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Physical education and the making of citizens:
Considering the pedagogical work of physical education in contemporary times.

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It is a great pleasure and honour for me to deliver this lecture today . I thank the Board of AIESEP for trusting me with this responsibility and the conference organising committee for their hospitality and organisational support.

As my first AIESEP conference was in 1985 in Adelphi University, New York I never had the pleasure of meeting José María Cagigal in person. I have however read of his important work as director of the first INEF (National Institute for Physical Education) at Madrid in Spain and of his work as president of AIESEP .

It is in his honour that I give this lecture today.
Physical education and the making of citizens¹

Introduction

The education of future citizens is a primary focus of what schools do. Schools work with young people who will be the citizens of the future. In this paper I will argue that since the late 19th century the pedagogical work of physical education has been directed towards the shaping of bodies and bodily practices that are consistent with the ‘making of’ a certain type of citizen. While this concept is not new to our field (eg see Kirk, 1998) I intend to point out that while more is expected of physical education in contemporary times, its power to deliver on these expectations is diminishing.

This paper will consider the pedagogical work of physical education through the lenses provided by the concepts of ‘governmentality’, ‘health promotion’ and ‘risk society’. These concepts will provide a way of thinking about the place of physical education in many contemporary societies that are increasingly connected by the march of globalisation. Of course I realise that it is not really possible to do justice to these concepts in the space of this lecture. However I hope to provoke your interest and perhaps you can pursue some of the ideas beyond this conference.

Basically I will make the following claims:

- physical education is about the making (or shaping) of certain types of citizen
- physical education is concerned with bodies and bodily practices associated with physical activity and health
- different contexts (eg., countries and cultures) will have different notions of a ‘good citizen’ and hence of physical education’s contribution
- physical education is increasingly associating itself with (and perhaps defined as) health promotion.
- the influence of physical education is being diminished by the rise of other cultural players who do pedagogical work on the body and bodily practices.

In order to minimise inappropriate cross-cultural generalisations, where appropriate I will use examples from the Australian context. This is not intended to be a parochial advocacy for Australian physical education. Rather it is but one site in which the role of physical education in the making of citizens can be explored using specific examples. Hopefully you will make connections, generalisations and comparisons to your own context where they are appropriate.

Education, physical education and citizenship (in Australia)

In thinking broadly about the purposes of physical education and the making of citizen Anthony Laker (2000) argues that “...physical education has been used for the purposes of survival, social control, military fitness, health, holistic development and citizen education.” from the time of the ancient Greeks (p14), A brief look at physical education’s history in Australia will show how its always been connected to citizen making.

For some 40,000 years Australian aboriginal cultures trained their young males in physical activities such as spear and boomerang throwing, and movement games were a significant part of their childhood play. But this is never called physical education and is never considered in any history of Australian physical education. Histories usually begin with white European settlement (invasion) and more

particularly the beginning of mass public education in the early 19th century.

In that view of history, there are three main discourses that can be found in a reading of the history of physical education in Australia. These are the military, sporting and health (including fitness) discourses. In various ways these discourses have shaped the physical education curriculum since the early 1900s. Importantly, although the dominance of particular discourses might have changed over time, they all circulate in various forms within all Australian PE curriculum. In other words the discourses of the past are still present in (perhaps residual form) contemporary curriculum.

The military discourses dominated physical education on or around the time of the two world wars of the last century. In essence, Australian governments of the day wanted school PT (as it was then called) to make 'fighting men'. The future citizens were to be fit male soldiers and PT in schools had an important place in the making of such men.

The sporting discourses arrived in Australian physical education after WW2 when the claimed benefits of sports and games participation were incorporated in the new syllabus of 1946. The contributions of sports participation to the making of citizens who are self-confident team players, who can work diligently for delayed rewards, and who have a sense of nationalistic pride in our sporting achievements remains a powerful discourse in the shaping of Australian physical education.

As in most other countries, health discourses have always been part of physical education. At the beginning of the 20th Century they were manifest in the therapeutic exercise regimes imported from Europe. By the 1980s they took the form of daily physical education as a preventative measure against hypokinetic diseases. And in 2001 they are clearly evident in the health promotion messages which pervade the new curriculum.

But as you all know, physical education is only one of the school subjects in the institution of formal schooling. In Australia at the present time our educational system is charged with the task of educating for a 'clever country' in which future citizens are multi-skilled, competent with information technology, literate and numerate in order that they play a productive part in a globalised economy.

In addition, citizens of our 'clever country' should also be *healthy citizens* who are self-regulating, informed, critically reflective and capable of constructing their own healthy lifestyle and minimising risky behaviours. It is here that physical

education is seen to play an important part in contemporary schooling.

Describing the purposes of physical education often includes reference to a certain type of citizen. American physical educator Daryl Siedentop (1994) talks of physical education developing *physically educated citizenry*. He claims that physically educated citizens will not only be competent physical performers, they will also be *critical consumers* of the sports, fitness and leisure industries. This concept will return later.

Here is how the Australia Health & Physical Education key learning area describes the type of citizen it claims to develop.

The [HPE] key learning area provides a foundation for developing active and informed members of society, capable of managing the interactions between themselves and their social, cultural and physical environments in the *pursuit of good health*. (p1. my emphasis)

Again the emphasis is on healthy citizens.

An important feature of the Australian HPE curriculum, as in other subject areas such as Mathematics, Science etc., is that it expressly sets out to assist students to become *lifelong learners*. A lifelong learner is defined as being:

- a knowledgeable person with deep understanding
 - a complex thinker
 - a creative person
 - an active investigator
 - an effective communicator
 - a participant in an independent world
 - a reflective and self-directed person
- (Qld, 1-10 HPE Syllabus, 1999, p2)

These skills and attributes are a clear articulation of the nature of the desired future citizen. But the success of the education system in making such citizens is *problematic*.

In Australia, as in many other Western countries, there is considerable concern over the developmental trajectory of our young people. Are they developing into the right type of citizen? There is considerable concern that young people might be too heavily influenced by new information and communication technologies (like Nintendo and web-based games) or even by drug or punk cultures. Some concerns have reached the level of 'moral panics' (Green and Bigum 1993).

Of particular relevance to this discussion of physical education is the concern that young Australians are 'at risk' of becoming obese (and by implication 'unhealthy') citizens of the future (Brown & Brown, 1996; Bouchard & Blair, 1999).

In addition to concerns over obesity, the range of particular concerns in Australia that are targeted by the HPE learning area include the following:

- concerns over the low level of fitness in young people
- reported low levels of motor skill development
- low levels of participation of young people in physical activity
- increasing drug use and abuse amongst young people
- increasing numbers of teen pregnancies
- alarming numbers of youth suicides
- increasing levels of depression in young people
- poorly developed skills in conflict resolution
- increasing difficulties in maintaining relationships

Australian citizens of the next decade who have been well educated in the Health & Physical Education field will be presumed to be equipped with the knowledge and skills to collectively ameliorate such social problems. At least that is the rhetoric. That's the hope.

Pedagogical work

With that introduction to the expectations of HPE in the Australian education system I now wish to shift gear and discuss some of the concepts that are useful in thinking about the work of our field. In particular our *pedagogical work*. Understanding pedagogical work requires that I revise the notion of pedagogy and how I am using it.

When educators in much of the English speaking world use the word 'pedagogy' it is often considered to be a synonym for teaching, as distinguished from curriculum. Of course such distinctions are rather arbitrary and, in general, rather limiting in helping us understand how knowledge is (re)produced in the act of learning. David Lusted's (1986) notion of pedagogy provides a way of thinking about knowledge production in a more integrated way. He argues that knowledge is not produced by intentions but through the process of interaction between the learner, the subject matter and the teacher. Knowledge is not what is intended but what is understood. *Pedagogical work*, therefore, is what is done in the process of knowledge production.

In a similar vein, Roger Simon argued that "Any practice which intentionally tries to influence the production of meaning is a pedagogical practice" (Simon 1988) p3. In this sense a pedagogical practice does pedagogical work. Importantly, in terms of pedagogical work the term 'teacher' is not restricted to a flesh and blood person but can be anything from an instructional video to a magazine article, a film, a

computer game, or even a billboard poster. In this sense pedagogical work can be done by a diverse array of 'teachers' and not just in the context of schooling. I will return to this point later.

One generative way of understanding the pedagogical work done in the making of certain types of citizen is through the concept of '*governmentality*'.

Governmentality

All societies need to be governed. But who does the governing and what forms does it take? French social theorist Michel Foucault's contribution to understanding the art of governing "has been to draw out the links between the levels of state and global politics, on the one hand, and the level of individuals and their conduct in every range of life, on the other. Taken together, this constitutes what he calls 'governmentality' (Danaher, Schirato et al. 2000, p82).

"For Foucault, governmentality is at least as much a matter of 'body politics' – the ways of conducting ourselves, the relationship we have with our own bodies and the other bodies that constitute society – as it is a matter of conventional politics (political parties, elections)." (p83)

The work of physical education is aimed at making a certain body politic and accordingly is very much a part of the process of governmentality .

In order to understand the concept of governmentality it is useful to return to the beginnings of the physical education profession in the late 19th and early 20th Century.

With the advent of the industrial revolution and the mass migration of 'unruly populations' to the new industrial cities, new problems arose "as attempts were made "...to tame and govern the undesirable consequences of industrial life, wage labour and urban existence"(Rose 1993, p284). The governmentability of individuals, families, markets and populations became increasingly problematic.

It was at that time that the American Dudley Sargent and other early physical education professionals were advocating physical exercises for the masses to compensate for the health debilitating living conditions of the growing industrial era (Lawson, 1993). According to Hal Lawson ... Sargent and many of his contemporaries in the late 19th century believed that "ordinary people were inherently weak and feeble, needing to be protected from their own folly and rashness".

"Sargent, like so many others in our field, believed that "Without professional regulation, the health, lifestyles, and lives of ordinary people will be adversely affected."

The essence of Lawson's argument was that, at least in the early 20th century, the human service professions like physical education set out to *regulate* the lives of people in their own best interests. For example: classrooms and lecture theatres are designed to order students bodies in certain ways (sit a certain distance from other students and so on); the subject syllabus is a prescription for what should be done in the classroom; outside the school gate road rules regulate all dimensions of our driving behaviour; daily newspapers and the 6 o'clock news inform us of a range of matters such as what happens to people who do not obey the laws, the weather for today and the next five days, and the performance of listed shares. All this knowledge has the effect of *regulating our lives* in certain ways.

Specifically related to the regulation of bodies and health, we can recognise that things familiar to our profession, such as the Ottawa charter (a the founding document for the Health Promoting Schools Movement), the physical education syllabus, healthy food charts, fitness testing, national fitness norms, and the body-mass index, all do pedagogical work related to the making of a *'healthy informed citizen'*. In this sense they are governmental technologies employed as disciplinary devices.

But these technologies do not, as it were, have the field to themselves. They compete against other technologies that do pedagogical work with a different intent. Consider the advertising industry. Through a range of governmental technologies (from billboard ads, TV commercials, magazine ads, etc) this industry sets out to make *consuming citizens*. In other words it (the industry) wants citizens to buy products, many of which are in some tension with the notion of the healthy citizen.

Identity

Making or shaping future citizens is very much about shaping subjectivity and identity. It was American educational researcher Philip Wexler (1992) who told us that, for young people, the essential project of life at school is to become somebody. It is about identity making. School physical education attempts to shape a health conscious subjectivity, an active healthy identity. Some other players however have an agenda of making consuming subjectivities – "I consume therefore I am". Indeed, as many have now argued (eg Featherstone, 1991) the body has become a major marker of identity and worth in a consumer society. Here we can see the body, identity and consumerism all enmeshed. And it is in this complex that physical education does its pedagogical

work. It is here that physical education plays its part in the governmental process.

Foucault argues that the idea that knowledge is power is simplistic and misleading. He claimed that knowledge actually 'makes us its subject' in that it is *through* knowledge (from discourse and experience) that we come to make sense of the world. Moreover, the process of meaning making is central to identity construction.

Think of how the *identities* of physical educators are shaped by the knowledge they acquire from the biomedical sciences. Think of the widespread embodiment in physical educators of the healthism assumption of exercise = fitness = health. It is hard for many physical educators to believe that someone could be healthy if they are not fit or are not slim. As Gard & Wright (forthcoming) suggest "The obesity discourses which link inactivity with overweight, make sense to physical educators, *because* they fit with an existing set of subjective positions held about the body"(my emphasis, p21).

Sociologist Robin Bunton claims that in late modern societies (Giddens, 1991) "the dominant culture is one in which health, self-identity and consumption are increasing entwined" p210. (Bunton and Burrows 1995) There is considerable tension here for the citizen is expected to negotiate a course through the pressures to *consume* and to *abstain* (Orbach 1978) at the same time.

Although the concept of governmentality helps us to recognise the multiplicity of disciplining agents and devices that do pedagogical work with respect to the making of the citizen, how the citizen 'turns out' will depend on a highly complex process of meaning making over which we have diminished direct control.

A diminishing influence?

Obviously governments have a very clear interest in promoting health in populations and physical education in schools remains a key site for such pedagogical work. However, as Nicholas Rose (2000) argues, "schools have been *supplemented* and *sometimes displaced* by an array of other practices for *shaping identities* and forms of life" (p1398, my emphasis).

He suggests that advertising, TV soap operas, and lifestyle magazines have become the new regulatory techniques for the shaping of the self, thereby replacing much of the traditional authority of education. As such, the role of popular culture is seen to play an increasingly important part in the lives of the young thereby "complicating questions" about the relationships between the curriculum and the making of citizens. This is a crucial issue for our

profession in the 21st century for in the battle to win the hearts and minds of young people the influence of physical education is diminishing.

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Health Promotion

The recognition that ‘lifestyles’ play a significant role in making people ill has led to the adoption of a range of new education initiatives that have sought to inform individuals about how to change their behaviours in such a way as to avoid illness.

The identification of *risk factors* and the education of the population about such dangers has spawned the relatively new field of *health promotion*. Health promotion is concerned with identifying and changing ‘unhealthy’ or ‘risky’ lifestyle practices such as lack of exercise, poor diet, over consumption of certain products, exposure of hazardous chemicals, and so on.

One way to think of contemporary physical education (at least in Australia) is as a form of health promotion that attempts to ‘make’ *healthy* citizens in the context of what Ulrich Beck (1994) calls the ‘*risk society*’.

Understanding the role of physical education as health promotion requires that we understand the nature of risk society in the context of ‘new times’.

Health promotion in the ‘risk society’

Living in modern societies is a risky business. This is not to say that living in pre-modern times was not risky. Far from it. The chances of being struck down by a plague, or being killed by an animal or a simple infection to a minor cut were certainly high in pre-modern times. Old age was 40 years. But the risks of modern living are *less* associated with natural phenomenon and more to do with those created by human endeavour.

Sociologist Anthony Giddens (1991) argues that we now live with manufactured uncertainty generated by our own doings. We suffer the consequences of certain self-made behaviours and constructions. For example there are substantial risks involved in smoking, in driving a car (especially when drunk), in working in an asbestos mine, in using excessive nitrate fertilisers on our crops, in clearing our forests, in genetic engineering and so on. A little closer to our immediate interests as physical educators we know that there are risks involved in taking too little exercise and in becoming obese. But there are also risks

involved in participating in certain forms of physical activity and sports (eg hang gliding, rugby, gymnastics or boxing).

What we are meant to do as healthy, informed self-regulating citizens is to *assess the risks* of our lifestyle and make such choices and changes as might be necessary to reduce risks. The new Australian HPE curriculum explicitly has as its focus the education (read making) of healthy, informed self-regulating citizens who can manage their lives in these *risky* times. Ron Feingold (2000) in his 1995 Cagial lecture made it very clear that he considered the central mission of physical education was to educate future citizens for a particular risk management lifestyle.

“It has been demonstrated time and again...that lifestyle management and personal choice can significantly prevent the onset of illness and disease.” (p154)

Further he claimed that

“...smoking cessation, healthful nutrition, physical activity, drug abuse reduction etc are key factors in the preventive prescription, *and that is what we are all about.*” (p154 emphasis added)

Petersen (Petersen and Bunton, 1997) makes explicit the links between the focus of our work as health promoting physical educators and the notion of risk. He states that

Fitness is widely promoted as an opportunity to avert several of the risks to selfhood present in modern society. This requires the individual to constantly monitor body ‘inputs’ such as attention to diet, and sleep and consumption of such unhealthy products as tobacco, alcohol and fast foods (p189).

Gard & Wright (forthcoming) argue that physical education has appropriated what they name as ‘the obesity discourses’ in order to increase their professional influence in the context of the risk society. Contemporary school physical education is now considered by many ‘experts’ to be one of the *key sites* in which the claimed obesity ‘epidemic’ can be resisted. Ironically, however, the very obesity discourses that are embraced by physical education actually help to produce anxieties about the body that can result in decidedly ‘unhealthy’ eating and exercise practices.

Risk is therefore one of the many governmental strategies used in the making of the healthy citizen. Physical education in Australia is now considered a key player in educating future citizens to live in the ‘risk society’.

The global connection.

Let me now try and bring some of these ideas together by way of the concept of globalisation.

George Sage in 1994 and Gudrun Dol-Tepper in 2000 in their respective Cagigal lectures have both discussed the significance of globalisation for our field.

Globalisation presents some massive challenges for education. Consider the influence of brands such as Nike, Reebok or Addidas on matters related to physical education. What kid in this interconnected global village comes to physical education class without a knowledge of what the swoosh signifies? Nike is every where and its does pedagogical work everywhere.

Some (perhaps a large part) of that work is done on identity. Young people are in search of identity and major brands like Nike are focused on being part of that identity. We also know that people develop multiple identities and for young people being 'cool' is a necessary identity. Canadian journalist Naomi Klein in her powerful book *NoLogo* (Klein 2000) gives a salutary account of the power of corporate advertising in targeting the youth market and the marketing of 'cool'. To be cool is to have attitude...the right attitude. In some suburbs in some cities with some kids this might mean wearing Nike shoes and clothes but definitely not doing anything physical (such as sport). For others it might mean doing a high five every time you score a goal. Nike however is less concerned with whether young people do anything physical as they are that the kids wear the Nike brand and that they are committed to it. Nike does a lot to make its brand cool...THE thing to wear.

For most young people and adults alike, the fact that the purchase of a pair of Nike shoes is to 'buy into' a global company that exploit cheap labour in Asian countries (Klein, 2000) is hardly a concern.

The youth market is an important place to be for many corporations. Getting kids to be 'brand loyal' at an early age is worth considerable dividends to shareholders. The fact that schools and universities are becoming increasingly used as sites of increasingly sophisticated corporate battle grounds for the hearts and minds of young people should bother us all. Is it really benign for Pizza Hut to sponsor the school athletics carnival. And what's wrong with having ads interrupt educational TV programs or displayed on 'educational' web sites? What's wrong with a shoe company sponsored school project in which children build a running shoe complete with the famous swoosh? This list could go on.

Part of the issue is that pedagogical work done by governmental agencies like multi-national companies is focused not just on making consuming citizens, but brand loyal consumers. Think of the impact of this trend when the consumables are a potential health

problem as identified by health promotion experts. That our field has little to say about such matters is reprehensible.

Earlier I mentioned that for Siedentop (1994) the physically educated citizen was not only a competent physical performer, but is also a critical consumer of the sports, fitness and leisure industries. But where will they get their education as critical consumers? If we consider the media and schools as doing the pedagogical work for developing critical consumers the picture is rather disappointing. In terms of the media, Deborah Lupton (1995) tells us that, as a pedagogical devise for health promotion it plays an essentially conservative role in that it seldom fosters critical thinking or challenges the status quo. School PE has a similarly conservative agenda. So we must realise that we have something of a battle on our hands if we want schools to be a more powerful player in the making of healthy citizens.

Conclusion

Young people are future citizens in the making. The sort of citizens they will become will depend on a vast array of influences, or put more specifically in the context of this paper, on a vast array of governmental technologies that regulate their lives in obvious and not-so-obvious ways.

The strategies of government have changed fundamentally over the last 50 years. The emphasis in the new HPE curriculum manifesto for Australia is not on *prescribing* certain pedagogic activities that might have certain beneficial health outcomes. Rather, it is on educating students about *risks* to health (eg smoking, lack of exercise, alcohol and drug abuse) and how to manage a healthy lifestyle through *self-regulation* rather than coercion.

But risk assessment and management can have its negative side and the creation of a generation of risk-focused, body obsessed, calorie counting, sports mad fitness fanatics is not what I would consider to be appropriate pedagogical work for physical education.

Physical education in contemporary times should strive to develop physically educated citizens who are *critical consumers* of the sports, fitness and leisure industries. Citizens who not only value physical activity as a regular part of their own lives but also "work to counter or reduce forces that seek to manipulate their (participation) interests for economic or political purposes" (Siedentop, 1994, p12).

In the process, we need to understand that powerful non-school 'cultural players' also do significant pedagogical work in relation to the body, physical activity and health and that they are making the quest for the healthy citizen a tug-of-war in which

different vested interests compete for the hearts and minds of young people.

In the final analysis, whether or not HPE can deliver on its objective of 'making' healthy, physically active, informed citizens will depend less on the sophistication of its curriculum documents and more on the ability of its teachers to clearly know what they are attempting to do (the major orienting purpose of their work) and what is realistic to achieve. Sometimes physical education attempts to do too many things to too many people (see Tinning, 2000b).

In creating appropriate learning environments we need to better understand how our young people are making sense of their bodies, physical activity and health. We need to be able to offer a challenge to those 'other cultural players' who would seek to use our subject matter, to create consuming citizens for their own purposes.

That we should continue to think of our work as overtly connected to the making of the healthy citizen is, in my view, entirely appropriate. To recognise the diminishing influence of physical education in the lives of many young people is a necessary reality check. I urge us all to use this check as an opportunity to begin to think differently about our role in the bigger picture of the pedagogical work done in the making of the healthy citizen.

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