



Thesis writing

# Conclusion



UNIVERSITY  
OF WOLLONGONG  
AUSTRALIA

## EDUCATION EXAMPLE

### Example: conclusion of a thesis

#### 8.0 THE MAIN ISSUES REVISITED: IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

The major thrust of this thesis has been to examine the contribution that teaching practices and particular linguistic practices in physical education lessons make to the production and reproduction of cultural discourses of masculinity and femininity and how these intersect with other discourses associated with the practice of physical activity in Australian culture. Although the study was originally conceived within the parameters of ethnography, the development of a focus on the linguistic practices in the lessons necessitated a more focused approach drawing on specific theories that addressed the meaning-making function of language within a social and cultural context. More particularly, it required a theory or theories that linked language, consciousness and sexuality. It is with post-structuralism and particularly with feminist poststructuralist writers that these connections are most usefully made in terms of the data produced in and around the transcripts of teacher-pupil interactions collected for this study.

The ideas of Michel Foucault have informed the structure and much of the analysis that constitutes the argument of this thesis. In particular, the notion of discourses as historically and culturally produced systems of knowledge and values has made it essential to examine the constitution of certain discourses in order to understand the meanings made possible in and through the genre of the physical education lesson. Similarly, to interpret the meaning-making behaviour of teachers and students, it has been necessary to identify those positions in discourse from which they are most likely to speak as male or female. An analysis of the media's contribution to the circulation of discourses of masculinity and femininity, of sport and physical activity, and of the intersection of the two has also been important in understanding students' and teachers' relation to the dominant discourses of the physical education lesson genre. ...

Substantial changes in what we understand as schooling are necessary to bring about radical social change. ...

#### 8.2 Physical education as a setting for the (re)production of complementarity

An analysis of the transcripts of lessons, and of open-ended interviews with teachers and students, together with observations of playground and lesson behaviour repeatedly demonstrated the ways in which the female students constructed themselves and were constructed as passive, lacking skill, strength, and enthusiasm - that is, as the antithesis of the male students who, in their behaviour and in their representations of themselves and in their representations by their teachers, were constructed as skilled,

*title clarifies the purpose of the conclusion – to review main ideas in previous chapters and synthesise them into a clear position on physical education*

*reviews aim of research*

*reviews key methods of data analysis and explanation*

*recommendation*

*extends ideas in earlier section*

## ACADEMIC LITERACY

Learning, Teaching & Curriculum – Learning Development



## Example: conclusion of a thesis

enthusiastic, tough, competitive and knowledgeable. In contrast, the female students and teachers demonstrated a greater competence and versatility in interpersonal discourses and practices. ...

Students may, and do, resist being positioned by the dominant discourses in physical education. Their resistance may take the form of avoiding participation by leaving their uniforms at home or less obviously through participating on the fringes of activities. They may also construct their own pleasure in the lesson by using the less restricted environment (compared to the classroom) to catch up on social chat with friends. ... Thus, the students' resistance does enable them to introduce a power/knowledge relation in which they have some power, but this is illusory both in terms of empowerment through the development of bodily confidence and skill and through their inevitable positioning as sexual object in the patriarchal discourses of heterosexuality on which they draw.

### 8.3 Challenging the hegemony of games

The curriculum areas of dance and gymnastics do provide opportunities for boys and girls to develop different orientations to their bodies and to each other. However, the forms of dance and games that are most likely to be taught in schools are those that lend themselves to the directed activity, skill acquisition approach. Moreover the teaching of ballroom dancing is constituted by practices and social relations which reinforce patriarchal masculinity and femininity. On the other hand, single-sex classes of jazz dance, creative dance and gymnastics can afford students the opportunities to use their bodies in ways that are not determined by comparisons with a standard, that do not rely, to the same extent, on predetermined skills and that can allow through less directed teaching methods opportunities for the development of body awareness, confidence and creativity. The danger here is that of falling into an essentialism which asserts specificities of female behaviour that are unavailable to men in our culture or a humanist position that attributes body awareness and creativity to the self-determining meaning making subject ...

Although I would argue for the original specificity of male and female bodies, I am also able to avoid an essentialist position which does not acknowledge the differential distribution of power in the culture in ways that position women as subordinate, by arguing that the masculinity constructed in and through physical education and sport is not only damaging for women but also for men. The sexuality defined in and through sports and games is far more restrictive for men than it is for women. For Australian men, according to Connell (1983), sport is "astonishingly important", in the embodiment of a patriarchal masculinity, a form of masculinity that is clearly defined and very prescriptive.

### 8.4 Women's meanings in movement?

An important motivation for the questions that have generated this thesis has been a concern to challenge the taken-for-granted practices of teachers in ways that provide a model for change. The thesis aims to provide the means by which teachers can begin to examine how their linguistic practices contribute to the production and reproduction of patriarchal masculinity. ...

The task, then, is to work towards the construction of experiences of physical activity which are pleasurable and which engage with girls' interests and needs, to explore new movement possibilities that contribute to redefinitions of individual female bodies as sites of personal power and control and which challenge patriarchal definitions of women as passive, dependent, fragile and physically incompetent.

*Notice how the section titles are articulating the position being reiterated in this conclusion.*



## Example: conclusion of a thesis

### 8.5. Co-educational physical education

In any critique of girls' experiences in physical education, co-educational physical education must be high on the agenda. This study has demonstrated that the reproduction of patriarchal femininity and masculinity occurs in single-sex as well as mixed sex classes, however, that latter form of organisation was clearly the most overtly alienating environment for female students. ...

The evidence from this study suggests that co-educational physical education should be considered as deeply problematic. I am not arguing particularly for or against coeducational physical education, primarily, because I am not intending to propose specific practices and secondly, because I do not believe the answer lies in simply adopting one form of organisation at a school rather than the other. However, if girls experience of, and participation in, physical activity is to change the issue must be addressed at all sites of practice, including the syllabus committees, tertiary institutions, physical education faculties in schools and teachers in their interactions with students. ... The long term purpose of this study is to provide a model of analytical practice which may be developed to enable teachers more readily to reflect on their linguistic and non-linguistic practices and to take more responsibility for the ways in which their practices contributes to the positioning of students in relation to gender (but also by extension, race, class, ethnicity, physical competency and so on). However, I would also want to argue for a more reflective and critical practice on the part of lecturers in tertiary institutions and syllabus designers which takes account of their contribution to the production and reproduction of discourses which constitute embodied subjectivities in and through the practices of physical education.

*details the general recommendations, recapping one of the findings*

### 8.6 Conclusion

In addressing the issues relating to girls and physical education, physical educators must eschew an approach that regards the female students themselves as the problem and examine their own assumptions about the 'good' of physical education and sport. Physical education is an historical and cultural construction conceived primarily within a masculine discourses of sport and the human movement sciences. Such a conception fails to meet the needs of many girls and also many boys. Moreover it is likely to contribute to forms of masculinity and femininity that disadvantage girls and construct them as lacking and inadequate, uncomfortable with their bodies and turned off physical activity for life.

If we are serious about changing the experiences of girls in physical education, then the equity solution of equal access is not sufficient. Rather, what must be challenged is the model of physical education that has been developed by men, for the needs and interests of boys. As a starting point we must challenge the dominance of sports and games skills in the curriculum. The draft New South Wales Syllabus (1991) begins to do this through a conceptual approach. However, until teachers are committed to a radical rethinking of their own assumptions and ideologies and recognise the contribution their practices make to construction of gender relations, there will be little change.

*puts forward core recommendations/ position of thesis*

