and sexual identity often become visible only when they are transgressed, when people break the rules” (p. 271).

While we can recognise that hegemonic masculinities in physical education place value on particular physical abilities, it would appear that there is more to it than that, as the physically able girls “they don’t fit” either. While males with physical ability are valued, females with the same characteristics are not valued in the same way. Again, male characteristics are more ‘valuable’ than female characteristics. It could be argued that as females transgress, from the ‘traditional’ or hegemonic form of femininity assigned to them, they too become marginalised by others in the class. Because transgression challenges hegemonic masculinities and femininities, it carries punitive sanctions, including bullying and putdowns, for those who do not meet expectations. For example, for male students who were “nerdy”, or “less able”, punitive sanctions took the form of “being left out”, or “ignored”.

“Although there may be some room for non-conformity the division of masculine and feminine is rigid and carries punitive sanctions for those who go against the grain” (Marsh, 1996, p. 273). While punitive sanctions may include verbal and physical bullying, it appears that exclusion, isolation, or limitations to involvement are more common sanctions for the “less able” males and females, and for the “very able” female, in the physical education contexts studied.

The recurring hierarchical groups that make up a physical education class clearly demonstrate the marginalisation of individuals that are perceived to be “less able” and transgress hegemonic masculinity, where strength and physical ability are valued. Teachers and students that were interviewed described the “lower” or “nerdy” as those who tended to “have poor motor skill ability”, be “not very athletic” and/or “lazy”. This group was the most marginalised in the classes described.

Students, who were perceived not to ‘fit’, were excluded in a variety of ways, including access to activities of their choice and usage in team based games. Teachers attempt to rectify the situation by “mixing” groups up. They told of how they, “spread my (their)
people with knowledge... and good leaders”. While one group of students outlined that their teacher does not “put all the sporty people in one group, (but) puts them in all different ones”.

While “just numbering off” and “mixing” the “good people” were viewed as a fair way to mix up the ‘groups’, students believed that the dominant still maintained control, however the division took place. As Bain (1990) outlines, “participation in co-educational instruction does not change the overall pattern of male domination” (p. 34). There are two distinct views on why the differential treatment of students occurred.

Griffin (in Bain, 1990) found that teachers believed that the “wimps” (p. 35) who maintain an equivalent status to the “less able” in this study, brought about their own marginalisation and ridicule. Some students who participated in this study felt the same way. They thought that the “less able” students left themselves out, and should have to take responsibility for not getting involved. “They are not getting accepted because they don’t...they don’t talk to you or anything else like so it makes it hard to try and communicate with them”.

Other focus groups suggested that the dominant group was responsible for the “less able” not getting involved. Students described how the dominant, “top” or “sporty” group do not “basically involve them (the less able) in the games that we are playing”. A “less able” boy told how “the good players always get the ball or whatever and the other players sort of get left out”.

Even when the teacher attempted to provide the ‘unsporty’ people with the option to choose an activity, in an effort to involve them more, they were perceived as “a little group of people” who wanted to do one thing. As they were not the “majority” or the dominant group then their choice appeared to count for very little and the class ended up doing what the “majority” wanted.
While some focus groups recognised that there were dominate and subordinate groups in classes, they did not go so far as to question the practices, beliefs, class structures or programmes that may have made the "less able" not want to be involved. When the "sporty" student suggested that there were "guys who are just in there and they don't like it", one individual saw it quite differently. He had earlier indicated that he was not an "able" student, and stated that this was "the first I (he) knew they didn't like it". The "sporty" student had stereotyped the "less able" students as not enjoying physical education, due to their lack of participation and "unwillingness to get involved". The young male involved in this scenario was marginalised due to his lack of physical ability and apparent lack of interest.

Preconceived ideas and 'traditional' assumptions skew student perspective, and support the maintenance of hierarchies and the reinforcement of hegemonic masculinity. So some students saw the class as never equal, always one group dominating. Others saw the physical education class as meritocratic, and thought class was always equal, but felt that some students did not make the effort so did not achieve as much. The latter of the two explanations seems to suggest that those who hold this view are very unaware of the discriminatory structures that appear in physical education, and subscribe to the 'facade' of meritocracy.

Meritocracy, however, serves to justify the application of double standards (Giroux, 1988a in Fernandez-Balboa, 1993) and discriminatory treatment. The most common result of this system is the exclusion and failure of those who are considered less ... physically "gifted" (Bain, 1990; Fernandez-Balboa, 1993, p. 235).

Teams and traditional sports, such as basketball, are based on competition and the desire to win or dominate the opposition. The 'masculine' characteristics that are reflected in sport and physical education classes result in the marginalisation of students who value sport for the pure pleasure of involvement. As one teacher put it, "we value sporting ability. We talk about the importance of participating and this wonderful thing that sport is supposed to do for our society, but in reality we value our teams that win". The desire
to win and the value placed on winning is a reflection of the capitalist nature of sport and society, and need to reinforce patriarchal dominance.

In an activity where the physically dominant wish only to prove their domination by winning, the result is to basically leave the “less able” out. The idea of spreading the “less able” around so that they will get more opportunity is naive the hierarchies still exist and those that are physically less able are marginalised to the same extent, if not more so. This reflects a capitalist view of the society, where the ‘weak’ fall by the wayside in order for the ‘strong’ to maintain power. The mixing of ability groups for activities appears to simply reinforcement of power structures within the class.

The reproduction and legitimisation of hegemonic masculinity and dominant ideologies of gender result from the hierarchies that exist in the structure of physical education classes. The hierarchical nature of physical education classes act to reinforce the domination of ‘masculine’ males over ‘other’ males and all females.

Where the hegemonic form of masculinity is based primarily on physical ability, the physical education class acts as a platform from which the dominant males can achieve status and domination. Those that transgress from ‘acceptable’ forms of masculinity and femininity face punitive sanctions that allow the dominant to reinforce their dominance.

Teachers appear to do little to challenge the hierarchies that exist in physical education. Their choice of physical activities and an inability to break down the hierarchies that exist allows for the reinforcement of gendered ideologies that dictate that physical capable boys and men are the most valued and dominant in physical education and society. Both teachers and students, in response to research questions four and five, were at times unaware of the actions that teachers took in the classroom, and the possibility of the reinforcement of gender stereotypes. However, their comments indicated that the hierarchical structure of physical education results in socially desirable forms of masculinity and femininity being constructed, reinforced and legitimised.
Levels of Achievement

Negation theory (Connell, 1983; 1987; 1995) suggests that the dominant group within society negates the biological similarities or distorts and exaggerates the superficial physical differences of the genders to create social inequality based on the socially determined criteria that are without permanent foundation. Teachers present an ideology based on “scientific ‘fact’, which is assumed to require no justification because it is portrayed as objective, technical information about performance” (Dewar, 1990, p. 74).

Teachers’ actions such as different standards act to reinforce gender stereotypes in physical education, with both students and teachers providing evidence relating to teacher beliefs and actions that contribute. Students in this study recognised that their teachers believe that, in terms of physical abilities, “everyone is different” and that some students have “better skills” and are “stronger than others”. Consequently, they felt that different expectations for achievement were justifiable, as biologically everyone is different.

The measurement of sporting performance and movement capabilities forms the ‘traditional base’ of assessment in physical education. When scientific knowledge about human physical performance is used to measure the achievement of students, the logical consequence of this is the elevation of status for elite ‘motor’ performers and the marginalisation of those with inferior physical ability, (Bain, 1985, 1990; Dewar, 1990; Fernandez-Balboa, 1993). Willis (1982) suggests that “sports performance serves to reinforce ideology about male supremacy” (p.120). Differentiation in standards doubles this reinforcement by sending a message to girls that their levels of achievement are ‘never’ going to equate to their male counterparts.

In one instance, students recognised that there were clearly different standards for achievement within the class. They suggested that there are “girls’ standards” which “are different from the rest”. The standards differed again for the “more able girls” who had standards similar to the “less able boys, but better”. As a group the “less able” males
appear to be unceremoniously grouped with the girls, reinforcing their 'lack' of masculinity.

Pentathlon, a traditional physical education activity, provides a clear example of the differentiation between males and females in relation to achievement. One teacher suggested that in an activity such as pentathlon "there are different standards for the boys and girls". He also talked about "acknowledging the fact that girls achievements in some physical things are going to be different to the boys and vice versa" and as a result "drew up standards to match girls achievement and the boys as a separate one".

As the example above suggests, assessment of students based on different standards, according to gendered differences or perceived physical ability, only reinforces the domination of one group over others, and reinforces the disparities amongst the group. In addition, it provides evidence of essentialist arguments that accentuate the differences and negate the similarities, being replicated and legitimised in physical education practices.

The 'elite' within physical education classes will remain dominated by males, when assessments, such as the one outlined above, and levels of attainment consistently are structured around biologically perceived differences that negate similarities. Elitism in physical education is reinforced by a meritocratic system that credits those who attain the best results in individual activities and who contribute skilfully to team competitions.

Students come to physical education with preconceived views on the biological differences of males and females. For example, one student stated, "I think they (the boys) have like more upper body muscle and stuff", while another suggested that "there is always the whole thing that the boys are meant to be stronger than the girls". These beliefs develop as a result of the abundant messages that students glean from their parents, peers, the media, sport, schools and other institutions in society. Students view most males as physically superior to most females, and as a result, willing except different standards for achievement based on physical differences.
Teaching practices, such as different "standards to match girls achievement and the boys", and the ‘measurement’ of males and female difference, acts to reinforce the essentialist arguments that support a patriarchal notion of society. Assigning different standards based on gender does not challenge, but legitimises males as superior to women, and reinforces the concept that women will never achieve as much as men. So while teachers, in response to research question one, perceived that by assigning different standards they were achieving gender equity, what the evidence suggests they were doing is assisting in demonstrating that some males are superior to others, and in reinforcing hegemonic masculinity. As a result genders continue to be constructed, reinforced and legitimised by differential standards for achievement within physical education.

Behavioural Expectations

Teachers suggest that they always attempt to “treat everyone the same”. This is no better according to Talbot (1993) who states that “the equal treatment claim ignores the pervasiveness and power of expectations of girls and boys, women and men” (p. 81). This pervasiveness and power are evident in the hidden messages surrounding the expectations of girls’ and boys’ behaviour. Griffin (1989), Fernandez-Balboa (1993), Scraton (1992) and Martinek (1983) suggest that teachers’ perceptions and expectations regarding students’ gender, effort and ability affects their interactions with students. When it came to the management of students, the stories told by students indicated that there were disparities in the treatment of students, based both on gender and physical ability.

While teachers outlined that boys were “dominant in their misbehaviour” students, both male and female, suggested that girls also exhibited poor behaviour. All groups indicated that “girls get away with a bit more than the boys”, especially when it came to talking. Boys “get in trouble for it (talking) and then when the girls do it they just don’t get in trouble for it”. However, one female student suggested that girls are “allowed to be loud, (as) we are girls".
It is apparent that teachers view certain behaviours as ‘typically’ feminine and others ‘typically masculine’. Teachers perceive boys as more likely to behave poorly, and therefore expect higher levels of management issues associate with males. Teachers’ commented on the social nature of feminine behaviours. They talked of girls “traditionally” being slower to get changed, and “hang around and wait for each other” and “socialising” before coming out together. Males tended to be the first out and were eager to get started. However, girls did not get in trouble for being late, although teachers did encourage them to get changed faster.

One teacher explained that the better interpersonal skills that girls generally demonstrate would mean, “a girl would get away with being late more than a boy because they would handle the situation better”.

One student commented that his teacher “expects everyone to be good, but the girls don’t have to be as good”. It would appear that the girls misbehaviour is seen as less ‘troublesome’, possibly as it is less threatening, aggressive, physical or overt. In a patriarchal society, women are perceived as non-threatening, and disregarded as management problems. Girls’ ‘misbehavior’ appears to be more passive than that of some of their male counterpart and provides no threat to the teacher or the ‘control’ of the class.

In order to provide a truly equitable environment, teachers need to do as they suggest they do, and that is to treat everyone equally. When it is perceived, by students, as more acceptable for girls to talk and get away with it, while at the same time teachers are referring to boys as “boisterous” teachers can not truly feel that everyone is treated equally. Disparity in the behaviour management of male and females reinforces and legitimises differences between the genders, such as ‘women talk more than men do’. This is divisive and leads to the continual construction of ‘acceptable’ gendered behaviours.
Programme content

Miles and Middleton (1990) point out that “equal access to a common curriculum does not guarantee equal treatment in the classroom or wider society” (in Abbott & Wallace, 1997, p. 93). It is:

... assumed that exposure to the same subject matter, teachers and so on would provide an equal outcome. Research on classroom interaction, ethnographies of girls’ experiences in co-educational classes and schools pointed to the error of this assumption (Wright, 2001, p. 16).

So long as physical education is mediated through an ideology which supports ‘masculine’ imagery and superiority (even in disguised forms) then differentiating gender identities will be maintained and much inequality between the sexes may still go unchallenged (Humberstone, 1990, p. 13).

While the official curriculum and programme that is implemented in accordance with it may reflect equal opportunities for all participants, the hidden curriculum acts as a medium for dominant ideologies to remain pervasive. It would appear that while there has been a change in the focus of programmes, traditional views of masculine and feminine activities are still evident, and the masculinised agenda is still evident in physical education.

One teacher told how she does not “teach any rhythmical gym here because it would just be a disaster with the boys”. So while a more ‘feminine’ activity was left out of the programme, the “sports orientated skills, like soccer and hockey” were still incorporated even though the “boys are still bound to be better than most of the girls”.

While another teacher also reflected the belief that sports such as soccer were more suitable for males than females, “because to be able to kick the ball a reasonable distance requires strength and the vast majority of boys can kick the ball a reasonable distance and
so girls perhaps, unless they have had a lot of exposure to soccer, are probably more prone to feeling or showing that they are inadequate in terms of how far they can kick or it something like that”. He went onto suggest that “basketball or some thing like that” was better as their inadequacy was “not so obvious”.

This is contradicted by the students who saw basketball as a sport where “the good players just take the ball and the others get left out”. While teachers attempted to make “something like basketball” more equitable by making “new rules so that they suit everyone” it was suggested that the “top” group still took over.

The masculinised agenda of physical education has traditionally allowed for sport and physical skill to dominate programmes. This has favoured the achievement of boys. Teachers suggest that the change in focus and assessment, due in part to the introduction of Health and Physical Education in the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1999), from physical ability towards incorporating other skills has made for a more equitable classroom. This is one way they perceive that they are achieving gender equity in their classroom practices. This reflects a philosophical shift in the curriculum from a technocratic orientated focus to an socio-ecological framework. This is an attempt to find balance between the individual and societal needs, conducive to social change. The shift to using movement as a medium to develop interpersonal skills, critique practices in society, action change and explore personal health and development appears to be challenging patriarchal dominance.

In one school, “the measurement or the assessment of boys practical skills was a heavy focus of physical education historically…but the change to the interpersonal sort of behaviour in relationships and so on, reflected in the new curriculum, has changed things”. This change in focus was common across all schools where they “don’t value highly the level of attainment of motor skills” in there assessments, as much as they used to.
There is some concern expressed by teachers about the lower levels of achievement that boys are attaining. The new curriculum and its broader focus appear to be challenging the maintenance of patriarchal dominance, and is causing a concern for the teachers.

Assessment based on physical ability has dominated 'traditional' physical education. The move toward assessment based on a broader range of skills appears to have disrupted the 'normal' pattern of status and dominance in physical education. "Working in teams and competing as a team, they all have to be equally involved and it is not necessarily popular with the 'top' boys because their competition has been linked with 'those' people".

The change in focus, from an entirely "in" movement perspective to one that explores "in" "through" and "about" movement (for more detail see Arnold, 1997), appears to have had a detrimental affect on the 'dominant male,' with teachers asking, "where are the boys in the top of this class?" Teachers in two schools are actually trying to "promote" their boys because they think their "boys have actually started to underachieve". One teacher expressed enormous concern for the position, status, and involvement of the "top" males in physical education (see appendix seven), and suggested that the "girls are taking over". Her account of the difficulties that males are now facing in physical education warrants a further study as it reflects a complete change in the structure of dominance within physical education.

These finding would suggest that students other then the "top" or physically gifted are experiencing success in physical education. The philosophical shift demonstrated by the introduction of Health and Physical Education in the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1999), has challenged teachers to move beyond the 'physical' as the dominate feature of their programmes. Having only been implemented in most schools over the last two years, it is encouraging to think that the curriculum has already brought about a change to the patriarchal dominance that has for so long existed in physical education. In a subject that has traditionally placed so much value on physical ability and consequently has reinforced hegemonic masculinity, this philosophical shift has enhanced practice and challenged existing structures within physical education. The lower levels
of achievement for the “top” boys’ may be the first indication that the balance of power is shifting.

However, this does not mean that physical education programmes do not continue to reinforce hegemonic masculinity, and contribute to gender construction. Teachers may believe that changes in programmes will potentially make lessons more equitable, however, the evidence would suggest that in some instances, teachers have reviewed their programmes but have not critically examined their practices.

While assessment and resulting rankings in the class may have changed, students continue to experience discrimination based on their physical ability and other students’ perception of their capabilities. The “top” boys still appear to dominate physical activities, and reinforce there superiority over all femininities and other masculinities. Changes in ‘official’ curriculum may contribute to explicit change, but the hidden curriculum still provides a point of access for discriminatory practice and the reproduction of gendered ideologies.

**Why constructions go unchallenged?**

The hidden curriculum is operationalised by teachers and students. Beliefs with respect to gender are entrenched in both teachers and students. These are very difficult to change, given that they are constructed and reinforced as part of everyday life through individuals’ interactions with, family, peers, the media, and formal institutions such as schools.

One teacher illustrated an example of the powerful assumptions about the relationship between physical ability and gender. He indicated that girls were unlikely to be amongst the “top ones”. He did however suggest that the girls, along with the “weaker” boys, had the opportunity to achieve “higher” if provided with inclusive activities, but this may be at the expense of the “top ones” coming down. Hierarchies clearly exist within his
perspective of the class structure, however it would appear that the improvement of the “girls and weaker boys” would be at the expense of those higher up, and this does not seem likely to occur.

This then becomes as pedagogical issue. The responsibility of all teachers is to bring out the best in all their students. This teacher has concerns for the achievement of the “top ones” suffering because of an attempt to raise the levels for the “girls and weaker boys”. What needs to be considered is what pedagogical changes can be made that allows everyone to reach a higher standard, at no expense to anyone else.

One teacher discussed how the school had “changed significantly” and had a much more “tolerant attitude” towards boys who were ‘less’ masculine. However, he followed this with a statement that reflected the view that there was only a narrow and limiting range of acceptable masculinities and femininities.

“I think there will still be put downs if someone perhaps shows any overt femininity, or a girl who shows any overt masculinity now. But that is pretty rare because kids know that is sort of outside the parameters of normal social behaviour”

Those who are ascribing to a narrow and limiting range of acceptable masculinities and femininities determine ‘abnormal’ social behaviour. ‘Abnormal’ is a transgression from the dominant form of social behaviour, and results in marginalisation. It would appear that this individual teacher is understanding of the punitive sanctions, in the form of put downs, handed down if anyone transgresses from “normal social behaviour”.

Physical education and the hierarchies that exist within it contribute to the normalisation of discrimination. In a society where “the value of competition is so deeply embedded in Western capitalist discourses of sport and physical activity” (Wright, 1996, p. 77), it is difficult to breakdown hierarchies, as competition between groups is consistently used to establish and maintain masculine dominance.
As with any stratified social structure where privileged groups in society are able to establish their own cultural practices as the most valued and legitimate, subordinate groups must struggle and fight against alternative practices and activities incorporated into the dominant culture. A long history and continued practices that reinforce hegemonic masculinity and patriarchal dominance in sport and physical education mean that the struggle for the marginalised and subordinate must seem impossible. Teachers maintain the 'authority' in the physical education setting. While they exhibit beliefs and practices that value a narrow and limiting range of acceptable masculinities and femininities, and allow situations to develop that maintain hegemonic masculinity, the struggle will continue to be lost.

**Where to from here?**

Challenging the masculinising agenda and the hidden curriculum will benefit girls, but also many boys. This can not be achieved simply by the development of better pre-service and in-service programmes (Brown, 1999; Henning & Stark, 2001). Gendered behaviours are hard to address effectively because students take such an active role in constructing their own gender identity. To overcome problems of gender inequity, whole school approaches are required that include:

... curriculum reform, including integration; inclusive pedagogy; better disciplinary practices; diverse extra curricula activities; staff and student exploration of gender issues; and the value of diversity in cultural, gender and personal identity (Alton-Lee & Praat, 2001, p. 35).

The introduction of *Health and Physical Education in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 1999) appears to have the support of the teachers. One teacher even went as far to say, “my gut feeling is that the curriculum is a wonderful thing”. Teachers told of how they would “like to think that if schools are taking on board the principles of the new curriculum as much as they should have, then it ultimately should
achieve a more equitable environment”. This ultimately involves that development of an inclusive pedagogy by teachers. An inclusive pedagogy can not only be concerned with dealing with the requirements of the official curriculum, but must also account for the hidden curriculum if it to allow all participants to experience success.

To bring about changes, in physical education in New Zealand, teachers need to understand the politics of gender, in order challenge the patriarchal constructs and structural arrangements of oppression and inequality that exists in of physical education (Flintoff &Scraton, 2001; Scraton, 1992; Wright, 1996).

However, the possibility for changes is affected by the ‘hopelessness’ of the situation. Teachers told of how they “don’t think it will ever be equitable”, that there are “really powerful forces at work and we are only a small one of them”, and how “effectively and long term” they would find it hard to do anything about.

From this, one could assume that teachers had given up on trying to make a difference, however some teachers interviewed recognised the need for change and suggested ways that could start the process. Two teachers suggested that there was a real need to “raise the issues” and “awareness”. This was seen as a “good starting point for Excepting differences and encouraging inclusion” and needed to be included “as part of our programme(s)”. However, a move towards critical thinking, as a part of the official curriculum, does not account for the oppressive nature of the hidden curriculum.

Students believed a wider range of choice would get more students involved. “More team games definitely more team games. Where everyone has to get involved. Not like basketball or something like that. Something like where even the Frisbee game everyone has to get involved for a team to win”. Another focus group also indicated that less ‘traditional’ games, such as Frisbee, provided more chance for everyone to be involved. However, teachers need to consider how they choose activities, and be aware that student choice caters more to the dominant group that the “less able”.

While liberal feminists push for equal access to physical education, other feminisms (including Marxist feminism, radical feminism and socialist feminism) strive to eliminate patriarchy and the oppression of women that occur as a result of the structure of society. Problems are so ingrained in the nature/structure of physical education and sport that to restructure/redefine this would seem impossible. While teachers can talk of the *Health and Physical Education in the New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 1999) taking us beyond the present, and supporting a more equitable environment, evidence outlined in this discussion suggests that the hidden curriculum still has so much sway. All one can hope to achieve is a raising of consciousness surrounding the issues associated with gendered ideologies and practices and a challenging of individuals to evoke change, even if this takes many small steps.
Chapter Six - Conclusion

This study set out to investigate how teacher beliefs, programmes and practices contribute to gender construction, within co-educational secondary schools in the New Zealand context. It has provided evidence, such as the existence of hierarchies and differing expectations of achievement and behaviour, that suggests that school physical education draws on and reinforces dominant discourses of gender which effect both males and females.

While their has been some change towards a physical education environment that is equitable, the evidence provided outlines how ‘official’ curriculum change does not ensure change to the hidden curriculum. The introduction of Health and Physical Education in the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1999), has resulted in change to the overt messages that students received about gender. Teachers believe that consequently they are providing more equitable physical education classes. However, the hidden curriculum ensures that dominant gendered ideologies are reinforced. It is a pervasive programme that often goes undetected in physical education classes and is interwoven into the core fabric of programmes and practices. The hidden curriculum is operationalised covertly, by both teachers and students, to reinforce and replicate socially desirable forms of femininity and masculinity. Through the hidden curriculum students learn to be dominant or subordinate, as part of physical education, dependent on their gender and physical abilities.

Physical education in New Zealand secondary schools “internalizes, supports, maintains and reinforces hegemonic masculinity” (Scraton, 1992, p. 116) through the way males and females are defined and groups are established and structured within physical education classes. Teachers and students have different expectations of different gender groups within their classes, and this results in the formation of hierarchies.

Hierarchies that exist in physical education, based on physical ability, go unchallenged by both teachers and students, as they accept the hegemonic form of masculinity as the
“top”. Ideologies and expectations reflected in teacher practices do not account for or foster an acceptance of a diverse range of masculinities and femininities. The status given to physical ability continues to support and reinforce a form of hegemonic masculinity that marginalises all other groups within the class. Where the hegemonic form of masculinity is based primarily on physical ability, the physical education class acts as a platform from which the dominant males can achieve status and power.

The masculinised agenda of physical education programmes appears to be changing as a result of the official curriculum, however it remains evident in the practices of teachers. Teaching practices that differentiate between students based on biological arguments and socially acceptable forms of masculinity and femininity act to reinforce the essentialist arguments that support a patriarchal notion of society, masculine dominance and gender stereotypes. Assigning different achievement standards based on gender does not challenge, but legitimises males as superior to women, and demonstrates and reinforces the supremacy of some males over other others, therefore, reinforcing hegemonic masculinity, while differing behavioural expectations in physical education classes acts to reinforce ‘typical’ behaviours associated with males and females. Activity selection in physical education continues to allow the “top” group to dominate all other groups, and allows for the replication of hegemonic masculinity.

Hegemonic masculinity is so valued and ingrained in the practices and structures of physical education that students do not challenge it, instead aspiring to achieve it. This does not allow for the development or acceptance of a diverse range of masculinities and femininities, it simply provides a platform in which hegemonic masculinity can flourish. This impacts on the development of both males and females in the physical education environment.

In order to be more accepting and encouraging of a diverse range of masculinities and femininities, teachers of physical education need to critically examine their own practices at more than a superficial level and take a more critical look at the structures that support hegemonic masculinity, and promote inequality in their classrooms. This by no means is
an easy task; change will only come about as physical educators move beyond their comfort zones, critically analyse the programmes they construct, and critically reflect on their own practices, beliefs and assumptions. This needs to be supported by a shift to a more inclusive pedagogy, and the exploration of gender construction as an on-going and dynamic issue for the profession.

Teachers’ concerns about the changing nature of achievement in physical education classes highlights the need for further investigation of the ‘girls taking over’ phenomena, and changing patterns of boys ‘achievement’ that are taking place. Further to this, in depth studies, incorporating participant observation techniques, of the hidden curriculum and gendered practices and programmes in the New Zealand setting need to be completed. Supplementary research would allow for the development of a well-grounded body of knowledge, generated in the classroom environment, to assist in the raising of consciousness of gender as an issue that is still prevalent in New Zealand physical education.

Fostering an understanding of gender construction as an issue in physical education would help ensure that teachers could more effectively and consciously work towards the elimination of socially desirable forms of masculinity and femininity, in physical education. With a more critically developed understanding of gender, and changes to their practices, physical educators could provide an environment where students do not experience domination and oppression.

As physical education classes continue to be an important site for the replication and legitimatisation of gendered constructs, the physical education sector must strive to challenge existing ideologies and develop practices that allow and provide for a diverse range of masculinities and femininities. This involves the process of developing the consciousness of all involved in physical education, encompassing professionals in the classroom and teaching training institutes, curriculum writers and those in the Ministry of Education. This provides a challenge to the profession that needs to be addressed so that equity in the classroom can truly be achieved.
References


Appendixes

Appendix 1 - Letter of Approach

I am a registered teacher and a student in the Masters of Teaching and Learning programme at the Christchurch College of Education. In the next six months, I am working towards the completion of a research thesis. The purpose of my research is to investigate how teacher beliefs and practices contribute to the social construction of gender-based behaviours, abilities and participation in co-educational secondary schools. For this I am interested in understanding, and am therefore conducting a study to explore, how both girls and boys are being ‘shaped’ into acceptable behaviours, ability and participation levels by the teachers of physical education. I hope the findings of the study will provide information to support more informed teaching practices in the physical education environment.

I would like to invite a member of your physical education staff, and six of their students, to participate in this study. The study will involve the physical education staff member in an interview, approximately one hour in length, in which I will invite them to explore their beliefs about male and female behaviour, ability, and participation and teaching practices relating to these beliefs. The study will also involve your students (three male/three female) participating in a focus group discussion, approximately one-hour in length. Access to students will need to be gained through class lists, using random selection methods. This focus group will explore student perceptions of their teacher’s beliefs about male and female behaviour, ability, participation and teaching practices relating to these beliefs.

The interviews and focus group sessions will be scheduled at time convenient to the participants and based within the school environment. The interviews and focus group discussions will be audiotaped to ensure accuracy and will be transcribed by a secretarial transcriber. Complete confidentiality will be ensured throughout the study by assigning each participant a code number. The code number will be used to identify the participant in the audiotapes, transcripts and research report. I will be the only person who knows the identity of the participants. A list of participants, code numbers and their consent forms will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at my home. At no time will the schools name be recognised or used. All participants involved in the study will be asked to sign a consent form before interviews. The student participants will also require parental consent to be involved.

The findings of the study may be presented at education conferences and submitted to professional education journals for publication. Participant confidentiality will be maintained in these situations.

You may choose not to involve your staff and students in this study. If you agree to involve your staff in this study I would like to meet with you and the teacher involved to organise interview and focus group times, as well as develop a strategy for the random
selection of students. In the event that there are more volunteers than needed for this study, the researcher will inform you as to whether your participation is required.

If you are interested in being involved in this study, please contact me as soon as possible at ......................... I will be pleased to answer any questions you may have. My thesis supervisor is Alan Scott, Principal Lecturer, Secondary Programmes at the Christchurch College of Education and he can be contacted if you have any further inquires on (03) 3482059.

Thank you for your time and interest.

Kirsten Petrie
Appendix 2 - Participant Information Letter

I am a registered teacher and a student in the Masters of Teaching and Learning programme at the Christchurch College of Education. In the next six months, I am working towards the completion of a research thesis. The purpose of my research is to explore how teachers of physical education contribute to the construction of masculinity and femininity. I hope the findings of the study will provide information to support more informed teaching practices in the physical education environment.

The study involves you either as the physical education teacher or as a student of that teacher. As the physical education staff member you will be involved in an interview, approximately one hour in length, in which I will invite you to explore your beliefs about male and female behaviour, ability, and participation and teaching practices relating to these beliefs. As the students involved you will be participating in a focus group discussion (all of you in one group), approximately one hour in length. This focus group will explore student perceptions of their teacher’s beliefs about male and female behaviour, ability, and participation and teaching practices relating to these beliefs. These will be followed by you having the opportunity to contribute further ideas by commenting on the transcripts of the discussions/interviews.

The interviews and focus group discussions will be scheduled at time convenient to you and based within the school environment. The interviews and focus group discussions will be audiotaped to ensure accuracy and will be transcribed by a secretarial transcriber. Complete confidentiality will be ensured throughout the study by assigning each participant a code number. The code number will be used to identify the participant in the audiotapes, transcripts and research report. I will be the only person who knows the identity of the participants. A list of participants, code numbers and their consent forms will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at my home. At no time will the schools name or the names of the participants be recognised or used.

The findings of the study may be presented at education conferences and submitted to professional education journals for publication. Participant confidentiality will be maintained in these situations.

If you have agreed to be involved the study I will liaise with the teacher involved to organise interview and focus group times. All participants involved in the study will be asked to sign a consent form before interviews. Students will also be required to get parental consent. These are attached for you to complete at your convenience, before the interview time.

If you have questions, please contact me at any time on ............ I will be pleased to answer any questions you may have. My thesis supervisor is Alan Scott, Principal Lecturer, Secondary Programmes at the Christchurch College of Education and he can be contacted if you have any further inquires on (03) 3482059.
Appendix 3 - Teacher Consent Form


Contact numbers of Investigators:
Researcher: Kirsten Petrie
Thesis Supervisor: Alan Scott

This is to certify that I, ____________________________ (print full name), agree to participate in the study, The social construction of gender in secondary school physical education in New Zealand. It is hoped that the findings of the study will provide information to support more informed teaching practices in the physical education environment.

I understand that my participation in this study will require the following processes. I agree to these as stated:
1. An interview, lasting approximately one hour, in which I will be asked to explore my beliefs about males and females in my physical education classes. A transcript of this interview will be mailed to me for further comment.
2. Audiotaping and transcription of the interview. I may ask to have the tape recorder turned off and the tape erased at any point I wish.

My confidentiality will be maintained in this study by the following procedures:
1. I will be identified by a code number on audiotapes, transcripts, thesis and in presentation or publication of this study.
2. The researcher, Kirsten Petrie, is the only person who will know both my identity and my code number. A list that links my identity to the code number will be kept in a locked cabinet in the researcher’s home.
3. The transcriber will have access to audiotapes, but my anonymity will be protected by identifying the audiotape by code number only. The audiotapes and transcripts will be destroyed after 5 years.
4. Transcripts will also be available to the supervisors/examiners, however, they will not be aware of my identity.
5. All information gained from the interview process will be used for illustrative purposes only. Any quotations used in publication will be unattributable.

I understand that I may choose not to participate in this study, may refuse to answer any questions, or may withdraw my participation at any point, without any adverse effect. I understand that there are no risks to me participating in this study.

If I have any queries or would like to be informed of the aggregate research finding I can contact Kirsten Petrie on ...........
If I have any concerns regarding my rights in this study, I may contact the Ethical Clearance Committee. Address all concerns to:

The Secretary  
Ethical Clearance Committee  
Christchurch College of Education 
PO Box 31-065  
Christchurch 8030

Telephone: (03) 343 7707  
Fax: (03) 343 7789  
Email: theresa.evans@cce.ac.nz

My signature below indicates that I have agreed to participate in this study, that I have received a copy of this consent form and an information letter about the study.

Signature of Participant  ____________________________

Signature of Witness  ____________________________

Date  ____________________________
Appendix 4 - Student Consent Form

The Social Construction of Gender in Secondary School Physical Education in New Zealand

Contact numbers of Investigators:
Researcher: Kirsten Petrie
Thesis Supervisor: Alan Scott

This is to certify that [insert name] (print full name), agree to participate in the study, The social construction of gender in secondary school physical education in New Zealand. It is hoped that the findings of the study will provide information to support more informed teaching practices in the physical education environment.

I understand that my participation in this study will require the following processes. I agree to these as stated:

1. An focus group interview, lasting approximately one hour, in which I will be asked to explore my physical education teachers beliefs about males and females in physical education classes. A transcript of this interview will be mailed to me for further comment.

2. Audiotaping and transcription of the focus group interview. I may ask to have the tape recorder turned off and the tape erased at any point I wish.

My confidentiality will be maintained in this study by the following procedures:

1. I will be identified by a code number on audiotapes, transcripts, thesis and in presentation or publication of this study.

2. The researcher, Kirsten Petrie, is the only person who will know both my identity and my code number. A list that links my identity to the code number will be kept in a locked cabinet in the researcher’s home.

3. The transcriber will have access to audiotapes, but my anonymity will be protected by identifying the audiotape by code number only. The audiotapes and transcripts will be destroyed after 5 years.

4. Transcripts will also be available to the supervisors/examiners, however, they will not be aware of my identity.

5. At no point will I have access to the information I provide during the focus group discussion.

6. All information gained from the interview process will be used for illustrative purposes only. Any quotations used in publication will be unattributable.

If I have any queries or would like to be informed of the research findings I can contact Kirsten Petrie on 3264004.
If I have any concerns regarding my rights in this study, I may contact the Ethical Clearance Committee. Address all concerns to:

The Secretary  
Ethical Clearance Committee  
Christchurch College of Education  
PO Box 31-065  
Christchurch 8030

Telephone: (03) 343 7707  
Fax: (03) 343 7789  
Email: theresa.evans@cce.ac.nz

My signature below indicates that I have agreed to participate in this study, that I have received a copy of this consent form and an information letter about the study.

Signature of Participant  

Signature of Parent  

Signature of Witness  

Date
Appendix 5 - Teacher Interview Schedule

Introductory question/s

You have taught in a coed school for a number of years now? What do you see as the benefits of a coed programme?

You teach in a school that was once single sex and is now coed – what are some of that changes this has brought about for physical education?

Why do you think mixed is better than single sex or visa versa?

Definitions of masculinity and femininity?

What values about masculinity and femininity do you think we promote in physical education classes?

Themes

Teacher attitudes towards males and females (masculinities and femininities)
  Differences/Similarities
  Biological or socially constructed
  Dominant/Oppressed Groups (Groupings)
  Descriptions of these groups

Teacher practices
  Different practices for different groups
  Expectations of behaviour
  Expectations of participation
  Expectations of ability (may be in a variety of settings)

  Classroom management (participation, attention, behaviour expectations)
  Selection of activities
  Language
  Team selection or division into groups
  Challenges for excellence
  Assistance with gear
Appendix 6 - Focus Group Interview Schedule

Introductory questions

Tell me about the physical education teachers here at school?
What makes them good or bad teachers?
Let's focus on Mr./Mrs./Ms/Miss ... What are they like?
In what ways does he/she treat the boys and girls differently?
Why do you think this is?

Themes

Teacher attitudes towards males and females (masculinities and femininities)

- Differences/Similarities
- Expectations of behaviour
- Expectations of participation
- Expectations of ability (may be in a variety of settings)
- Biological or socially constructed

Teacher practices

- What do they do in the classroom that leads social construction
- Classroom management (participation, attention, behaviour expectations)
- Selection of activities
- Language
- Team selection or division into groups
- Challenges for excellence

Prompts

Can you give me another example of that?
Does this happen all the time?
Really!
Go on!
Tell me more!
I don't understand, can you elaborate?
Could you be more specific?
When?
How?
Think back ...
Appendix 7 - An Interesting Observation

While physical education has predominantly been viewed as:

"... traditionally masculine" (Teacher D - Female)

One teacher perceived that a role reversal has occurred, according to the teacher, and it is seen that 'girls are taking over again'. While this is a long passage, I think its inclusion is warranted as it clearly highlights an interesting take on the oppression of students in physical education.

"I think the girls are getting very strong messages from home and also they are getting very strong messages from the media that they should be out there and pushing. In some ways I think girls have become so aggressive that the boys way of doing it is by opting out. I have watched my senior classes especially and watching them in group work and organizing a task and the girls are always in their faces organizing it and the boys eventually go "oh you do it" and that's their response because I don't think that they have the skills any more in some ways of leadership, you know that they are so scared of being seen to be sexist because the girls throw that whole sexist thing at them very very quickly and I think the boys sometimes think 'well that's not right actually' that they just get traded off with it.

It's the same in physical and that's what worries us that the girls were really starting to absolutely dominate and dominate inappropriately. They are taking over again. Well I think to a certain extent that things become less practical in the senior school and become more work ethic orientated in terms of academic work and sometimes the boys are not mature enough to be prepared to put the effort in. When I said that the girls were often opting out, they don't often opt out, don't is understand, but their level of energy and their level of interest and their level of commitment to being they best physically in the girls, I don't think it is as important to them, or whether it is whether they have been brought up not to have, like not being part of their need to be successful to be good at sport, you know, whereas the boys in this area are. I think our girls here are really physically aggressive and they are really out there and they really try to be there and they don't hold back at all. What they don't realise is that there is a difference between assertiveness and aggressiveness and because they are teenagers they haven't got that sorted yet ... Girls are manipulative aggressive.
We are actually trying to promote our boys because we think our boys have actually started to underachieve as well which really worries me because they weren’t doing that, but the reality is because the boys do tend to be stronger by the time they get to 15 and 16 on the whole then it is very easy just to make them do the lifting and the carrying and things and let the girly whirlies do the writing things because in terms of getting jobs done in a short period of time that is the fastest and most efficient way of doing it. I am constantly pushing the boys now and increasingly the longer I am here the more I see that as being really crucial that we do that. Well we are trying to work on teaching them to accept and stand up for what they are good at, because as I said it really annoys me when I see them backing down, even when they are the ones who actually have the better skills, whether it be physical skills or whether it be the experience they got in the past which they could bring to the task in hand, the girls won’t acknowledge that” (Teacher C - Female).