



BOYS AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The role of schools as agencies in the social construction of gender has been well researched and efforts to design the most appropriate learning environment often lead to discussions of single-sex versus co-educational schooling. Physical education is a subject where content and grouping arrangements can contribute to stereotypical expectations and assumptions about gender appropriate role-play. Typically, when gender is raised as an issue in physical education, attention is often directed towards the problems encountered by the girls and their evident alienation and lack of participation in physical education classrooms. To date, few studies have focused on boys' experiences and whether their needs are met in the various forms of physical education.

KEYWORDS: physical education, co-educational, boys, masculinity.

INTRODUCTION :

Numerous physical teachers, similar to a great part of whatever is left of society, remain secured ideological civil arguments about the estimation of single-sex versus co-instructive classes (Soderlund, 2005). Endeavors to plan the most proper learning situations for young people often prompt exchanges of partitioned sex versus co-instructive tutoring. Contentions and research supporting the two

sorts of tutoring have been made, especially as they identify with scholarly, socioemotional, and relational improvement (Mael, 1998). The direct of physical instruction classes in single-sex versus co-instructive configurations is generally bantered about globally (Penney, 2002). Many examinations have explored young ladies' distance and absence of support in physical instruction, yet few investigations have concentrated on young men's encounters and whether their requirements

are met in the different types of physical training. Also, as pointed out by Lundvall (2004), thinks about examining the different sexual orientations' encounters of physical training, are regularly relative and once in a while takes a gander at contrasts inside every sex. This investigation analyzed young men cooperation in and encounters of single-sex and co-instructive physical training.

BACKGROUND

Physical education as



an activity in the school curriculum has been gendered since its first appearance in the modern era, which dates from the mid- to late 1800s and the beginning of mass compulsory schooling (Kirk, 2003). For well over one hundred years, then, the practices that make up physical education have been strongly associated with girls being “feminine” and boys being “masculine”. This gendered history has strongly influenced what we now regard as legitimate knowledge in physical education (Kirk, 2003).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The role of schools as agencies in the social construction of gender has been well researched and the secondary school curriculum, in general, is known to perpetuate gender-stereotyped behaviour (Lines & Stidder, 2003). Physical education is one aspect of the secondary school curriculum where content and grouping arrangements can contribute to stereotypical expectations and assumptions about gender appropriate role-play. This can, and does, influence pupils’ overall perceptions of sex differences and accentuates a broader, hidden, ‘gendered’ curriculum (Lines & Stidder, 2003).

Mixed- and single-sex physical education during the past thirty years has been an issue of critical pedagogical debate amongst the physical education profession all over the world (Humberstone, 1990). This is not a new debate or particular to physical education within educational dimensions. In some co-educational schools there have been moves to segregate girls and boys within and across subjects in order to optimise learning and increase academic performance. For example, it has been shown that girls benefit from single-sex teaching in English, Science and Maths whilst boys benefit in Modern Foreign Languages and certain aspects of Music education (Lines & Stidder, 2003).

The History of Physical Education

Any school subject, its teaching practices, the teachers and the students, do not exist in a historical, cultural and societal void. The subject and its teaching practices are strongly influenced by traditions, beliefs and customs which have arisen out of entirely different contexts. Consequently, the norms, values and perceptions which are inherent in the subject today can be traced back to historical, cultural and societal contexts which to greater and lesser extent no longer can be seen as reasonable or even desirable (Larsson & Meckbach, 2007). Physical education as an activity in the school curriculum has been gendered since its first appearance in the modern era, which dates from the mid- to late 1800s and the beginning of mass compulsory schooling (Kirk, 2002).

BIOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

There are both biological differences (sex differences) and culturally created differences (gender differences) between boys and girls which affect attainment and attitudes towards physical education. Sex differences tend to be more influential during the secondary than the primary phase of physical education. Gender differences are significant at both primary and secondary phases of education. Primary aged pupils enter the education system with different experiences regarding engagement in physical activities and with strongly formed views regarding gender appropriate behaviour (Piotrowski, 2000). Similarly, in the case of secondary aged pupils, Scraton (1993) observed that by the age of 11, girls on average, do not start from an equal position to boys both in terms of physical skill and hand-eye coordination.

Biological differences between boys and girls from adolescence onwards generally have the effect of making boys taller, faster and physically stronger, on average, than girls. It would be wrong to ignore these biological differences between adolescent boys and girls in secondary school physical education on grounds of assumed ‘sameness’ between the sexes. To expect girls to compete against boys on equal terms in activities where strength, force, and power largely determine success would not only place girls, in general, at a disadvantage to reach equivalent levels of attainment but, in contact sports, could make it unsafe for girls to participate on these terms (Piotrowski, 2000).

MASCULINITY

The past two decades have seen increasing recognition of the body’s significance in social processes and

an expansion in research and writing on the sociology of the body. Featherstone and Turner (Featherstone & Turner, 1995) suggest that much of the contemporary interest in the body and issues of embodiment have been driven by radical French feminist literature. Indeed the body's centrality to the formation of gender identity has guided much feminist research (Bordo, 1989) where sport has been identified as an important site for the construction of gender and the embodiment of unequal gender relations. This focus on the body is also beginning to guide research on the construction of masculinity.

BODY IMAGE

Body image is a multidimensional phenomenon that has been variously defined and is a construct that has received substantial research attention. Fisher (1990) defined body image as the psychological experience of one's own body while Davis (1997) stated that body image is the manner in which we view our body and the mental representation we have of it. Previous research has found that a positive body image is significantly related to greater self-esteem, more positive self concept, lower incidence of depression, lower levels of body fatness and lesser likelihood of the development of eating disorders (Duncan, Al-Nakeeb, Nevill & Jones, 2004).

METHODOLOGY

To discover whether boys prefer single-sex or co-educational physical education and how their participation and experiences differ between the two different gender groupings, boys from eight physical education classes were given a questionnaire on the subject of single-sex and co-educational physical education. The school, an upper-secondary school, is located in the southern part of Sweden where most students attend various vocational programmes, such as carpentry, woodcrafts and hairdressing. A mixture of singlesex and co-educational physical education classes (four classes) was used. The students consisted of a mix of year 1 – year 3 so aged between 16 and 19. The number of male respondents was 103.

CONCLUSIONS

In summary, the results of this study suggest that majority of boys in both single gender and co-educational groups prefer to have physical education together with the girls, where a somewhat greater percentage was identified for the single gender group. However, two different motives for this opinion have been identified. The majority of boys believe that girls should be part of the physical education classes when doing activities that they deem require girls to be present, i.e., dance or when they want them there to have something to look at, such as in the swimming pool. The rest of time, when engaging in more competitive games and activities, it is better if the boys can be on their own. However, some of the other boys, who belong to a smaller group, state that they rather have all their physical education classes together with the girls, regardless of what activity they are doing.

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