Pedagogical practices of female physical educators in an all-boys’ school

by

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Abstract

This study explores the ways in which two female teachers in an all-boys’ school negotiate their approaches to physical education (PE) pedagogy in an environment where dominant or hegemonic masculinities can often cultivate at the expense of individuals who embody different versions of gendered identities (McCaughtry & Tischler, 2010). Specifically, it argues that their notions of ‘good’ PE pedagogy are inextricably linked to professional identities shaped within the social, cultural and political discursive fields of the contexts in which they teach and live.

Much of the rhetoric surrounding claims of boys’ supposed underachievement in education calls for structural changes in schools, such as the implementation of more boy-friendly curriculum and pedagogy and an increase in the number of male role models, to counter the effects of a supposedly ‘feminised’ education system. In contrast, feminist and profeminist responses to the boys’ agenda have called for a closer examination of how gender constructions impact educational achievement (Lingard, Martino, & Mills, 2009). In all-boys’ PE settings, curriculum content frequently orientate around competitive and traditionally masculine team sports, wherein teaching pedagogies draw heavily on ‘masculine’ practices that serve to legitimate and/or reproduce hierarchical and heteronormative masculinities (Atkinson & Kehler, 2010).

Embedded in the broader tenets of gender equity, and drawing on feminist poststructuralist perspectives, this research examines the experiences of two female physical educators from an all-boys’ school in Victoria, Australia, as they negotiate their daily work in an environment where embodied masculinities are intensified. In doing so, this research looks beyond the PE Department to the wider school context (discourse and practice) as integral to the contestation and struggles for the professional identities, and by extension, pedagogical practices, of female PE teachers in all-boy settings.
Interpretation of the study draws largely from selected works of Michel Foucault to explore the discourse-power relations that shape the professional identities of these teachers. Further, this lens provides a framework to interrogate how constructions of effective practice in boys’ PE are shaped and to explore student responses to pedagogy in this context. Findings reveal that dominant gendered constructions that privilege hegemonic and heteronormative masculine identities underpin much of the culture of the school and as such, are heavily implicated in notions of effective pedagogy for all boys. A prominent element of this study is the use of Foucault’s later work around technologies of the self to reveal the struggles, contestations and negotiation practices that these female teachers drew on to mediate tensions that arose from being ‘positioned’ outside the gendered hegemony of the school. The challenge, that confronts the PE sector is to develop initiatives and interventions (at both the pre-service and in-service levels) that promote a critical awareness of the ways in which dominant discourse-power relations currently constrain professional identity formation and notions of ‘effective’ practice in PE.
Preface: An autoethnographic declaration

I wish to know how the reflexivity of the subject and discourse of truth are linked – “How can the subject tell the truth about itself?” (Foucault, 1994, p. 128).

Often in qualitative writing the position of the ‘author’ is declared to provide an insight into how their own histories and biographies shape the work undertaken and to allow the ‘reader’ to make interpretations about how meaning and knowledge is distilled. Autoethnographies as “highly personalised texts rely on systematic sociological introspection and emotional recall to allow authors to tell stories about their own lived experiences, relating the personal to the cultural” (Sparkes, 2002, p. viii). In his discussion of Roland Barthes’ renowned proclamation of the ‘death of the author’, Foucault (1994) questioned the notion of the authentic self, proffering that aspects of the author’s subject should not be central to the distillation of meaning from their work, and that rather, consideration should be given to the “mode of existence of a text” (Danaher, Schirato, & Webb, 2000, p. 153). Further interpretations suggest Foucault argued “the ‘unique subject’ of the author is swallowed up by social and discursive formations, and the important question becomes not ‘who’ but ‘how’” (Danaher, et al., 2000, p. 153) texts are produced. With this in mind, I offer this autoethnographic declaration not as confessional validity or as a form of ‘self-indulgence, a charge which is so often levelled against autoethnography’ (Sparkes, 2002, p. vii), but more in an attempt to display multiple levels of consciousness and position my interpretations within their wider social, historical and political discursive formations.

Prior to my work in higher education, as a PE teacher for the best part of a decade, my problematisation of gender in teachers’ work and pedagogy can be located in three distinct experiences of societal institutions: the family, entry to professional work in a co-educational school and my extended tenure at two Catholic boys’ schools. Growing up as the eldest of six children, we lived in a town positioned halfway between Victoria’s metropolitan centre and a large regional city. In times of growing unemployment and unprecedented peaks in home interest rates, both of my
parents travelled to the metropolitan centre to work, which required my siblings and I to shoulder the daily rigours of country life to varying degrees.

With one younger brother and four younger sisters many of the responsibilities undertaken replicated traditional gendered work, wherein tasks such as preparing dinner, making lunches, washing dirty clothes and helping my younger sisters get ready for school were often my domain. For my brother however, daily chores included chopping firewood and the feeding of animals. That said, we were equally familiar with all required chores. The blurring of the boundaries of adult responsibilities and childhood interests however did not preclude us from the doctrines of country life – many of us were heavily involved in various local sporting clubs, including the football/netball club; the tennis club; the Catholic Church; and at one time or another (although not all at the same time) we worked at the local supermarket or butcher shop. Whilst I paint the picture of a very traditional Catholic family and of being raised within traditional gendered discourses, opportunities to disrupt gendered boundaries were plentiful. Regularly my siblings and I engaged in recreational fishing, catching rabbits, swimming in the dam, playing football and cricket in the backyard – who else was my brother going to play with? Such experiences form a significant part of my personal story because it was this constant negotiation of gendered boundaries, fostered by my parents, which cultivated my sense of gender ignorance – why would anyone be treated significantly different as a result of their gender?

Upon graduation from my teaching degree I secured employment as a PE and Science teacher in a Catholic co-educational college, located about 40 minutes from Melbourne. With students and staff of predominantly a white, Anglo Celtic, middle class demographic, this environment was not significantly different to my previous experiences as a student in educational institutions. As a young graduate you expect some challenges in your first year of teaching; however I did not anticipate that they would come in the form of a Year 7 all-girls PE class. The extraordinary degree of resistance shown by a particular ‘clique’ of girls within this class to any pedagogical practice was astounding and the cause of much angst as a newly qualified teacher. More concerning however was the constant surveillance and scrutiny that I, and other girls within the class, were subjected to. Although these behaviours were limited to a minority of students within this class, the resultant self-reflection, critical analysis
and investigations of reasons underlying such behaviour, sparked an awareness of differing femininities and an interest in the social and historical origins of how they were constructed. Whilst such experiences were limited to this class only, when I was approached about a position at an all-boys’ school in a regional city for the following year, I welcomed the opportunity.

The cliché of ‘out of the frying pan and into the fire’ comes to mind when I recall my initial experiences of being a female PE teacher in an all-boys’ school. In a bid to escape the suffocating influences of the all-girls Year 7 PE class, I had given little consideration to what teaching in an all-boys’ school would entail. As a quite traditional school steeped in sporting and military history, I encountered a community with deeply entrenched expectations about being ‘male’, ‘female’, a ‘good teacher’, and a ‘PE teacher’, some contravening my own ideologies. As one of twelve female teachers in a staff of nearly seventy teachers (and one of two females under thirty) in a school of mainly white, Anglo-Celtic, middle-class demographic, it is not that unfathomable that I was also the first female physical educator. Despite experiencing resistance to my existence within the school community initially, particularly from some of the more established male PE staff (with long-standing records of service), I went about carving out what I considered an effective female physical educator of all boys’ PE to be. And I loved it!

Whilst the scope of this thesis prevents an in-depth discussion of the multitude of ‘gendered’ incidents experienced in my first few years (and subsequent years upon commencement in another boys’ school), these collective events have contributed to a critical awareness of multiple gendered subjectivities and have revealed issues associated with the practice of dominant versions of masculinity. My experiences of positioning and being positioned as ‘other’ within and between genders, has led to an interest in interrogating and disrupting the continual reinforcement of normalized values in society. As Hatchell (2003) argues, “accepting normative male cultures of private boys’ schools and…the associated privileges as unproblematic, reinforces hegemonic masculinist discourses” (p. ix). More specifically it has caused me to question ‘how’, and under which conditions, ideas about effective PE pedagogy for boys have been formed.
Chapter 1 - Gender and Education: Framing the study

1.1 An introductory narrative

‘A boys’ school – are you crazy? Did you not hear about the Montmorency football trip?’

Emma and Kate, two friends who had recently graduated from their PE degrees at a regional University, met up for coffee at their local café. Emma was ecstatic when Kate arrived, and was nearly bursting with bottled-up enthusiasm as she hugged her friend and proudly declared “I’ve got a job! You’ll never guess where...St. Paul’s...you know the one”. Kate’s face contorted in horror, “The boys’ school, what...the one with 1400 boys, are you crazy?” Still beaming and not in any way deterred by her friend’s reaction she continued, “Yep, oh don’t be so dramatic...I have got Year 8, 9 and 10 PE, a Year 11 PE class and some sport classes, isn’t that great for a first year out...why do you look so concerned, you know you will get creases from frowning so much, what’s the problem?”. Picking up the coffee menu, Kate relaxed a little as she explains “I am really happy for you; if you are happy, but shit Em, a boy’s school...do you have any idea what you are getting yourself into?” Taking the coffee menu from Kate, Emma pretends to peruse the menu, but after a second or two, looked up with a hurt expression on her face, “I mean it is not the kind of job I thought I would get, but I wanted to stay close to home, to be honest I hadn’t really thought much about teaching all boys, I was just so excited to get a job, my first job...I guess it won’t be that bad, Tina who graduated two years ago taught there and she seemed to like it”. “Yeah and now she is going overseas, probably couldn’t wait to get out of there...I mean you are five-foot nothing, how will you go teaching a group of 25 Year 11 students who are probably all over six-foot...look at how those idiot boys were behaving at the footy on the weekend, when their mates are around they think they are a law unto themselves” Kate states as she visibly becomes more agitated. “What is more, how did you even get a job there when all the stuff in the media is calling for more male role models in boys’ schools – as if they don’t have a pretty good lot in life already the blokes...”. Emma appears to contemplate all of this as she
responds, “Well, I guess it would be a bit daunting if the boys behaved like those hoon at the footy, but as if they would be allowed to scream obscenities at you in a school environment, I mean it is not the dark ages, surely gender wouldn’t be an issue, they have other female teachers”. Kate responds, “Yeah in English and the like...not PE Em, what if you have to coach a footy team or something...I mean did you not hear what those boys from the Montmorency Football club allegedly did to those two girls they met at Phillip Island on their footy trip?”.

In October 2009 three boys from the Montmorency under-19 football club were charged with “rape, unlawful imprisonment and indecent assault” (Caldwell, 2009), with up to thirteen other males released pending further investigations of an alleged pack rape of two women during an end of season football trip to Phillip Island. It is alleged the women were “lured to a rented house on the island for a party after they had met some of the footballers at a local hotel. When they arrived they discovered about 30 men staying there” (Caldwell, 2009). Although not an officially sanctioned event by the football club (Gregory, Millar, & Cooper, 2009), members of this team and friends attended the privately-rented property for the event. A nearby resident said, “she was terrified on the weekend of October 10, with “wall-to-wall guys” on a drinking binge, tearing up and down the street in cars packed with teenagers” (Strong & Millar, 2009). It is asserted the two women returned to the rental property with some of the boys where they were “taken into separate bedrooms and wardrobes were pushed against the doors to prevent their escape…One of the women…alleged she was sexually assaulted by as many as eight men” (Strong & Millar, 2009). Despite some club members recent participation in the Australian Football League’s pilot program ‘respect and responsibility’ conceived to improve “footballer’s attitudes towards women” (Strong & Millar, 2009), one of the charged boys claimed “he believed the sexual acts were consensual” (Strong & Millar, 2009).

In July 2010, on the third day of a committal hearing against the three charged teammates, the charges against them were withdrawn, yet the reasons for why the case collapsed have remained a mystery (Lowe, 2010). As reported “laws prohibit the cross-examination of complainants of sexual crime in the Magistrates Court to be open to the public and the court refused to release the complainant’s statement.
Police and defence lawyers declined to disclose why the case collapsed” (Lowe, 2010).

In the opening constructed narrative, and the subsequent account of an alleged pack-rape by boys on a football trip, I foreground potential issues associated with working with groups of adolescent boys in the PE and sport domain. In his presentation of three heuristic devices that exemplified the role of sport and PE in the privileging of hyper-masculine identities, Hickey (2008) highlighted “the propensity for members of male sporting cliques to engage in practices of bullying, shaming, violating and excluding” (p. 148). For some boys, the adoption of a ‘group mentality’ potentially forged from the collective bond they can develop through sport (Hickey, 2008) provides a sense of individual anonymity and consequently a lack of responsibility for individual actions, and this has “enormous potential to become abusive” (Hickey, 2008, p. 155). Issues associated with PE and sport in terms of their maintenance of a hegemonic privilege at the expense of marginalised others has been well documented (Dowling Næss, 2001; Hickey & Fitzclarence, 1999; Light & Kirk, 2000; Pringle, 2008). This substantial body of literature raises “concern about the codes of unity, entitlement and privilege that can be forged among groups of boys whose identities are strongly aligned with sporting forms of hyper-masculinity” (Hickey, 2008, p. 148), particularly as they act to marginalise other masculinities and femininities. Read together with the opening narratives presented here, I suggest that there is something unique or different about working in contexts where boys’ physicality is centralised and this has particular implications for a PE teacher’s professional work, particularly a female PE teacher.

Although sensationalised in the above narratives, factors that potentially impact on professional work and professional identity construction in contexts where females may be (self) positioned as ‘other’, deserve consideration. As argued elsewhere, “to be a professional is to be a person who must do certain, quite specific work on oneself so that one can be considered a particular kind of person – in this case a competent PE teacher” (Hickey & Mooney, 2007, p. 12). This ‘work’ signposts that ongoing processes mediated by the institutional and cultural discursive practices and power relations of particular contexts are undertaken by individuals to establish a coherent stable identity, a process known in poststructural terms as ‘subjection’ (Markula, 2003). Although I acknowledge the interrelationship between the terms
‘identity’ and ‘subjectivity’, I consider them as distinct concepts. As employed in this thesis, *subjectivity* refers to the processes undertaken within socially and historically contingent contexts mediated by discourse-power relations to form particular ‘subjects’, and given they occur across time and spaces can be fluid and multiple. Here, I employ *identity* to refer to the performance aspects of subjectivity – of a particular gender, class, ethnicity or profession, such as a female physical educator (Gard, 2006). To more fully understand the contributions and capacities of female PE teachers (and their pedagogies) in an all-boys’ school context, analyses of the localised social and political environments in which professional teaching identities are forged are warranted. Professional identities and “the meaning of gender is negotiated in everyday interactions, however…is permeated by cultural norms” (Priola, 2007, p. 23), implicating the culture of an all-boys’ school as significant in these processes. As such, I employ the term ‘professional identity’ to describe teacher performances that convey aspects of their subjectivity as they relate to the professional role in which they are engaged.

This thesis interrogates the significance of ‘context’ for two female PE teachers as they make decisions about what constitutes effective PE pedagogy in all-boys’ settings. Further, it investigates how they construct their professional identities as ‘female’ teachers in these spaces and it examines how students respond to them and their practices. Drawing on prominent Australian researchers in boys’ education to proffer the relationship between gender and pedagogical work, it is suggested:

some boys do experience forms of oppression, albeit not as boys but as particular kinds of marginalised boys, and that recognises the importance of challenging dominant constructions of masculinities for girls and female teachers. We argue…that in challenging such constructions of gender, pedagogy matters (Lingard, Martino, & Mills, 2009, p. 25).

### 1.2 Contextualising the research

Embedded in the broader tenets of gender equity, this research positions the wider school context as central in the contestation and struggle for professional identities that ‘work’ for female teachers in all-boys’ schooling. Of course, these teachers do
not enter such contexts without personal theories of ‘what will work’ but rather, have rich personal histories and biographies that will inform their practice (Rich, 2004). Subscribing to the notion of gender as a social construction, these teachers will draw on their lived experiences, both within and outside of the (all-boys) school context, to frame and implement successful teaching identities and practice. After Connelly and Clandinin (1999), to interrogate teacher’s pedagogical practice, I came to appreciate that “knowledge was both formed and expressed in context” (p. 2). Consistent with the findings of these authors, my conversations with the study’s participants around teachers’ knowledge and pedagogical practice, were often integrated with conversations of identity. Like Connelly and Clandinin, I became attuned to teachers questioning, “Who am I in my story of teaching?”; “Who am I in my place in the school?” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p. 3) and by extension, “How does this shape my professional practice as a female PE teacher”?

The context for this research was a Catholic boys’ school, located in a large regional centre in the state of Victoria, Australia. Amidst a backdrop of boys’ supposed underachievement and an educational system charged on occasion with ‘failing boys’, particularly due to the claimed ‘feminisation of teaching’ (Hoff Sommers, 2000), this school was selected for its potential to yield rich insights into how participants constructed ideas around effective PE pedagogy for boys. As Lingard, Martino and Mills (2009) explain, often boys’ schools are “heralded as leaders in boys’ education” (p. 100), yet relatively little is known about how the culture of these schools are implicated in teacher knowledge, identities and pedagogical practice.

1.2.1 Introducing the socio-political context of boys’ education

The global gender policy debate over the last sixty years has significantly vacillated between prioritising issues of educational and social practice that appear to privilege one gender over another (Lingard, et al., 2009). With the rise of the first and second waves of feminism, opportunities for women and girls have been significantly increased. However, as Kimmel, Hearn and Connell (2005) explain, “following the world conferences on women that began in 1975, there has been an increasing global debate on the implications of gender issues for men” (p. 2). Whilst some social commentators position the opposing priorities of many gender advocates within a
‘competing victim syndrome’ (Cox, 1995 cited in Keddie & Mills, 2007, p. 2), others have welcomed a consideration of the interests of both genders. As Mills and Lingard (1997) remind us, in education circles, “prior to this debate ‘gender and education’ meant girls and education” (p. 280).

Globally, social concerns about boys have attracted much attention and, “the late 1980s and 1990s saw rising media interest and public debate about boys and men” (Kimmel, et al., 2005, p. 6). Social problems such as unemployment, violence, harassment, family dissolution, educational failure and poor physical and mental health were often drivers of social and moral panics about contemporary masculinities in these countries (Kimmel, et al., 2005). Further, at the localised level, differing perspectives about the impact of changes to masculine identities have ranged from interpretations of how men relate to the changing position of women in Scandinavia; to the specific challenges mounted against the “salaryman model of middle-class masculinity” in Japan (see, for example, Kimmel, et al., 2005, p. 6). At the other end of the economic continuum, “in most of the developing world, these debates have not emerged, or have emerged only intermittently. In the context of mass poverty, the problems of economic and social development have had priority” (Kimmel, et al., 2005, p. 6). In Australia, not unlike the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Canada, media and government fuelled social panics about the supposed underachievement of boys have perhaps been mostly emphasised in debates about the education of boys (Lingard & Douglas, 1999).

Whilst the specificities of the wider socio-political landscape of teachers’ work will be taken up in Chapters 2 and 3, it is worth noting here that changes to the “gendered division of power … [and] labour, emotional/sexual relations (cathexis) and symbolic politics relating to gender” (Lingard, et al., 2009, p. 15) have significantly altered what Connell (2002) has termed the ‘gender order’. These changes in the way masculinity, femininity and the gender order are thought about and understood on global and national scales, has prompted greater analysis of the ‘gender regimes’ (Connell, 2002) of societal institutions. Here, after Connell and others, I understand gender regimes as the “ways in which gender relationships are organised within an institution such as a school” (Keddie & Mills, 2007, p. 181).
Acknowledging the alignment between policy debate and educational research (Kimmel, et al., 2005), commencing through the early to mid-1990s was what Weaver-Hightower (2003a) has termed the “boy turn”. Fuelled by “media furore, parental pressure, practitioner efforts, policy attention, and a great deal of research” (Weaver-Hightower, 2003a, p. 472), the current state of boys’ education has received much attention. Sparked by the alleged underachievement of boys academically and an overrepresentation of boys in the courts, hospitals and morgues (Hartman, 1999), the “boy turn” represents a paradigmatic shift in the theorising about boys’ education. Weaver-Hightower reminds us that this paradigmatic shift is not unlike “the ‘social turn’ in literacy documented by Gee, 2000, and the ‘interpretive turn’ discussed by Geertz, 1983” (Weaver-Hightower, 2003a, p. 472). On the one hand the “boy turn” describes an unwelcome “turn” towards the interests of boys as it has directed attention away from the interests of girls. Conversely, others such as members of the men’s rights movement and antifeminists and have seized the opportunity to advocate that finally boys are “having a “turn”, a share of research and policy attention” (Weaver-Hightower, 2003a, p. 472). Much of this research has been categorised by Weaver-Hightower (2003b) as popular-rhetoric, theoretically-orientated, practice-orientated and feminist/profeminist literature (see Chapter 2 for a more detailed discussion).

Weaver-Hightower describes popular-rhetoric literature as having “its roots primarily in pop psychology or media-driven moral panic” (2003a, p. 473). He explains that much of this work appears in commonly available sources such as newspapers, bookshops and magazines. According to Weaver-Hightower this literature could be “construed as the source of the boys’ turn because that literature offers the loudest voices and the most visible headlines” (p. 473; original emphasis). As proponents of much of the ‘poor boys’ (Mills & Lingard, 1997) and ‘boys as victims’ discourse (Epstein, 1997), a number of authors have published what Mills (2003) has termed ‘backlash blockbusters’: for example, Biddulph (1997) in Australia; Bly (1991), Pollack (1999) and Hoff Sommers (2000) in the United States; and Kindlon and Thompson (1999) in the United Kingdom. After Mills (2003), it is important to avoid categorising these authors as a unitary group, especially given the various aspects of the boys’ underachievement argument taken up by each. Perhaps common to literature characterised by Weaver-Hightower as ‘popular-rhetoric’ in nature are claims that the current state of boys’ education is a result of feminism going too far,
or more specifically that “feminism has served to undermine the reliability of privileges accruing to heterosexual men simply on the basis of their manhood” (Mills & Lingard, 1997, p. 284). According to Lingard, it was the intense lobbying of this group in the absence of any formal policy relating to boys’ education that resulted in media constructions afforded “the status of *de facto* policy” (2003, p. 37; original emphasis), and in response the Australian Government launched a parliamentary inquiry into the current state of boys’ education.

Initiated by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training, the *Boys: Getting it Right* (2002) report was produced. Citing, amongst other things, a lack of boy-friendly curriculum and pedagogies, the ‘feminisation’ of the teaching profession and a lack of male role models as significant factors in the supposed under-achievement of boys, this report incited strategies that focussed on “implementing structural change in systems and schools” (Lingard, et al., 2009, p. 2). Perhaps most prominent were calls for “more male teachers, single sex classes and boy-friendly schooling practices” (Lingard, et al., 2009, p. 2). There was extensive critique levelled at this report (Karlsson, 2007; Mills, 2003), particularly for its treatment of boys as a unitary category. With these critics, I share concerns over rhetoric claiming that boys “…are suffering because they are being taught by women and not men [because this] devalues the major contributions that female teachers…are having in the lives of boys” (Lingard, et al., 2009, p. 138). The critics of this report in response argue that “factors such as school culture, peer group, cultural and socio-economic background and teachers’ knowledge, values and pedagogical practices all have a part to play in influencing the social and educational outcomes for boys and girls in schools” (Lingard, et al., 2009, p. 91). Whilst the intricacies of this debate will be explored in more detail in Chapter 2, on the basis of evidence presented here, it appears that “the truth about the current state of boys’ education is a contested truth” (Lingard, et al., 2009, p. 85).

Perhaps one area where a consensus has been reached in academic responses to the boys’ agenda has been in calls for a closer examination of how gender constructions impact educational achievement. Although discussed in more detail in Chapter 2, this research rejects an essentialist notion of gender. Following O’Donovan’s (2006) critique of current gender education policy, I concur that “totalizing categories of identity…can be read as a meta-narrative that does not account for the complex,
lived reality of gender in Australian schools” (p. 476). Rather, by acknowledging
gendered identities as fluid and multiple and constructed within the available ‘social
and discursive fields’ (Mills & Lingard, 1997, p. 280), it is possible to understand the
(re)construction of masculinities and femininities as “created and maintained by
schools, texts, interactions, and larger political and economic processes” (Weaver-
Hightower, 2003b, p. 414). So then, one key intention of this research is to
interrogate how boys’ schools are implicated in encouraging particular constructions
of masculinity and, following James (1999) to ask: What role do teachers and their
pedagogies play in this process?

According to Weaver-Hightower (2003b) “schooling remains a crucial component to
the mollification of gendered inequalities” (p. 418), and others have contended that
schools are “masculinity making devices” (Haywood & Mac an Ghaill, 1996, p. 59).
Research identifies that students construct particular curriculum areas as gendered in
nature, for example English as synonymous with femininity (Martino & Mellor,
1995), and manual arts and sport as particularly masculine curriculum areas (Keddie
& Mills, 2007). Further, Connell (2004) describes particular areas of school life such
as boys’ subjects, school sport and the discipline system as “masculinity vortices” (p.
7). An extensive body of literature interrogates the constraining elements of
hegemonic masculinity practices in education for both boys’ and girls’ learning
(Francis, 2006; Keddie, 2006; Keddie & Mills, 2007; Kenway, 1997; Lingard, et al.,
2009; Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2005; Mills & Lingard, 1997). Yet despite this
large body of work, Weaver-Hightower suggests that we still lack a nuanced
understanding of ways to “interrupt disruptive or limiting masculinities where they
occur” (p. 412). Of significance to this research, sport and PE have been strongly
charged as school sites where destructive versions of masculinity are often cultivated
(Connell, 2008; Hickey, 2008; Pringle, 2008). As argued in the literature, attention
needs to be directed towards practices in schools that privilege this ‘masculinity
making’ and celebrate sporting versions of hegemonic masculinity uncritically
(Hickey & Fitzclarence, 1999). For, as Weaver-Hightower argues, if schools are
incriminated in the production of “destructive and disruptive masculinities, then they
also should be able to produce more egalitarian forms” (p. 418), and teachers have a
critical role to play in this.
1.2.2 The climate of boys’ physical education

As a curriculum area PE is most often located within a school department that usually combines subject areas with similar objectives, albeit often very different content. In Australia, in the absence of a national curriculum, this coupling of subject areas usually falls under the governance of State directed policy and legislation in government schools, the auspices of the State-based Catholic Education Office for Catholic schools and the independent governing boards in autarchical schools. Needless to say, curriculum groupings differ somewhat in constitution and composition depending on the socio-political environment in which they exist and the name allocated to the learning area often acts to transmit a “particular rationale for the learning area and to anticipate what content will be deemed legitimate and accorded status in the curriculum” (Penney, 2010, p. 9). The actual nomenclature used to describe this learning area has been greatly contested historically (Penney, 2010), and as a result the ‘naming’ of this learning area varies from State to State and across schools in Australia. In the context for this research, namely a Victorian Catholic Boys’ school, the Health and Physical Education (HPE) department assumes management of the areas of Health, PE, Sport, and Outdoor Education.

Despite being housed in the same key learning area (KLA), the philosophical underpinnings of individual subject areas are distinctly articulated, yet it is not uncommon for faculty members who are usually PE trained to teach across many of these sub-disciplines. Perhaps one exception here is that of Outdoor Education, yet on occasions PE teachers are still charged with the responsibility of developing and implementing outdoor education experiences. The subject area for this research has been limited to that of PE, yet considering the interdependent and relational capacity of both sport and PE in the (re) construction of masculine identities (Connell, 2008; Hickey, 2008) both are considered here.

As Jenkinson and Benson (2009) report despite being closely related, PE and sport education “do not share the same goal or serve the same individuals” (p. 366). Siedentop (1994) describes the intent of sport education as developing enthusiastic andcompetently skilled sportspeople, extrapolated by Bailey (2006) to mean skilled across a variety of activities and processes, including social relationships with “presumed physical, psychological and sociological outcomes” (p. 397). On the
other hand, Bailey (2006) explains that PE is far more concerned with physical development so as to build student confidence and competence in a range of physical activities. Whilst it is acknowledged that understandings of the distinctive contribution PE can make to an individual’s education within the physical domain have changed historically from an “initial health-related rationale in the first half of the twentieth century to more performance-related considerations…to concerns about the health impact of sedentary behaviours more recently” (Bailey et al., 2009, p. 6), much of contemporary PE curriculum orientates around multi-activity sport models, a practice heavily scrutinised for its marginalising effects (Azzarito & Solomon, 2005). Given the imminent development of a national curriculum in Australia many of these philosophical underpinnings will be again questioned and contested (Penney, 2010). Writing on the future of PE, Kirk (2010b) predicts that history is unlikely to repeat itself and instead signposts three possible futures – ‘more of the same’, ‘radical reform’ or ‘extinction’ (p. 121).

Currently, however, in Victorian government schools a mandated policy of 100 minutes of PE and 100 minutes of sport education per week for compulsory schooling exists, yet many schools are not compliant with this mandate (Jenkinson & Benson, 2009). In their study of Victorian government secondary schools, Jenkinson and Benson (2009) report that between 23 and 33 percent of schools offer classes in PE that comply with the mandate, but that only between 2 and 3 percent of schools adhered to the sport education policy. Whilst Catholic Boys’ schools are not mandated to adhere to this policy, they often defer to governmental policies as best practice exemplars. In the school where this research was conducted, PE and sport was offered in excess of the mandate with 150 minutes of HPE and 120 minutes of sport education. In different contexts, sport education may vary in the way it is taken up (Tinning, 2010). In some schools it may be adopted as a ‘curriculum brand’ embedded within the PE curriculum, whereas in other settings (such as this boys’ school) it can take the form of a weekly afternoon organised competition. The provision of sport in boys’ schools is hardly surprising given the socio-political impetus for them to adopt more ‘boy-friendly’ learning opportunities, and as Hickey (2008) describes the “channelling of (excess) male energy through physical activity has long been seen as a virtue of the presence of PE and sport in the school curriculum” (p. 148). Despite their popular existence in boys’ schools, Hickey (2008) revealed the potential that physical spaces (such as PE and sport) can have for
acts of serious abuse and oppression. Moreover, the perpetrators of these acts are often strongly linked with hyper-masculine sporting identities (Dowling Næss, 2001; Hickey, 2008; Martino, 1999, 2000b; Messner & Sabo, 1990), suggesting that the proliferation of more PE and sport in boys’ schools should be adopted critically (Hickey, 2008).

Parker (1996), drawing on the work of Connell (1995), explored relationships between sport and masculinity in PE settings. He claims that PE provides physical spaces for masculinity to be acted out, for example waiting for the class to start, in the change-rooms and at times throughout the lesson when the teacher is otherwise occupied (Parker, 1996) and that this contributed to hierarchical relations between students. Hickey (2010) through his discussion of masculine sporting identities, explains that “regardless of whether they are inclined or disinclined towards sport, most young males can expect to have their identity measured off against the culturally dominant forms of sporting masculinity” (p. 118). In this literature, Hickey appeals to schools to recognise the substantial role that they play in supporting hypermasculine cultures and identities, and points to the potential capacity of PE and sport teachers, as those who often directly oversee these identity-shaping experiences, to “play an active role in monitoring the practices and sensibilities that are formed around hypermasculine sporting discourses” (2010, p. 118).

1.3 The purpose and significance of the research

What I wanted to know was how the subject constituted himself (sic), in such and such a determined form, as a mad subject or as a normal subject, through a certain number of practices which were games of truth, applications of power, etc. (Foucault, 1987, p. 121).

After Smyth and Shacklock (1998) this study intends to develop a “conversation between the macro-forces shaping teachers’ work and the specific micro-forces as lived and experienced” (p. 6) by female PE teachers as they enact pedagogical practices in an all-boys’ setting. The important role that pedagogies can play in the construction of dominant gender practices in boys’ education generally has been well established (Keddie & Mills, 2007; Lingard, et al., 2009), yet relatively little research
has focussed specifically on boys’ PE. Moreover, little work has mapped the contributions and contestations surrounding the work of female teachers in this context and as Keddie and Mills (2007) contend, some female teachers’ work can be instrumental in promoting gender equity and “thus provides a strong counter to the claims that boys respond better to male teachers” (p. 145).

It has been argued that uncapped and uncritical acceptance of dominant forms of masculinity in particular educational practices like PE and sport, could be responsible for rendering far from positive experiences for some students, particularly for marginalised and subordinated masculinities (Connell, 1993; Connell, 2008; Hickey, 2008). After Keddie (2001) the question here is, what role do teachers play, either consciously or subconsciously, in reinforcing dualistic notions of gender and how is this implicated in the reproduction of social inequality? Of particular relevance, Robinson (2000) explains how broader discourses of gender and power in educational institutions “authorise ‘maleness’ and work to delegitimize” (Keddie & Mills, 2007, p. 184) the authority, and perhaps the effectiveness, of female teachers. Further, Keddie and Mills (2007) argue, “where parents and students (and indeed other teachers) associate legitimate authority with the hegemonic masculine body and dominant masculine characteristics, and conversely, illegitimacy with the female body and femininity, the professionalism of female teachers is frequently undermined” (p. 185). Therefore, it is the intent of this research to go some of the way to bridging current understandings of what Weaver-Hightower (2003a) terms the theoretically orientated and the practice-orientated literature in boys’ education to do more than just provide a ‘tips for teachers’ approach (Lingard, Mills, & Hayes, 2000). It aims to interrogate how issues associated with gendered identities and subjectivities are embroiled with issues of professional identity and to map the impact this has on pedagogical practice in PE for both female teachers and students.

Bloomfield (2010) asserts that analyses of educational contexts, particularly at the level of the classroom, are important. To reveal pedagogies and ways of being that seek to contest and disrupt essentialist constructions of gender, we need to understand “how discourses of education function to categorise and legitimate meaning, as well as identity formations…How do the ‘truths’ of teaching and the
teacher become imbedded and perpetuated through these discourses?” (Bloomfield, 2010, p. 228). Following the advice of Rich (2004), the focus here is on the:

subtleties of social reproduction within and through educational practice in both the discursive and the embodied sense. More specifically…to explore the ways in which teachers draw on their own identities and experiences to make sense of gendered encounters and merge them with their developing pedagogies in ways which have a bearing on those they teach (pp. 216-217).

The significance of this research lies in interrogating how female PE teachers formulate and engage in pedagogical practices in all-boys’ PE classes and to question the effectiveness of these practices. Kirk (2010b) outlines issues associated with current pedagogical practices as potential deterrents for some students to physically active lifestyles and cites, among other things, the stranglehold that particular dominant pedagogical practices have had on the practice of PE for many decades. He claims that widespread societal changes in physical culture have posed real challenges in PE futures, especially if they continue to exacerbate disconnects between teaching agendas and student interests.

In terms of boys’ PE and sport, Hickey (2010) argues that understanding the “drivers behind particular meanings and actions” (p. 119) for teachers and students is key. He cites identity making, where individuals create and establish “a sense of self that is tied to specific cultures, communities and groups” (p. 119) as critical to this. Hickey points out that in order to help students “become aware that a responsible participation in sport and PE is about more than being able to run, throw, kick and catch, the pressure is on to produce learning frameworks that cultivate a measure of social and ethical responsibility” (2010, p. 119). To that end, he argues that if “we are more attuned to both the benefits and pitfalls of particular identity positions then we will be better placed to influence the practical environment” (Hickey, 2010, p. 119). Against this backdrop, the key research questions guiding this study are:

1. Which discourses appear to dominate the culture of an all boys’ school and what effects do they appear to have on gendered subjectivities?
2. Which pedagogical approaches do female PE teachers deem to be appropriate in teaching boys’ PE and how have they constructed this understanding?
3. How do students receive and interpret their experiences in PE with a female teacher?
4. How do female PE teachers mediate competing tensions of gendered identity in an all-boys’ school?

1.4 Positioning the research: a theoretical and methodological introduction

Whilst research that investigates the contributions of female physical educators in all-boys’ school appears indubitably feminist in intent, core aspects of critical feminist perspectives that act to identify and emancipate marginalised femininities did not really resonate with the aims of this study. There are a range of factors that exist within the socio-cultural make-up of a boys’ school that act to limit the uptake of aspects of the critical tradition and as others argue, mere enlightenment and empowerment does not always invariably lead to emancipation (Hickey, 2001). To examine how individuals negotiate and mediate potential sources of tension as they go about developing a professional identity and crafting pedagogical practices, it appeared that a methodological approach that facilitated an analysis of the ‘work’ that individuals did on themselves would prove more insightful.

So, in an effort to acknowledge and sift through the ambivalence of the complex array of identity positions prevalent in the pedagogical exchanges in boys’ PE, I draw on the tenets of feminist poststructuralism, and in particular the work of Michel Foucault as core interpretive tools. As Weedon (1997) points out, to analyse patriarchal structures of society and our positions within them, we require:

a theory which can address forms of social organization and the social meaning and values which guarantee or contest them. Yet it must also be able to theorize individual consciousness. We need a theory of the relation between language, subjectivity, social organization and power. We need to understand why women tolerate social relations which subordinate their interests to those of men and the mechanisms whereby women and men adopt particular discursive positions as representative of their interests. This is the agenda which a feminist poststructuralism might consider (p. 12).

This study adopts the principles of feminist poststructuralism as a theoretical lens to facilitate a reading of meanings that are invariably layered and that possess the potential for contradiction (Hickey, 2010). As Law (2004) holds, many modes of
academic inquiry don’t really catch a full textual reading. In fact, he suggests the “pains and pleasures, hopes and horrors, intuitions and apprehensions … things that slip and slide, or appear and disappear, change shape or don’t have much form at all, unpredictabilities” (p. 2) are examples of the phenomena that are difficult to track through rigid modes of inquiry. Further, he suggests that if much of the world is “vague, diffuse or unspecific, slippery, emotional, ephemeral, elusive or indistinct … or doesn’t really have much of a pattern at all” (Law, 2004, p. 2), then frameworks that lend themselves to troubling taken-for-granted ways of being hold potential to yield rich insights into what is not being captured as much as what is.

In considering how female teachers made decisions about pedagogy in boys’ PE, I was particularly concerned with the “personal, intimate and historically forged elements of biography and emotion…interacting with…institutional structures and practices that serve to fashion and legitimate and thus to exert control over both subjectivities and practices within teaching” (Bloomfield, 2010, p. 222). To this end, the study finds a warrant to examine the impact gendered identities have on the practices of female PE teachers and their students in an all-boys’ school through the work of Foucault as a way of seeing “which identities are constantly shaped and reshaped, made and remade, presented and represented” (Aitchison, 2007, p. 1) and to reveal how specific, localised and historical contexts influence this process.

Whilst many poststructuralist theorists could be helpful here, like McCuaig (2007), Foucault’s thinking around discourse-power relations as it endeavours to reveal “possibilities for us to sort out how we might see, understand and in turn, negotiate our subjectivity and the power relations in our world” (Besley & Peters, 2007, p. 20) was enlightening. In particular, Foucault’s later work, his technologies of the self, provides some interesting insights into how these female teachers negotiate and reconcile their professional self in a boys’ school. These lenses allow for an exploration of teacher beliefs and philosophies about what is important in the teaching of boys’ PE and to capture issues associated with masculinity and gender relations in the PE classroom, the broader school structure and beyond. Much of the existing literature on how teachers have formed ideas around effective pedagogical practice has been informed from sociological perspectives and in particular that of occupational socialisation theory pioneered through the work of Lortie (1975), and applied to the PE setting by others (Curtner-Smith, 1997; Curtner-Smith, Hastie, &
In keeping with the sociological interests of this study, interpretations of teacher socialisation are also considered to enrich my theorising on teacher’s work. A more detailed discussion, as well as an acknowledgement of the uneasy alignment of these perspectives and how I have attempted to reconcile these differences is outlined in Chapter 4.

Methodologically the study adopts a case study approach to understand the complexity of the lived experience of particular individuals in their socio-political contexts (Simons, 2009) namely, in PE, in a Catholic boys’ school. The relevance of a case study approach to educational research has been well documented (Merriam, 1998; Simons, 2009; Stake, 1995, 2006, 2010; Yin, 2009). While some critique has been levelled at the use of case study research (see Chapter 5), its potential to allow researchers to “retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events” (Yin, 2009, p. 4) especially when interrogating the complexity of classroom interactions, is sound justification for its adoption. In deciding what constitutes the ‘bounded system’ (Simons, 2009), or more specifically what is, or what is not, the case in this research is challenging because much of what occurs in the classroom is inextricably linked to wider social discourses. Acknowledging this, the boundaries for the case have been delimited to one school site, with one specific female PE teacher and one of her classes, and a female PE teacher who is also the Head of Department (HPE), as the key focus of this interrogation.

Perspectives on how female teachers construct effective pedagogies for boys’ PE are collected through semi-structured interviews with the female physical educators over a six month period. In working closely with one teacher through video-stimulated reflection techniques (Byra & Karp, 2000), observations of specific pedagogical practices as employed by the teacher in her PE classes and the reasons underpinning her practice were captured across five interviews. Further, data were collected through individual and group interviews with 10 students about their experiences in PE with a female teacher. The female Head of Department (HPE) participated in two 60-minute interviews across the semester and to examine the significance of ‘context’ to the development of professional identities and practice, data were collected from a number of key informants from the school. These key informants included the Principal, two Deputy Principals, the Year 12 Coordinator and other
teachers from the HPE department (as detailed in Chapter 5). Using the theoretical tools discussed above, the data are fashioned into thematic stories and presented in Chapters 6 and 7.

1.5 Overview of the thesis

This chapter has overviewed the thesis that the pedagogical practices of female PE teachers in boys’ schools are inextricably linked to professional identities forged within the social, cultural and political discursive fields of the contexts in which they teach and live. The following outlines the forthcoming chapters as they specifically contribute to the thesis and the key concepts explored in each section are summarised in the concluding ‘reflective notes’ of each chapter.

Recognising that subject positions are shaped through interactions within historically contingent discursive fields, to explore how one’s lived experiences of ‘context’ shape teacher’s professional work, the relevant literature has been reviewed in two parts (Chapters 2 & 3). The first chapter addresses contributions to the theorising of gendered identities and the formation of subjects as they relate to boys’ education. The subsequent chapter reviews what is known about the differing contexts in which PE teachers enact their professional work. To that end, Chapter 2 examines major literary contributions to the field of boys’ education, commencing initially with some commentary on how gender is being understood in this study. Tracing diversity in gender theorising, the discussion presents a poststructural perspective of masculinity and femininity to consider how gendered subjectivities might be taken up. Additionally, major contributions exploring the contexts of teachers work are offered with a particular emphasis on the ways in which gender issues in education have been theorised and represented. This chapter also considers the historical, political and social factors that have shaped the current climate of boys’ education, and concludes with an account of the ways in which schools contribute to the construction and regulation of gendered subjectivities.

Chapter 3 examines the PE context in its broader discipline sense to outline its potential role in the construction and reproduction of gendered identities. Specifically, dominant discourses and contested truths about the purpose and intent of this curriculum area are critiqued to determine the impact underpinning ideologies
have on teacher’s pedagogical practices and student experiences of these practices. In discussing how ideas of effective pedagogical practice are formed, an analysis of the occupational socialisation literature is offered to explain how some of these deeply ingrained practices have been constituted and reproduced historically. Finally, the context of the PE classroom is explored through a review of the PE pedagogy literature to reveal possible inequities that can result from current practices and to map out potential spaces for productive change.

Chapter 4 works to reconcile the epistemological underpinnings of this research and provides discussion on the theoretical framework within which the study is located. Drawing on a feminist poststructuralist perspective and framed within the context of Foucauldian theorising, this chapter explores the many nuances that these perspectives offer in thinking about how female physical educators take up particular pedagogies and professional identities within the context of an all-boys’ school. Central to this discussion is a critical analysis of the concepts of discourse, power, language and subjectivity, together with an acknowledgement of particular critiques of poststructural theory and Foucauldian thinking to signpost how these lenses have been employed to inform data analysis and interpretations. This chapter also explores notions of textual authority and considers the ways in which my positioning within the study and relationships between researcher and researched have been addressed.

Chapter 5 discusses the methodological and procedural aspects of the research providing justification for the adoption of an analytical case study methodology and the principles that underpin this mode of inquiry as a key strategy in making sense of the social worlds my participants inhabit. The procedures adopted within this methodology are explained and an introduction to the case study school and study’s participants are offered. The second half of this chapter is dedicated to outlining the specific methods of inquiry and data collection techniques adopted, including site visits, classroom observations, document analysis and interview strategies – including application of a video-stimulated reflection approach to aid in conversations of pedagogy with one of the female PE teachers. Following this a discussion ensues of how the data is to be analysed and represented in the fashioning of four interrelated case stories (Polkinghorne, 1992 cited in Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) that each draw on various aspects of Foucault’s work to address the research
In Chapters 6 and 7 the data is represented through a discussion of the four interrelated case stories mentioned above. In particular, Chapter 6 focuses on the wider school context (discourse and practice) to outline the ways in which the dominant and pervasive discourses of hypermasculinity and heteronormativity are implicated in the construction and positioning of gendered subjectivities, and performance of particular identities, at St John’s College¹. In particular, this discussion outlines the specific intent by some members of the school administration to actively recruit female teachers to this school context as a strategy to disrupt the perceived ‘macho’ culture of this school environment. Further, through integration with the research literature, analyses focus on tensions that arose for the female participants as ‘front-line’ gender workers and reveals some strategies employed to mediate and negotiate these issues. The second half of Chapter 6 examines how dominant discourse-power relations actively shape understandings of ‘good’ pedagogy in all-boys’ PE settings and analyses consider the reasons that underpin a pervasive reliance on ‘masculine’ pedagogical approaches. In particular, this discussion explores the ways in which gender positioning within the classroom, both passively and actively on the part of the female participants, has implications for not only how these female teachers see themselves as ‘professionals’ in this context, but also for how these perceptions impact on the pedagogical approaches adopted.

In Chapter 7 I continue to examine the links between power, pedagogy and professional identities in the context of all-boys’ PE with particular intent to identify how multi-directional workings of power shape experiences for both teachers and students. In drawing on the work of Gore (1990, 1995, 1998) and Wright (1995, 2000b) this analysis focuses on the ways in which power relations are taken up, exercised and experienced at the micro-political level of the PE classroom. Through interactions with Gore’s pedagogy as text concept, selected pedagogical interactions are analysed to explore student responses to, and experiences of, particular pedagogical approaches. The remaining part of this chapter is dedicated to exploring how two female physical educators, one in the capacity of Head of

¹ Pseudonyms have been employed for anonymity
Department (HPE) and one as a teacher of Year 8 PE, negotiated tensions that arose for them as they went about establishing themselves as professionals in this context. In particular, through the use of Foucault’s *technologies of the self*, key moments as discussed by the participants were analysed to identify self-work undertaken in the shaping of different aspects of their professional subjectivities.

Finally, Chapter 8 draws together the study’s key contentions and, through an interaction with the research literature, considers the pedagogical possibilities and implications of the key research findings. It argues that coherent and stable professional identities for these two female physical educators were highly contingent upon the discourse-power relations permeating the social and cultural contexts in which they worked. Further, that the subjectivities taken up in this context, were somewhat mediated and judged against the ‘masculine’ standards that shaped and regulated the performance of professional identities in this context. Given the ongoing nature of the struggles associated with problematising gender identity in this context, it is appropriate that further research continues to identify and analyse the forms of knowledge and practice that make the issues, their implications, and their solutions knowable and manageable. The chapter draws the thesis to a close by suggesting that it is through this work that we can begin to identify and open up the opportunities that exist to legitimate counter hegemonic voices, and the modes of support needed to foster them.
Chapter 2 - Gender and Boys’ Education

“In short, when is gender “a difference that makes a difference”?”

(Maher & Ward, 2002, p. xvi)

The purpose of this chapter is to review key research that has shaped understandings of gender and education, particularly with respect to boys’ education. Commencing with a broad consideration of gender theorising and its application in education research, this chapter works towards exploring the nuances of arguments presented in the boys’ education literature to contextualise the micro-political environment of boys’ PE which will be taken up in more detail in Chapter 3. As Weaver-Hightower (2003a) cautions, “the art of reviewing research literature is always potentially problematic because each analysis constructs the reviewed field in certain political ways” (p. 472). This task is further complicated by the “slippery nature and difficult to delineate field of teachers’ work” (Acker, 1995b, p. 100) represented in research that draws on many paradigms, theoretical perspectives and disciplines such as sociology, psychology, history and philosophy, as well as interdisciplinary approaches.

The field of gender and education has grown considerably over the past few decades, particularly due to the endeavours of feminist and pro-feminist researchers, as evidenced by the inaugural edition of the journal Gender and Education in 1989. Committed to developing conversations about education with gender as the specific category of analysis, journal contributions are often multidisciplinary and seek to further extend knowledge, action and consciousness in the feminist tradition (Öhrn & Weiner, 2009). The prevalence of ‘gender’ research in PE and sport is also demonstrated with the key works of Sheila Scraton, Anne Flintoff and Jan Wright (Flintoff & Scraton, 2005; Flintoff & Scraton, 2006; Scraton, 1987, 1990; Scraton & Flintoff, 2002; Wright, 1995, 1996a, 1996b, 1997) as well as edited collections such as Penney’s (2002) Gender and Physical Education and more recently, Aitchison’s (2007) Gender and sport identities. In Australia alone, many academics have devoted significant career works to using feminist and pro-feminist perspectives to inform their analyses of aspects of PE and sport (examples include Gard, 2008;

As a starting point, this study acknowledges gender as a social construct, where meanings are made and re-made in social institutions such as education and sport. This chapter commences with some commentary about how gender has been theorised historically. The discussion then centres on a relational account of gender that works from the basic premise that gender, and more specifically masculinities and femininities, cannot be understood without relational reference to the other (Connell, 2000). Following this, literature relevant to the field of boys’ education is analysed, concluding with a consideration of the ways in which schools contribute to the (re)construction of gendered identities.

2.1 Gender theorising

The term ‘gender’ is widely contested and represented in the literature (Arnot & Mac an Ghaill, 2006), and as such it is difficult to ascribe, in absolute terms, a definitive explanation distilled from such varied perspectives. That said the work of Australian gender theorist and sociologist Raewyn Connell proves helpful. She suggests:

   gender is a key dimension of personal life, social relations and culture. In this dimension of our lives we face difficult practical issues about identity, social justice and even survival. But gender is also a topic on which there is an amazing amount of prejudice, ideology, myth, misinformation and outright falsehood (Connell, 2002, p. vii).

Connell (2002) explains that “a century and a half ago there was no theory of gender in the modern sense” (p. 115), yet in contemporary times there are so many offerings that “now, a major problem in understanding gender is to make sense of the multiple frameworks on offer” (p. 115). Whilst Connell attributes the “historical take-off point of contemporary gender research” (Connell, 2002, p. 7) to the political activism of the women’s liberation and gay liberation movements of the 1960’s and 1970’s, she explains that many historical explorations of gender have started from a presumed biological division between ‘male’ and ‘female’. Theoretically, ideas about gender “are created in varying historical circumstances, by people who have
different backgrounds, different places in the social order, different training and different tools” (2002, p. 115), and as such Connell suggests that there are four main waves in which Western gender theory evolved which are summarised herein.

### 2.1.1 Diversity in contributions to gender theorising

Mid-way through the nineteenth century, an era when religious discourses relating to gender were challenged for their “non-rational and moralistic” (Connell, 2002, p. 116) influences, the rise of the natural sciences occurred so that they became “the major frame of intellectual life” (Connell, 2002, p. 116). With this, Darwinism produced the notion that gender differences were attributable on the basis of biological differences (Connell, 2002). As suggested, even prior to social Darwinism’s popularity, issues relating to gender permeated the work of early philosophers, including Auguste Comte. Interpreting this work, Connell explains that “women were, in his view, an important social base for the coming utopian society – but only if they remained in their proper sphere as comforters and nurturers of men” (Connell, 2002, p. 117). Some of the earliest feminist theorising of women’s oppression conceived during this time is characterised in Mary Wollstonecraft’s ‘*A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*’ in 1792 and later, John Stuart Mill’s ‘*The subjection of Women*’ in 1869.

Early gender theorising tended to be categorical in nature, drawing on the key assumption that men and women were dichotomous (Connell, 2002). Connell summates that under the suffrage guise, approaches to gender theory at this time, viewed the “emancipation of women as a test of the ‘progress’ achieved by any society” (p. 116). In her critique of ‘categorical theory’, Connell suggests that the key issue with works grounded in biological essentialism is that they “treat women and men as pre-formed categories” (Connell, 2000, p. 18) which discounts the ways in which society influences the development of gendered identities.

The second most influential period on gender theorising occurred during the early twentieth century, where approaches during this era were characterised by a “decoding or deconstruction of gender accomplished by the new depth psychology” (Connell, 2002, p. 120). Inspired by the work of Freud and early followers such as Adler, psychoanalysis produced an understanding of gender as no longer a fixed
characteristic. As Connell suggests, this work “showed…that the gender divisions of adulthood were not fixed from the start of life. Rather, adult patterns were constructed in a conflict-ridden process of development over the life-course” (2002, p. 121) and this thinking popularised “the concept of ‘sex roles’ during the 1940’s and 1950’s” (Connell, 2002, p. 123). ‘Sex role’ theories tended to work to explain people’s social conduct by suggesting that the behaviours and attitudes they displayed were acts reflecting “conformity to cultural norms for the social positions they occupy” (Connell, 2002, p. 123).

In another contribution, Connell explains that the intellectual weakness of sex-role theory is well understood claiming “a theory based on ‘expectations’ or norms give no grasp on issues of power, violence, or material inequality. It misses the complexities within femininity and masculinity, and it offers very limited strategies of change” (Connell, 2000, p. 18). Simone de Beauvoir’s work mid-century, acted to challenge gender categories and gender domination simultaneously (Bowden & Mummery, 2009). With a refusal to take for granted the polarity of the masculine and feminine, de Beauvoir examined how “women were constituted as ‘other’ in the consciousness of men. She…explore[d] the variety of ways in which women could respond to this situation and constitute themselves – not escaping from gender, for that was impossible, but realizing gender differently” (Connell, 2002, p. 124).

It was work such as this that, coupled with the passion, enthusiasm and energy of young women involved in the “radical social movements of the 1960’s” (Connell, 2002, p. 125) that fuelled what is now commonly known as the Women’s liberation movement. Later iterations of this movement, known as ‘radical feminism’ which emerged in the 1970’s, viewed ‘the oppression of women as the root of all social inequality’ (Connell, 2002, p. 126). It was during this third wave of gender theorising that terms such as ‘patriarchy’ emerged and was used to name systems of male power, with the underpinning premise being that men would not act to reform a system in which they were privileged (Connell, 2002).

The fourth distinctive shift in gender theorising is most notable in the burgeoning academic world of gender research that occurred during the 1980’s (Risman, 2004). During this time, extensive research was conducted from feminist, or feminist-inspired standpoints across “almost every discipline of the humanities and social
sciences” (Connell, 2002, p. 129), and tended to focus on gender as a social structure (Risman, 2004). Social constructionist approaches to gender argued “that conceptualizations of gender are neither inherent nor cemented by socialization practices in early childhood. Rather, definitions of gender…are produced through interactions in cultural, political and social contexts” (Biklen & Pollard, 2002, p. 726). More recently, deconstructive approaches such as poststructuralism, work to de-stable the fixed and essentialist notions of gender, and as Connell explains, from this standpoint gender is viewed as “performative, bringing identities into existence through action, rather than expressive of some pre-existing reality” (Connell, 2002, p. 130). As others note:

poststructural work has challenged the idea that identities…are unified, but rather fragmentary and contradictory…work on any topic, including gender, always takes place within theoretical understandings of power, reflects struggles over meaning, and needs to be careful not to replace one regime of truth with another (Biklen & Pollard, 2002, p. 731).

Despite significant developments in gender theorising, known conventionally as ‘feminisms’ rather than as a single ‘feminism’ “in order to recognise diversity and disclaim privilege” (Connell, 2002, p. 132), modern gender work has been somewhat criticised as overly academic and remiss of any political urgency in terms of gender equality (Tong, 1998). As Connell (2002) explains “Women’s liberation activists…looked on with distrust, fearing that academic feminism would…separate itself from grassroots campaigns, and become unintelligible to working women” (p. 129). An analysis of how these various ‘gender theories’ have been taken up in educational debates are offered in subsequent sections of this chapter.

2.1.2 Relational accounts of gender

Connell (2000) explains that many contemporary gender theorists now subscribe to a relational account of gender to give “us a way of understanding the different dimensions or structures of gender, the relation between bodies and society, and the patterning or configuration of gender” (pp. 23-24). In this tenor, gender is not viewed categorically, but rather as a “way in which social practice is organised, whether in personal life, interpersonal interaction, or on the larger scale…so the relational approach is sometimes summarized by describing gender as a social structure” (Connell, 2000, p. 24). Connell goes on to describe practices or processes relevant to
the structure of gender as ‘gender configurations’, meaning that the actions people
use to either describe or display masculine or feminine social practices are in essence
deeds of ‘naming’ configurations of gender practice (2000, p. 28). Further, these
gender configurations are not isolated to individual acts rather, Connell explains the:

patterning of all these relations within an institution (such as a school) may be
called its *gender regime*. The overall patterning of gender regimes, together with
the gender patterning of culture and personal life, may be called the *gender order*
of a society (2000, p. 29; original emphasis).

Connell does add a caveat however, suggesting that in understanding gender in this
way, one should be mindful that both the gender regimes and gender orders of
particular institutions or societies are historically forged, and therefore likely to
change with time. Finally, she suggests that in considering gender as a way of
“structuring social practice in general” (Connell, 2000, p. 29) it will unequivocally
intersect with other social structures such as class, ethnicity and race. Interpreting
Connell’s work as it relates to boys’ education, Keddie and Mills (2007) explain that
the gender regime refers to the ways in which ‘gender relationships’ are established
within institutions like a school. They highlight that these relationships often reflect
the gender order of wider society but suggest that they “can be constructed in
opposition to those broader sets of politics” (Keddie & Mills, 2007, p. 182). Rich
(2004) explains gender can be considered as “a layered concept, a category of
individual identity but also symbolic constructions, and a dimension of social
relations and social organisation…Thus what becomes ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’
emerge as historical and cultural ‘social constructions’ subject to change and internal
contradictions” (p. 218).

2.2 ‘Multiple’ masculinities

Contributions to understanding gendered identities and subject positions have
undoubtedly been informed by the extensive history of feminist research, for as
others note, “the history of women’s struggles to change their lives is a long one”
(Bowden & Mummery, 2009, p. 1). Through their comprehensive collection of
seminal historical works that have informed and shaped feminist theory, Kolmar and
Bartkowski (2005) convey the extreme diversity of interests interrogated in the name
of ‘feminism’ over a 200-odd year period. As Swain (2005) points out, it has only been since the 1980s “that researchers have begun to focus on the multiple differences within each gender group” (p. 214; original emphasis).

Perhaps one of the most important contributions Connell has made to the theorising of gender, has been through her book *Masculinities* (1995, 2005), which in 2003, was voted by the Australian Sociological Association as “one of the ten most influential books in Australian sociology” (Connell, 2005, p. xiii). Conceived through research conducted in the late 1970’s analysing inequalities in education, Connell identified multiple patterns of masculinity and femininity among the adolescents who took part in this study (Connell, 2005). She points out that “to recognise more than one kind of masculinity is only a first step. We have to examine the relations between them” (Connell, 2005, p. 76). Connell describes how, in the current Western gender order, the practices and relations that contribute to the construction of the main patterns of masculinity are known as *hegemony, subordination, complicity and marginalisation* (Connell, 2005).

Hegemony, “derived from Antonio Gramsci’s analysis of class relations, refers to the cultural dynamic by which a group claims and sustains a leading position in social life” (Connell, 2005, p. 77). Accordingly, hegemonic masculinity is considered as a configuration of gender practice which “embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (Connell, 2005, p. 77). Reinforcing hegemonic masculinity as the embodiment of a ‘currently accepted strategy’ in historically contingent conditions, Connell explains “when conditions for the defence of patriarchy change, the bases for the dominance of a particular masculinity are eroded. New groups may challenge old solutions and construct a new hegemony” (Connell, 2005, p. 77).

If hegemony occupies a culturally significant and dominant position, then oppressive acts that subordinate other groups of males such as gay masculinities are also evident in masculinity relations. Connell explains, “oppression positions homosexual masculinities at the bottom of a gender hierarchy among men. Gayness, in patriarchal ideology, is the repository of whatever is symbolically expelled from hegemonic masculinity…it is easily assimilated to femininity” (Connell, 2005, p.
Acknowledging that even heterosexual men and boys can be subordinated by hegemonic practices, Connell points to the use of terms such as “wimp…nerd…sissy…dweeb, geek” (Connell, 2005, p. 79) as powerful subordination tools, highlighting that through this use of language “the symbolic blurring with femininity is obvious” (p. 79).

Speaking of complicity, Connell (2005) outlines that not all men practise hegemonic masculinity, stating that the overall number is most likely quite small. Instead, she argues the “majority of men gain from its hegemony, since they benefit from the patriarchal dividend, the advantage men in general gain from the overall subordination of women” (Connell, 2005, p. 79). She suggests that we need a way of thinking about the large number of men who have a connection with the hegemonic privilege, but who do not necessarily embody it. In this sense, complicit masculinities can be seen to be privileged by a patriarchal dividend, without necessarily advancing the cause, as in the case of ‘front-line troops’ (Connell, 2005).

Marginalisation refers to the, “relations between the masculinities in dominant and subordinated classes…[and] is always relative to the authorization of the hegemonic masculinity of the dominant group” (Connell, 2005, pp. 80-81). Whilst the practices of hegemony, subordination, complicity and marginalisation were conceived to describe the power relations that patterned gender relations amongst groups of males, Connell cautions these terms “name not fixed character types but configurations of practice generated in particular situations in a changing structure of relationships” (Connell, 2005) meaning that they can, and do, change over time.

Notwithstanding the critique levelled against Connell’s offerings on masculinity, particularly with respect to hegemonic masculinity (Demetriou, 2001; Moller, 2007) it’s wide uptake in the sociology of gender research demonstrates its’ richness for theorising gender in education. Key critiques, especially from poststructural perspectives, suggest that the concept of hegemonic masculinity fails to highlight the role that discourse-power relations can have on identity formation (Demetriou, 2001). In response Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) reiterate that “masculinities are configurations of practice that are accomplished in social action, and therefore, can differ according to the gender relations in a particular social setting” (p. 836). Elsewhere, Connell (2005) is conciliatory in her viewpoint that it is timely to
reconsider the notion of hegemonic masculinity, but reinforces, “in my view we still require a way of theorizing gender power relations among men, and understanding the effectiveness of masculinities in the legitimation of the gender order” (Connell, 2005, p. xviii).

Taking up this thinking in relation to multiple ‘femininities’, Schippers (2007) claims that a “compelling and empirically useful conceptualization of hegemonic femininity and multiple, hierarchical femininities as central to male dominant gender relations has not yet been developed” (p. 85; original emphasis). Despite the inherent assumption that such a framework is necessary, I would argue that later contributions by Dillabough (2009) and Rasmussen (2009) do much to extend our thinking in relation to multiple femininities beyond the constraints of a hierarchical framework.

2.3 Gender issues in the historical, social and political context of education

As discussed above, gender research as it applies to education “has a pre-history” (Connell, 2000, p. 7) dating back to the beginning of the 20th century. Cursory analyses of the multitude of literature claiming to interrogate gender issues in education can crudely suggest that much of the writings dominating the field’s historical landscape appear to reflect the broader social and political interests of their times. Gender issues have been portrayed in the literature in a see-sawing fashion – from girls being cast as disadvantaged as a result of the liberal-progressive actions of first and second wave feminists to boys, more recently, being positioned as the ‘new disadvantaged’ (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training, 2002). This competing victim syndrome has promoted the interests of those politically positioned as in drastic need of policy attention, whilst simultaneously silencing the issues and concerns of the other (Lingard, et al., 2009). What confounds me as a relative newcomer to the field of gender and education research is the apparent impossibility to politically serve the interests and concerns of both genders at the same time.

Despite these historical and politically motivated trends in education research, significant works have been undertaken in the sociologically-inspired tradition that
have questioned issues associated with power, identity, culture and concerns over boys’ and girls’ schooling (Arnot & Mac an Ghaill, 2006). A focus on social structure and social relations has worked to raise consciousness about who is privileged, under which conditions and in which situations, and, at whose expense (Connell, 2002; Dillabough, 2006). Much of this work acknowledges that classrooms and schools are not insulated environments and that “what goes on inside schools is greatly influenced by what occurs outside of schools…students…teachers and administrators…bring into the school building all sorts of cultural assumptions, social influences and contextual dynamics” (Liston & Zeichner, in Maher & Ward, 2002, p. ix). In the sections below I map the various ways in which the gender debate has been taken up in educational research and discuss the implications this has had for teachers’ work.

2.3.1 An overview of gender research in education

In perhaps one of the most recent works that attempts to compile the major theoretical ideas of gender research in education, Arnot and Mac an Ghaill (2006) demonstrate the ‘slippery’ nature of gender and education work. Through their collection, they “show how complex, fluid masculinities and femininities are negotiated in relation to sexuality, ethnicity and new transitions to work and citizenship” (p. i). In her synopsis of the historical patterning of gender and education research, Dillabough explains:

| gender research in education has moved away from its initial concern with gender socialisation patterns, the reproduction of gender inequality in schools and gender equity reforms towards an engagement with social and cultural theory and its analysis of the contested nature of gender identities in schools (Dillabough, 2006, p. 17). |

Early 20th century gender work with its roots in psychoanalysis explored how personality “is constructed via conflict-ridden processes of development in which the gender dynamics of families are central” (Lewes, 1988 cited in Connell, 2000, p. 7). This work was regarded with suspicion by social scientists for its intrinsic focus, and by the 1930s the concept of social roles emerged in anthropology. In turn, this work gave rise to the theorising of ‘sex roles’ (Connell, 2000) grounded in what Dillabough (2006) terms reproduction theory. According to Connell, sex roles “were
understood as patterns of social expectation, norms for behaviour of men and women, which were transmitted to youth in a process of ‘socialisation’” (Connell, 2000, p. 7).

Much of this work positioned individuals as passive victims of social structures, like education, fuelling feminist movements to agitate for a wide range of previously marginalised issues to be recognised in the political agenda (Weedon, 1999), including aspects of girls’ education. In much of the western world equal opportunities were legislated in response to the liberal feminist agenda that assumed “that once girls experienced the same performance expectations and instructions as boys” (Nilges, 1998, p. 173) improvements would follow. Legislation such as Title IX in the United States, Anti-discrimination Acts in the United Kingdom and Australia and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, mandated equal opportunities for women in education (alongside other social institutions). Interpreting the impact this had for females in PE and sport, Wright (1999) explains that such legislation provided “the means to argue that women and men should have equal access to the resources, opportunities, occupations, courses and media coverage associated with sport and physical education” (p. 182).

By the 1980s, social constructionism emerged (Connell, 2000) that provided theoretical tools to examine gender in education differently. As Connell describes, examples of research undertaken in this guise included:

the feminist analysis of gender as a structure of social relations, especially a structure of power relations; sociological concerns with subcultures and issues of marginalization and resistance; and post-structuralist analyses of the making of identities in discourse, and the interplay of gender with race, sexuality, class and nationality (2000, p. 8).

With respect to the ways in which gender research has influenced teacher’s work, specific literature reviews have been undertaken (see for example Acker, 1995b; Biklen & Pollard, 2002; Sabbe & Aelterman, 2007; Thompson, 2003). In quite an expedited and selective summary, Sabbe and Aelterman (2007) explain that “in most cases, the opposing perspectives can be identified as essentialist and constructionist” (p. 522). They dichotomise these approaches by remarking that essentialist approaches focus on differences between genders whilst constructionists “investigate
how teaching is imbued with dominant discourses and subjectivities of gender” (p. 524). They describe key players in ‘sex differences’ research as those that concentrate on the biological differences of male and female teachers in their work, for example how gender shapes educational beliefs (Montecinos & Nielsen, 1997; Relich, 1996) or student perceptions of their male and female teachers (Huberman, 1993; Lee, Loeb, & Marks, 1995).

In critique of this type of gender research, Sabbe and Aelterman (2007) question the way in which these studies operationalise the notion of gender explaining that not everyone fits perfectly into one category or the other. They claim “… sex difference research does not provide insight into reasons why gender differences occur” (p. 525). In contrast, they describe ‘gender dynamics’ research as being interested in “the role gender plays in the choice to be a teacher, in professional experiences, careers, opinions…professional identities and in the perceptions and the behaviour of those involved in education (such as pupils, school management, colleague-teachers, parents)” (p. 527). These authors address the common critique that small and intense sample sizes mean that such findings are not generalisable to wider settings and remind readers that “the value…lies precisely in the uncovering of some general – often invisible – gender dynamics in the teaching profession that shape teachers’ professional environments, their professional identities, and the ways in which they are perceived by others” (p. 528).

A further critique of this collective work is offered by Öhrn and Weiner (2009) where they claim that the Anglophone domination in the literature represented has marginalised and silenced “non-Anglophone issues and voices” (p. 423). In their review of published articles from selected volumes of the Gender and Education journal they highlight the significant bias towards work emanating from the English-speaking world. Perhaps more specifically, these contributions flow from countries established in the legacy of the British colonial empire “who tend to share common histories and understandings of schooling and education more widely, and who likewise have a common referential basis for their work on gender” (Öhrn & Weiner, 2009, p. 424). They argue that much could be gleaned from gender work being undertaken in other countries and refer to Swedish policy responsible for the establishment of the Swedish National Graduate School in Gender Studies in the early 2000s as a prime example. Whilst I tend to agree with their thesis broadly, I
find a warrant for this study in its aims to interrogate some commonly held assumptions about teaching practices in boys’ PE from a previously silenced voice in the literature – female teachers. More detailed overviews of what has been taken up or ignored in gender education research, particularly from a sociological perspective, has been presented in the work of Acker (1995b), Bilken and Pollard (2002) and Thompson (2003).

In describing contemporary approaches to gender research in education, Dillabough (2006) explains that in their efforts to destabilize essentialism, many feminist researchers have adopted a “more explicit research interest in the multiple forms of gender identity and their manifestations in education” (p. 22; original emphasis). Dominating the gender education research over the past fifteen years has been issues to do with boys’ education and perhaps more specifically, manifestations of masculinity in boys’ education (Arnot & Mac an Ghaill, 2006). On specific works relevant to boys’ education, Dillabough (2006) cites research in school performance (Epstein, Elwood, Hey, & Maw, 1998); the ways in which identity formation might influence the effectiveness of gender equity policies (Kenway, 1997); and accounts of the lived experiences of female teachers (Acker, 1995a). Drudy (2008) reports “there has been a proliferation of media scare stories and moral panics about the underachievement of boys” (p. 309). She claims that now much of the gender research in education focuses on the ‘feminisation of teaching’ and she asks, “…do boys need male teachers to achieve better? Do they need male role models? Are female teachers less competent than male teachers?” (Drudy, 2008, p. 309). The remaining section of this chapter seeks to explore the origin and perpetuation of the ‘failing boys’ discourse.

### 2.4 The impact of masculinity politics on boys’ education

In the same way that much of the attention on girls’ educational outcomes was associated with feminist agendas, the increased concern for boys’ educational and social achievements can also be linked to a broader men’s movement (Lingard, et al., 2009). As suggested, this movement is not unitary, but rather involves a range of groups such as “the mythopoetic, men’s rights and pro-feminist groupings, who have concerns over different aspects of gender politics and its impact on the well-being of boys and men” (Lingard, et al., 2009, p. 3). Hence, politics that are explicitly
concerned with a social organisation of masculinity, or more specifically “the mobilizations and struggles where the meaning of masculine gender is at issue, and, with it, men’s position in gender relations” (Connell, 2005, p. 205) have become commonly known as ‘masculinity politics’ (Connell, 1995, 2005). Explicitly, Connell (1995) identifies four variants of masculinity politics namely, masculinity therapy which is also termed mythopoetic by others (Mills & Lingard, 1997), the gun lobby, gay liberation and exit politics.

Each of these groups draw on particular practices in which ideas about masculinity are embedded to promote their agendas and, as Connell (2005) highlights, this has significant implications for gender justice in education. The masculinity therapy, or mythopoetic group tend to focus on the “healing of wounds done to heterosexual men by gender relations” (Connell, 2005, p. 206). In seeking to constitute men as the new victims (Mills & Lingard, 1997), the mythopoets have centred on “archetypal and ‘deep’ masculinities, which they argue have been thwarted by feminism and industrialization and need rejuvenation through male bonding and homosocial connectedness” (Lingard, et al., 2009, p. 3).

Similarly, the political practice of ‘gun lobbyists’ promote actions that seek to protect the interests of hegemonic masculinity. As Connell (2005) argues, this level of politics is aimed at protecting men’s legal rights which have changed, they believe, as a result of feminism. Exploring this issue through the lens of changing gun laws in the US and Australia, Connell explains “the gun lobby hardly has to labour the inference that politicians trying to take way our guns are emasculating us. At both symbolic and practical levels, the defence of the gun ownership is a defence of hegemonic masculinity” (2005, p. 212). Interpreting the ways in which the agendas of ‘mythopoetic’ and ‘men’s rights’ movements have been taken up in education circles, Lingard, Martino and Mills (2009) contend that concerns around absent fathers and single mothers are behind calls for more male teachers in schools. Cynically, they argue that such calls are a “chromosomal response to deep cultural changes” (p. 3), and that the many valued contributions female teachers make to education are silenced by these arguments.

In contrast to the hegemonic masculinity agenda is homosexual masculinity “and the most explicit political opposition among men was articulated by the Gay Liberation
movement” (Connell, 2005, p. 216). This group represents an assertion of gay rights that has not necessarily aimed to destabilise the existing gender order, but rather “simply sought to provide a better position for gays in that order” (Mills & Lingard, 1997, p. 277). As suggested, the mere presence of a group that articulates an alternative to hegemonic masculinity “re-configures the politics of masculinity as a whole, making gender dissidence a permanent possibility” (Connell, 2005, p. 219) that will continue to challenge the gender order in both practical and theoretical terms.

The fourth movement, described by Connell as ‘exit politics’ is where pro-feminist agendas are located. As suggested, “it is possible for straight men to oppose patriarchy and try to exit from the worlds of hegemonic and complicity masculinity…[in order] to confront and change their masculinity…[and] to pursue a politics of social justice” (Connell, 2005, p. 220). Pro-feminist politics have built a male alliance with women (Lingard, et al., 2009) in order to ‘exit’ from practices of masculinity that support the existing gender order, and their inherent inequalities (Mills & Lingard, 1997). Pro-feminism has addressed issues such as misogyny, sexism and homophobia amongst others, whilst additionally encouraging reflexivity to examine their own complicity in oppressive gender relations (Lingard, et al., 2009). The differences between pro-feminist politics exist in whether or not to work with women or to agitate for changes in men (Connell, 1995) and on which feminist to be ‘pro’ given the diversity in feminist perspectives (Lingard, et al., 2009).

In terms of how masculinity politics have shaped the boys’ education literature, in a thorough and critical contribution Weaver-Hightower (2003a, 2003b) characterises this work into four main categories. The popular-rhetorical literature, arguing for the ‘boys’ turn’ in education, is characterised by what Mills (2003) explains as ‘backlash blockbusters’ and the various media representations of boys’ supposed educational underachievement. Examples such as Bly’s (1991) Iron John, Pollack’s (1999) Real Boys: Rescuing our sons from the myths of boyhood and Australian Steve Biddulph’s Manhood (1995) and Raising Boys (1997), amongst others, “have served as important foundations for a whole new range of...texts which seek to inform educators and parents about the best way to raise boys” (Mills, 2003, p. 59). This work has been heavily critiqued by pro-feminist writers (see for example Connell, 2005; Lingard, et al., 2009) for being often essentialist in nature, anti-feminist and
drawing on biological determinism as a major frame of reference. Such work rarely takes into account differences and inequalities within groups of boys and girls and as others suggest “its recuperative character is anathema for a socially just gender reform agenda” (Lingard, et al., 2009, p. 10).

The theoretically-orientated literature, classified as the ‘scholarly turn’ (Weaver-Hightower, 2003a) explores philosophical and sociological understandings of gender and educational contexts (Weaver-Hightower, 2003b). Examples of these works include Mac an Ghaill’s (1994) and Connell’s (1995) analyses of masculinity constructions in educational contexts. Summarising the main criticisms of theoretically-orientated literature, Weaver-Hightower (2003a) concludes that it is often the most visible males that are scrutinised in this work. Theoretical literature, he claims, rarely suggests practical responses to the issues raised and as such, fails to address the concerns of various stakeholders such as parents, teachers and students themselves (Weaver-Hightower, 2003a).

The practice-orientated literature, representative of a ‘school-based turn’, has been produced in response to practitioner and public calls for action. As a result, much of this literature is produced by ‘boyswork scholars’ (Weaver-Hightower, 2003a) and focuses on pedagogical or programmatic issues summarized by Weaver-Hightower as suggesting whole-school approaches; considering the gender of teachers; providing strategies for teaching in boys’ classrooms; creating reasons that encourage boys to change and considering the gendering of textbooks and class materials that promote particular constructions of gender (see for example Browne & Fletcher, 1995; Hartman, 1999; Salisbury & Jackson, 1996). Such approaches, according to Weaver-Hightower (2003a), draw heavily on performance data and governmental reports to underpin claims but fail to acknowledge the political influence, reliability of test score data and power-relations that shape such documents. Perhaps most significantly, the simplified techniques suggested to address complex issues fail to take into consideration wider societal factors that shape boys’ approaches to learning, and consequently, many of these contributions fail to ask “which boys…for not all boys are at a disadvantage in schools” (Weaver-Hightower, 2003a, p. 484; original emphasis).
Feminist and pro-feminist approaches work to provide critique of the moral panics about boys’ achievement, often claiming that ‘backlash’ politics and antifeminism are detrimental to not only boys’ education, but also girls (Epstein, et al., 1998; Keddie, 2010; Keddie & Mills, 2007; Kenway, 1997; Kenway & Willis, 1998; Lingard, et al., 2009). As Weaver-Hightower (2003a) surmises, critical analysis of the ‘boys’ turn’, notions of ‘underachievement’ and the provision of well-considered counter-arguments to address popular-rhetorical backlashes is a real strength of this work, particularly as it endeavours to maintain a focus on the social justice gender agenda. He cautions, however, that perhaps a key weaknesses of this body of work is that immersion in deconstructing dominant discourse-power relationships that produce particular truths and practices can mean that researchers are “prone to overlooking ‘good sense’ of boys’ reforms” (Weaver-Hightower, 2003a, p. 474).

Collectively, the impacts that masculinity politics have had on boys’ education has been quite profound in the way gender in education is thought about (Mills, 2003). In Australia, much of the ‘What about the boys?’ debate is fuelled by popular-rhetoric, mythopoetic contributions that claim fewer male role models, inadequate implementation of boy-friendly curriculum, pedagogy and assessment, an increasing numbers of female teachers and the ‘feminisation’ of education are to blame for the current state of boys’ education (Lingard, et al., 2009; Zyngier, 2009). As such, policy initiatives, structural reforms and ‘tips for teachers’ strategies that have been proffered to address boys’ supposed underachievement have been grounded in a ‘common sense’ understanding about boys and their learning styles (Lingard, et al., 2009). In summarising the impacts that masculinity politics have had on education, and boys’ education in particular, Keddie (2010) laments:

The competing agendas and priorities of the anti-feminist politics of the boy-turn, on the one hand, and the feminist politics attempting to defend schooling gains for girls, on the other, have generated somewhat of an impasse in terms of moving the gender justice agenda productively forward (p. 354).

2.4.1 The so called ‘crisis’ of masculinity in boys’ education

As described above, many attribute the ‘boys’ turn’ discourse as firmly grounded in pop psychology and media driven panics which are frequently perpetuated by the visibility of popular-rhetorical literature (Connell, 2000; Weaver-Hightower, 2003b).
Yet as Weaver-Hightower (2003a) cautions, this is “only one of many etiologies” (p. 473). In agreement, Raphael Reed (2006) explains that the so called ‘crisis’ of masculinity in boys’ education is driven by the way the subject, in this case an ‘underachieving boy’, is shaped by popular debates that draw on particular forms of evidence and is heavily influenced by sociological and psychological discourses. She states, “this is not an argument over whether male educational underachievement exists or not: its ‘reality’ is a measure of its productivity in reshaping…educational policies and practices” (p. 34). To help to identify, at this time, how ‘failing boys’ has become constructed as a perceived reality in some contexts, Weaver-Hightower (2003a) acknowledges key etiologies of this debate. Specifically he cites the following:

- Media panic, popular-rhetorical books, and news events
- Feminist examinations of gender roles
- Narrow initial indicators of gender equity
- New Right and neoliberal reforms in education
- Explicit backlash politics
- Economic and workforce changes (the “crisis” of masculinity)
- Parental concerns and pressure
- The “thrill of the new” for researchers and educators

(Weaver-Hightower, 2003a, p. 476)

At both global and local levels, economic change, globalisation and technological advancements have had a significant impact on the ‘gender order’ of many societies (Connell, 2005; Zyngier, 2009). Despite shifts towards egalitarianism in some western societies, Connell (2005) reminds us that “the global economy is highly unequal and the degree of economic and cultural homogenization is often exaggerated…The historical processes that produced global society were, from the start, gendered” (pp. xxi-xxii). In Chapter 1, I briefly described how the social organisation of masculinity has changed in contemporary global times as a result of economics and signposted the effects this has had on the gender order of particular societies.

In considering how these changes have impacted on education, others indicate, reconfigurations in the “‘knowledge economies’ of nations of the global north”
(Lingard, et al., 2009, p. 4) and shifting of manufacturing industries off-shore, often to the “developing nations of the global south” (Lingard, et al., 2009, p. 4) have required different skills to be developed through education. For example, in a global service sector “enhanced literacy skills or multiliteracies and emotional intelligence, dispositions often associated with femininities in dominant gender orders” (Lingard, et al., 2009, p. 4) are valued commodities. Additional global forces and events, such as the ‘9/11’ terrorist attacks in the United States and gang related violence and crime among particular racialized masculinities (Lingard, et al., 2009), have also contributed to a ‘crisis’ of masculinity through changes in the world gender order (Connell, 2005). Collectively these events have reinforced dominant hegemonic masculine practices to protect ‘one’s own’ (Lingard, et al., 2009).

In education especially, rather than focussing on ‘re-invigorated anti-racist policies’ (Lingard, et al., 2009, p. 4) and anti-violence strategies, the emphasis is usually placed on an absence of male role models (fathers and teachers) in some boys’ lives, “rather than a complex and nuanced analysis of the intersections of race, class, masculinities and sexualities” (Lingard, et al., 2009, p. 5). Rarely are such factors represented in the localised iterations of the boys’ education debate and associated policy documents (Lingard, et al., 2009).

In a climate where the marketisation of schooling (Lingard, et al., 2009) and a culture of performativity has “generated an obsession with academic outcomes and the measurement of…quantifiable aspects of education” (Keddie & Mills, 2007, p. 8), it is hardly surprising that performance data is drawn on to legitimate a focus on boys. Specifically “the selective presentation of particular outcomes – generally those associated with literacy and retention rates” (Keddie & Mills, 2007, p. 8) have been used to position boys’ as disadvantaged within an educational system that has become increasingly ‘feminised’ according to some (Hoff Sommers, 2000).

Significant critique has been levelled against the use of performative data for its narrow focus in defining success and achievement (Epstein, et al., 1998; Lingard & Douglas, 1999), particularly given many “tests are not nuanced enough to reflect the complexities involved” (Weaver-Hightower, 2003a, p. 485). Considering the significant changes to assessment measures and the variability of contexts in which these are undertaken, “it is hard to have confidence in the demonstration of
trends...of underachievement of cohorts over time. Low scores of socially defined
groups certainly indicate an area for investigation; they do not necessarily indicate
underachievement *per se*” (Raphael Reed, 2006, p. 35; original emphasis). Yet
despite these growing contributions, it is such data that is used to fuel public
discourse on ‘failing boys’ (Keddie & Mills, 2007).

In light of these concerns about boys, the global north has seen extensive growth in
what Lingard, Martino and Mills (2009) have termed the ‘consultancy industry’. Drawing on selective aspects of performance data, combined with the pervasiveness
of media representations, they have also helped to construct the boys’ agenda
through a ‘crisis’ of masculinity discourse and “at the same time served to shore up
this consultancy work and a demand for it” (p. 8). In critique of some of this work,
Zyngier (2009) asks “do we really need more books telling us there is a problem with
boys’ underachievement in education?” (p. 111). Instead, he claims that rather than
asking ‘if’ boys are in trouble, a more productive question for schools is “which
boys? (and girls) are disadvantaged?” (Zyngier, 2009, p. 117).

### 2.4.2 Exploring the ‘right’ way to educate boys

In Australia, the political uptake of the ‘crisis of masculinity’ discourse were
manifested in inquiries about the current state of boys’ education. With previous
policy attention during the 1990s heavily skewed towards the interests of girls, the
release of *Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools* in 1997 signified
what others have suggested was the end of “specific girls’ policies in Australian
schools, discursively speaking, with gender indicative of a new focus on *both* girls
and boys” (Lingard, et al., 2009, p. 34). Subsequently, it has been argued that in its
attempt to address the competing agendas of feminists and recuperative men’s
groups, the *Gender Equity* document was considered unsatisfactory by both
(Lingard, et al., 2009).

As a result, in an era devoid of formal policy, or in other words a ‘policy vacuum’ in
relation to gender in education (Lingard, et al., 2009), the political antics and
backlash media representations of boys’ supposed underachievement constructed a
‘truth’ of ‘failing boys’, which was acknowledged by the Australian Government.
“In March 2000 the Liberal-National Party Coalition Commonwealth Minister for
Education, Training and Youth Affairs charged the Employment, Education and Workplace Relations Committee with the task of investigating issues surrounding boys’ education” (Lingard, et al., 2009, p. 37), which resulted in a parliamentary inquiry (for critique see Lingard, et al., 2009).

With over $8 million being directed into boys and education throughout this parliamentary inquiry (Gill, 2005), the resulting report – *Boys: Getting it right* (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training, 2002) was eagerly anticipated. According to Martino and Berrill (2003, p. 104) in their critique of this report, ‘getting it right’ means understanding that:

- boys need more explicit teaching than girls and tend to prefer more hands-on activities;
- structured programmes are better for boys because they need to know what is expected of them and moreover, they like to be shown the steps along the way to achieve success;
- girls respond more readily to content while boys respond more to their relationships with teachers;
- activities help boys establish rapport with their teachers;
- boys respond better to teachers who are attuned to boys’ sense of justice and fairness and who are consistent in the application of rules.

As others suggest, these strategies over-emphasise the ‘naturalistic’ and “essentialised differences” (Mills, Martino, & Lingard, 2007, p. 6) between males and females that are central to the “conceptualisation of gender equity within the discursive regime of the report” (Mills, et al., 2007, p. 6). In fact, many acknowledge this point as a disappointing outcome for what could have been a promising opportunity for furthering the gender equity debate (see for example Gill, 2005; Hodgetts, 2008; Lingard, et al., 2009; Martino & Berrill, 2003; Mills, et al., 2007). Specifically, the failure of the inquiry committee to engage with an amassing global body of research literature, “which offer[ed] more nuanced accounts of the complex social variables, including masculinity, affecting boys in schools” (Mills, et al., 2007, pp. 6-7) resulted in the acceptance of many recommendations that inadvertently supported the ‘re-masculinisation’ of schooling to enhance boys’
educational outcomes, a trend that is reflected in other global communities (Arnot & Mac an Ghaill, 2006).

### 2.4.3 Female teachers in boys’ education – feminising education?

A key argument drawn on to perpetuate the “failing boys” discourse is that educational institutions have become overly “feminised” (Hoff Sommers, 2000). Writing on the phenomenon in English primary schools, Skelton (2002) explains that the ‘feminisation of schooling’ can be interpreted from three main perspectives – statistical to refer to the number of women teachers in comparison to men, cultural to describe school contexts that appear to be biased towards females, and political.

From a statistical perspective, education has and continues to be a profession that attracts a higher number of females than males (Acker, 1994; Arnot & Mac an Ghaill, 2006; Skelton, 2002). In Victoria, Australia, 28% of the 113,022 registered teachers as at June 2010 were male (Victorian Institute of Teaching, 2010). So given the prevalence of more females than males, it could be considered ‘feminised’. Skelton (2002) explains, when “taken at its most literal to mean that the job of teaching has become more ‘feminine’ as a consequence of a consistent rise in female teachers, it leads to the second way in which the term is deployed” (p. 86).

Fuelled by the mythopoets, a cultural interpretation of the ‘feminisation of education’ is used to imply that “there have been fundamental, widespread effects on…pedagogy and culture caused by the predominance of women teachers” (Skelton, 2002, p. 86). At one level, it has been assumed that the mere presence of increased numbers of female teachers has created a more ‘feminine’ environment, but at another level, others discuss allegations that schools, in response to feminist agendas, are now favouring girls by reworking curriculum in line with their learning needs (for discussion of this see Arnot & Mac an Ghaill, 2006). Further, the adoption of assessment practices and modes of discipline better aligned to the needs of girls comes at the expense of boys (Gurian & Stevens, 2005). Arnot and Mac an Ghaill (2006) explain that this rhetoric likely originated from fears that ‘feminine influences’ were behind the development of progressive student-centred teaching approaches. In response they report, an over-emphasis on boys’ “essential characteristics (lack of concentration, motivation, independence, emotional
development etc) encouraged teachers to adopt more traditional highly structured and teacher controlled pedagogies” (Arnot & Mac an Ghaill, 2006, p. 6). Collectively, such arguments have manifested in backlash politics where it is claimed feminism has gone ‘too far’ in its creation of school contexts and practices that privilege girls and set boys up to fail (Browne & Fletcher, 1995; Pollack, 1999).

Politically, the key counter-argument to the ‘feminisation of education’ claim has been increased calls for more male role models, and in an Australian setting this featured strongly in the Boys: Getting it Right report (Mills, et al., 2007). Initially, this notion grew from feminist critiques that men should be involved in primary education to destable the stereotype that teaching was a woman’s domain whilst work to “simultaneously reduce the low status and poor promotion prospects accorded to teachers” (Skelton, 2002, p. 77). Perhaps to the dismay of feminist researchers, mythopoets have taken up this mantle and used it to construct a supposed ‘truth’ around the problems associated with a lack of male teachers. As others suggest, this ‘truth’ is based on “fallacious assumptions about the supposed benefits for boys of having men in their lives” (Lingard, et al., 2009, p. 145). This movement perpetuates an idea that boys need men to nurture their development if they have any hope of growing into healthy and ‘normal’ men, and that women as genetically different, are unable to understand what is involved in being a man (see for example, Biddulph, 1997). It is this taken-for-granted assumption that is drawn on to suggest that increased numbers of female teachers in primary schools is a negative and undesirable outcome for boys’ education (Mills, et al., 2007).

In secondary school settings many of these claims are based on the assumption that men “are more likely to be able to educate, control and mentor…boys by providing them with ‘masculine’ ways of teaching and learning” (Lingard, et al., 2009, p. 122). One of the major concerns with this line of argument is that often the ‘masculine’ pedagogical approaches that are used to ‘control’ boys act to reinforce dominant constructions of masculinity that can be at the core of problems for particular boys. Further, constructing men as authority figures often works to create understandings of women as ‘soft’ (Lingard, et al., 2009), a notion that potentially undermines female teachers’ ability to manage boys’ behaviour effectively in the eyes of their students, and in some cases, can lead to the harassment of female teachers (see for example Robinson, 2000).
In Australia, calls for more male teachers have been taken up at a policy level, with the government “seeking amendments to the Sex Discrimination Act so as to enable measures to encourage men into teaching” (Gill, 2005, p. 106). Cushman (2008) highlights that although similar policy interventions in the United Kingdom and New Zealand have been implemented, there has been relatively little attempt to define and critically analyse what an effective ‘male role model’ is. In a convincing argument, Cushman explains that in efforts to increase the number of male teachers, examination of the responsibilities and attributes required have been largely overlooked. Put simply, not all male teachers provide positive role models (Mills, 2000).

It is the position of this study that men do need to be involved in boys’ education, for, as Mill’s argues, “not because men can do this work better than women, but rather because men have a responsibility to challenge the existing gender order” (2000, p. 221). This is paramount when education seeks to prepare students for lives beyond school in a society where it is likely they will need to be able to work with, and for, women (Lingard, et al., 2009). Despite the negative connotations that are linked with the ‘feminisation of teaching’ many female teachers are highly effective practitioners of boys’ education and it is important that such calls do not silence or “potentially denigrate the work being done in schools by female teachers” (Lingard, et al., 2009, p. 122).

### 2.5 Female teachers’ experiences of boys’ education

As Bailey (1996) explains, limited research has explored the experiences of women in boys’ education, and now, over a decade later, relatively little has changed especially if comparisons are drawn with the volume of contributions claiming to interrogate aspects of boys’ education. Of the research that does exist, little work was initially undertaken with this intent, but rather through the research process, pertinent issues relevant to how women experienced such cultures emerged that warranted consideration (see for example Angus, 1993b).

In more recent times and perhaps prompted by the rise of masculinity politics, work that considers aspects of female teachers’ work in boys’ education has been
presented from varied perspectives. For example, drawing on her ‘boyswork’
endeavour, Hartman (1999) presents strategies that have ‘worked’ for other female
teachers in boys’ primary education. Many of the conclusions presented however
appear to draw on essentialised and naturalistic assumptions about boys that are
accepted unproblematically. In contrast, drawing on feminist poststructuralist
perspectives, Keddie (2007) explores the experiences of a young female English
teacher (Sally) in an all-boys’ secondary school. Through Sally’s accounts of sexual
harassment and intimidation, Keddie “highlights how broader masculinist discourses
and structures constrain[ed] and undermine[d] her professionalism and expertise”

Much of the work undertaken in a secondary education context has predominantly
examined the overall cultural conditions in which these teachers enacted their
professional work (Angus, 1993a, 1993b; Bailey, 1996; Oplatka & Atias, 2007) or
explored experiences of female teachers of particular curriculum areas such as
English (Hatchell, 2003; Keddie, 2007) or Drama (McDonald, 2007; Sanders, 2003).
Few works exist to examine both the organisational culture and the specific
curriculum areas in which professional work was undertaken, a gap that this study
seeks to address.

Angus (1993b) explores the ways in which the gender order or gender code of one
Christian Brother’s College (a similar context to this study) positioned female
teachers within the organisation, and as he explains, “…in an essentially male
institution…life could be hard for females” (p. 75). In describing the religious
dictum of this school, he explains that the most prominent female figure within this
context was “a statue of Mary Immaculate [which] stood on an elevated altar in each
classroom” (p. 67). Angus (1993) argues that “these statues in some ways had a
stronger ‘presence’ in the school than the marginalized women teachers who were
present in life” (p. 67). In an era that witnessed increasing numbers of female
teachers within this context, Angus summates that females were perceived to have
little capacity for discipline and authority by both students and their male colleagues.
He explains, “…whilst the nature of discipline and punishment had changed
considerably during the previous two decades, a concern with controlling student
behaviour was still a feature of everyday life at the school” (Angus, 1993b, p. 70).
Further, he explains that many of the male teachers were critical of the increased
presence of women teachers as they claimed “classes too often had to be ‘settled down’ after lessons with women teachers who had inadequate classroom control” (p. 73).

Similar sentiments regarding female teachers’ ability to discipline boys are reported elsewhere (Kindlon & Thompson, 1999), and as Keddie and Mills (2007) comment, “it is unfortunate that such experiences by women teachers have been used by sections of the boys’ lobby to call for more male teachers” (p. 34). They explain that many of the arguments “have consisted of claims that men would have more authority with boys than women, that boys would respect men more…[and they] are more likely to have a calming influence over boys” (Keddie & Mills, 2007, p. 34).

In one of the earliest works overtly claiming to interrogate female teachers experiences in boys’ education, Askew and Ross (1988) describe how authoritative, masculine approaches to discipline privileged in these institutions was a source of considerable angst for the female teachers. In support of Askew and Ross’ claim, Bailey (1996) explains, “…since the pupils have learnt to identify discipline with physical intimidation and aggression, a woman who attempts a more co-operative approach will be seen as a weak disciplinarian” (p. 175). Similarly, Oplatka and Atias (2007), from their study of female principals in Israel, conclude that women “focus more than their male counterparts on caring, understanding, collaboration, involvement, human proximity and other forms of emotional display” (p. 56), attributes arguably aligned with femininities that contrast with the masculinist discourses permeating the culture of all-boys’ settings. Robinson (2000) also explains how female participants in her study felt pressure to “adopt a more aggressively ‘masculine’ approach to discipline” (p. 80), especially when female teachers “found themselves in daily power battles with male students, which were often resolved by sending the student to senior teachers, most frequently men, to be ‘pulled into line’” (Robinson, 2000, p. 79). Interestingly, she notes that such experiences were not isolated to female teachers, explaining that male teachers who did not align to the students’ perceptions of authority, “predominantly associated with hegemonic masculinity, were also on occasions harassed, with their sexuality particularly targeted by male students” (Robinson, 2000, p. 78).
Bailey (1996) reports examples of female teachers being undermined by their male colleagues, or excluded from decision-making processes, especially when in staff meetings “their contributions...[were] often ignored, unless reiterated by a man” (p. 175). Perhaps, most alarmingly, the most commonly reported experiences of female teachers in boys’ education were those incidences of sexual harassment and abuse (see for example Angus, 1993b; Bailey, 1996; Keddie, 2007; Keddie & Mills, 2007; Lingard, et al., 2009; Robinson, 2000, 2005). Whilst offensive behaviours ranged from verbal sexual abuse to more physical violations Robinson (2000) argues that incidences of sexual harassment “significantly undermined the classroom management strategies and teaching practices of many women teachers” (p. 76). Such practices ‘normalise’ particular gendered identities in that femininity is associated with passiveness, vulnerability and a sexualised body, whereby masculinity is associated with power over girls and women (Keddie & Mills, 2007). In summary, Keddie and Mills (2007) argue that sexual harassment impacts on female teachers as it:

serves to police women’s behaviours in that they are constantly having to consider issues such as what to wear, how to remain safe and how to avoid confrontational situations with boys. It...constantly remind[s] women of their femininity and the power that men and boys have over women – even [for] women who are positioned in authority over them (Keddie & Mills, 2007, p. 35).

Despite these concerns regarding the role of female teachers within boys’ education, other studies have reported the gender of the teacher as somewhat insignificant provided they are ‘quality’ teachers (Cushman, 2010; Lingard, et al., 2009). Student preferences regarding “who should teach them has little to do with gender and much to do with sound pedagogical practices and the formation of relationships conducive to effective learning” (Cushman, 2010, p. 1212). According to others, students want teachers who are fair, friendly, able to create fun and engaging classroom activities, have an ability to develop good relationships with their students and who demonstrate a good working knowledge of their curriculum area (Lingard, et al., 2009). Cushman (2010) concludes, “teacher quality is one of the most important factors governing successful educational outcomes for students, and the emphasis in the recruitment and employment of prospective teachers needs therefore to be on teaching skills and relationship skills, not gender” (p. 1212).
2.6 The school as a regulative site of masculine identities – Possibilities ‘beyond structural reforms’?

Although some research has down-played the role of schooling in the formation of gendered identities, instead citing families and workplaces as powerful vectors for the shaping of gendered subjectivities (Connell, 1993), others contend that schools can be seen as masculinity-making devices (Haywood & Mac an Ghaill, 1996). As Skelton (2001) argues, work environments and marriage hold little relevance to school-aged boys, but school environments play a relatively more prominent role in their lives especially when considering how ideas relating to gender are constructed.

Historically, the English public school system of the early 19th Century on which many educational systems in the former British Colonies were also based, was established with the express intention of schooling boys in how to become a (Christian) man (Connell, 2000; Swain, 2005). Swain (2005) argues that these educational institutions, “produced boys in the image of the metropolitan gentleman with all the failings of misogyny, homophobia and emotional repression” (p. 213). Further, he suggests authoritative pedagogical practices underpinned with strict discipline (and up to a point with corporal punishment) produced patterns of masculinity “that promoted toughness, gender inequality and repression” (p. 214). Although some changes in educational discourse have occurred over the years, Swain (2005) suggests that many of the practices undertaken in the name of ‘education’ still act to define and reinforce particular gender regimes. As he explains:

> Although schools are located and shaped by specific sociocultural, politicoeconomic, and historical conditions, individual personnel, reproduced rules, routines and expectations…will all have a profound impact on…the way in which young boys (and girls) live and experience their lives at school. This means that there are different options and opportunities to perform different types of masculinity in each school; in other words, there are different alternatives, or possibilities, of *doing boy* that are contingent to each school setting, using the meanings and practices available (p. 215).

Extensive literature has examined how the gender regimes and associated practices of particular school environments have shaped the construction of masculine
identities (Connell, 2004; Epstein, 1997; Frosh, Phoenix, & Pattman, 2002; Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998; Keddie, 2006; Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Willis, 1977). The masculinising practices revealed through these studies, according to Swain (2005), can be identified as “the official or formal and the unofficial or informal cultures of the school” (p. 215).

Swain (2005) suggests formal cultures are often conveyed through curriculum and policy documents, pedagogical approaches, discipline procedures and the organisational and administrative structures of schools. In contrast, he intimates the informal school culture is in continual negotiation with the formal school culture, describing it as having “…a whole life and meaning all its own: It includes not only the relations and interactions between the pupils, but the informal relations between pupils and teachers outside of the instructional relationship…” (p. 216). Perhaps more explicitly, Connell (1996) explains that “masculinising practices” are concentrated at certain sites including curriculum, discipline systems, sports (see Chapter 3) and peer relations.

With respect to curriculum, particular areas such as science, maths, manual arts, technology, PE and sport have been considered to be masculinised domains (Lingard, et al., 2009), where areas such as English and Modern languages have been constructed as feminine (Arnot & Mac an Ghaill, 2006). Curriculum content and the way that it is organised and delivered offers male students a “resource to use in developing particular patterns of masculinity through a range of responses to it…and although many…use it to establish status through teacher approval and test results, some boys actively resist school learning and expectations” (Swain, 2005, p. 216). For example, research demonstrates that in some school environments it is not considered ‘masculine’ to enjoy and do well in subjects such as English (Martino, 2000a) and consequently “boys who demonstrate a passion for English may well be constructed as ‘gay’ or a ‘girl’” (Keddie & Mills, 2007, p. 5). In quite a persuasive account, Francis and Skelton (2005) describe how the environments in which boys perform at their best are often characterised by curriculum that “challenges gender cultures, and encourage[s] boys and girls not to see aspects of learning as gendered” (p. 134).
Perhaps in recent times the most significant insights into the way in which school cultures act to regulate gendered subject positions have been research contributions that examine the informal cultures of peer relations (Connell, 2000; Hickey & Keddie, 2004; Keddie, 2003; Mac an Ghaill, 1994). Acknowledging the construction of masculinity as a “collective enterprise” (Swain, 2005, p. 217) the power and potency of the peer group as the main bearer of gender definitions, rather than individual boys, has been well established (Connell, 2000). Interestingly, Swain (2005) suggests that the collective identities that boys draw on to establish ideas about their own particular subject positions, “may help to explain why some boys, who may be disruptive and troublesome when part of a group, are sensitive and amenable when on their own” (p. 217).

In earlier studies, Mac an Ghaill’s (1994)’s Macho Lads, Connell’s (1993) Cool guys and Martino’s (1999) Party Animals describe subject positions that draw on misogynist and heterosexual discourses to subvert gendered identities that are more closely aligned to homosexuality and anything feminine. These masculine identities tend to draw on aggressive responses to those in positions of authority, and as Martino (1999) explains, often adopt disruptive behaviours in class “to get a laugh” (p. 247). In contrast, this anti-academic culture is positioned in complete opposition to more ‘feminine’ masculinities such as the Academic achievers (Mac and Ghaill, 1994), the Squids (Martino, 1999) and the Swots (Connell, 1993).

As others discuss, heterosexuality forms a compulsory “element in the social context of schooling and…many boys who are identified as sissy or feminine are often the targets of heterosexism, homophobic harassment and bullying” (Frank, Kehler, Lovell, & Davison, 2003, p. 122). Others contend these various expressions of masculinity are hierarchical in nature, wherein such practices are associated with boys’ need to “prove themselves in pursuit of self-legitimation, status and prestige within the peer groups’ ‘pecking order’” (Keddie & Mills, 2007, p. 24). Kenway (1997) has also suggested that through gendered, sexualised, classed and racialised discourses associated with many elements of school culture, boys “learn…there are different ways of being a male, some more valued and prestigious and powerful than others, and that one way of being and feeling powerful as a male is to demonstrate power over other males and over females” (p. 6). Alarmingly, Swain (2005)
contends that for many students, occupying an ‘average’ position in the formal school culture, appears to be the safest position. He explains:

it is a paradox that although pupils attempt to construct their own individual identity, no one aspires to be, or can afford to be, too different, and they are conscious that they need to be “normal” and “ordinary” within the strict codes set by their peer group (Swain, 2005, p. 217).

Despite the growing body of evidence that points to the importance of social relations in the current “boys’ underachievement” debate, rarely has there been consideration of pedagogical practices that focus on connections between performances, and constructions, of gender (Keddie & Mills, 2007). Rather, Lingard, Martino and Mills (2009) argue that many of the responses to the boys’ agenda have been structural in nature, such as the implementation of specific boys policies to attract and recruit more male teachers, the creation of single-sex classes in co-educational settings and fostering boy-friendly pedagogies. Zyngier (2009) argues, “what is needed are initiatives that transform the inequities of the existing system” (p. 115) as common to many of the situations described above is a version of dominant and subversive masculinity that is detrimental to the learning success of all students. Keddie and Mills contend that “the problematising of such ways of being a boy…is imperative to pursing the goals of gender justice in schooling and should be central to the teaching of boys” (2007, p. xiv).

In arguing for changes “beyond structural reform” Lingard, Martino and Mills (2009) point to the importance of ‘teacher threshold knowledges’ as central to advancements in gender reform policy and practice. Martino and colleagues contend knowledge about subject disciplines, student development, the purpose of schooling, policy and gender concepts, as examples of teacher threshold knowledges, impact on students’ attitudes and learning (Martino, Lingard, & Mills, 2004). Of significance to this study, Kenway and colleagues argue:

Knowledge is the core work of schools. Teachers are expected to know their subjects and to know about knowledge, learning and learners… what do they have to do with gender reform? What knowledge about gender are our students supposed to acquire and how are they to acquire it? And what do teachers need to know and do in order to assist in this process? What do students do with what we teach them in school? What do we teach them
about gender that we don’t know we teach? (Kenway et al., 1997, p. 66 cited in Lingard, et al., 2009, p. 9)

2.7 Reflective notes

At the start of this chapter, from Maher and Ward (2002), the question was posed, “when is gender a difference that makes a difference”? This chapter has explored this through an examination of the major social, political, economic and historical forces that have shaped understandings of gender and education broadly, and more specifically contemporary boys’ education. An initial consideration of the way in which gender has been theorised historically was offered to demonstrate how various conceptions as historically contingent have evolved, and to position this study’s conceptual framework within a deconstructive perspective of gender. As described, whilst historically gender research in education has tended to focus on gender socialisation patterns and the reproduction of gender inequalities, more recent work has sought to examine the contested nature of gendered subjectivities (Dillabough, 2006), and it is within this tradition that the current study has been undertaken.

Through an analysis of the ways in which gender issues in education have been represented I have explored the impact feminist perspectives conceived during the rise of the second and third waves of feminism have had on educational research. Specifically this work has “challenged masculine notions of technocratic rationality, instrumentalism, efficiency, objectivity, and a privileging of the intellectual domain in the production of knowledge – values considered to permeate the hierarchical structures and pedagogical relationships within schools” (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2009, p. 213). This historical analysis has also sought to identify that a greater focus on the creation of gendered identities within educational institutions, often considered as microcosms of wider society (Connell, 2004), has changed in focus from analyses of differences between genders to differences within genders (Swain, 2005).

A detailed examination of masculinity politics and media constructions of boys’ supposed underachievement revealed their pervasiveness in the perpetuation of the ‘failing boys’’ discourse (Epstein, et al., 1998). Whilst evidence does exist to
suggest that some boys are failing to achieve similar standards to their female counterparts, particularly in terms of literacy, a more accurate representation of this data is reflected in the question of ‘which boys’? (Lingard, et al., 2009; Weaver-Hightower, 2003a; Zyngier, 2009). As Weaver-Hightower (2003b) reports, much of the endeavours of feminist and pro-feminist researchers over the past decade have been focussed on a deconstruction of arguments drawing on flawed performative data to fuel media and social moral panics about the state of boys’ underachievement. Hayes (2003) explains that:

whilst there have been fundamental changes in what may be said about who is disadvantaged, there are persistent silences. Closer attention…places gender among a number of other markers of identity. In other words, students are not simply boys or girls, they may also be indigenous, poor, isolated, queer and/or from non-English speaking backgrounds (p. 11).

She goes on to argue, by considering boys as if they are unitary, stable and uncontested identities is to significantly delimit what can be known about educational subjectivities (Hayes, 2003).

Another pervasive argument often conveyed in educational research is either an explicit or implicit reference to a ‘masculinity crisis’ (Arnot & Mac an Ghaill, 2006). Heavily espoused by ‘mythopoets’, and reflected in the politics of ‘gun-lobby’ groups (Connell, 2005), these arguments have focussed on men’s health issues, shorter life expectancies than women, high suicide rates among males and supposed poor educational attainment to fuel debates that a rejection of women’s influences is integral for boys achievement (Mills & Lingard, 1997). In critique, Mills and Lingard explain “the assumption is that women have nothing to offer men in understanding gender constructions. This position is at its most obvious in their criticisms of mothers’ influences on boys and men” (1997, p. 285). As they advocate, they are not opposed to a men’s politics, rather, they view the problematising of masculinity as a step in the right direction. Perhaps most emphatically, Kimmel and Kaufman argue that masculinity politics has promoted the viewpoint that:

men have suffered from a ‘mother wound’ which is brought about by men’s drive to distance themselves from the feminine…men need to be more involved in the everyday world of nurturing and caring rather than in running
around the forests: “We need more Ironing Johns, not more Iron Johns” (p. 27 cited in Mills & Lingard, 1997, p. 286).

Through this analysis of literature relevant to the field of boys’ education I have attempted to demonstrate that discourse drives what is, or is not, said about gender in education. A specific aim has been to make explicit the social and historical factors that have shaped certain claims made about what can only be considered a ‘contested truth’ on the state of boys’ education (Lingard, et al., 2009). Hayes (2003) argues that the “catchcry of recent equity discourses has shifted from ‘what about the boys’, to ‘let boys be boys’” (p. 13), and as others have suggested, the ‘feminisation of education’ has led to increased calls for more male role models to foster conditions conducive to this (for critique see Mills, Martino, & Lingard, 2004). However, as established earlier, not all male teachers are inherently positive role models for adolescent boys, and the appointments of teachers to boys’ education should be based more on the ‘quality’ of the teacher rather than gender alone. As Lingard and colleagues outline, “…the concern of the gender of the teacher neglects the most important factors about teachers, their pedagogies…” (Lingard, et al., 2009, p. 122).

The final section of this chapter explored what is known about how the formal and informal cultures of schools contribute to the construction and regulation of gendered identities, with a specific focus on masculinity. Whilst particular pedagogical approaches, discipline systems and gendered curriculum were implicated, it was the informal cultures of schools where peer relations cultivate that were signposted as significant in these processes. The hierarchal structure of collective masculinities, often organised around sexualities, race and class (Martino, 1999) were often drawn on to perpetuate self-legitimating practices of status and privilege, often at the expense of marginalised and subordinated others (Keddie, 2006). In the subsequent chapter, the areas of sport and PE as key sites where collective hegemonic and heterosexual masculinities play out (Martino & Frank, 2006) will be explored.
Chapter 3 – Gendered Physical Education: Exploring pedagogy, practice and professional identities

This chapter is dedicated to exploring literature relevant to a PE teacher’s pedagogical work with a particular focus on reviewing contributions that inform understandings of the interdependency of curriculum, teaching and learning as dimensions of pedagogical practice in PE (Kirk, Macdonald, & O’Sullivan, 2006). By drawing on literature informed from a range of theoretical perspectives, and with a particular emphasis on those contributions grounded in critical and poststructuralist approaches, this chapter seeks to understand how some of the taken-for-granted notions about ‘effective’ PE pedagogy have been constructed. Further, it attempts to unpack the ways in which certain practices can contribute to a ‘gendered’ experience in PE for many students and their teachers.

As Gard (2006) comments, “bodies of research literature are not simply…accounts of the state of knowledge about something. In retrospect, they may be more profitably understood as artefacts of particular historical events, periods or struggles” (p. 184). Considering this, I commence with an overview of the historically located and politically motivated emergence of particular iterations of sport and PE as devices implicated in gendered identity construction, and specifically masculinities, given the intent of this study. In the latter sections of the previous chapter the institutional role of schools in the shaping of gendered subjectivities was considered and sport and PE were identified as significant sites where masculine subjectivities are (re)constructed and hierarchically configured and performed (Connell, 1996, 2005). In this chapter, the micro-political practices of PE as they act to shape and privilege particular masculinities, often at some social, emotional or physical cost to marginalised others (Gard, 2006), will be explored to reveal the implications of particular pedagogical practices for various masculine identities.

Gard argues that PE “has been added to the list of institutions which are thought to favour the interests of boys over girls” (2006, p. 785). Amidst contemporary gender and education debates, the role of the teacher (and their pedagogies) has been
questioned, especially in terms of their potential complicity in the reproduction of particular gender power-relations (Keddie & Mills, 2007; Wright, 1999). For these reasons an analysis of the discursive fields of PE to reveal how teacher knowledge and beliefs are shaped within discourse-power relations is undertaken. Further to this, Wright (1996b) contends that what counts as legitimate and valuable knowledge in PE classrooms has shifted across time and space. As such, this review considers PE curriculum as a site of considerable contestation and will examine dominant discourses that have shaped what counts as legitimate knowledge in PE pedagogy.

This chapter also examines various competing pedagogies within the field of PE. In particular, the major assumptions and principles that underpin teaching and learning practices within dominant and emerging pedagogies will be considered. Further, a critique of ideological assumptions and contradictions will be offered to signpost how subjects are ‘positioned’ and in fact position themselves, in relation to dominant discourses persistent in PE, especially with respect to the influence this has on the (re)construction of a professional identity. This chapter concludes by examining what is currently known about the pedagogical practices of female physical educators in boys’ education.

Undoubtedly, the scholarship of gender in PE has been richly informed by the research endeavours of many feminist scholars (see for example Bryson, 1987, 1990; Dewar, 1987; Flintoff, 1993; Scraton, 1990; Sherlock, 1987; Wright, 2000b), who were among the first to critique the gendered knowledge bases and practices of sport and PE (Gard, 2006). Wright’s work in particular has been informative in providing additional methodological tools to examine gender construction in PE (1995, 1996b, 2001). Whilst this research acknowledges the contributions early feminist scholars have made to the way gender is understood and played out in the context of PE, much of the work reviewed here will focus on boys’ PE specifically given its centrality to this study.

3.1 PE and sport in the (re)construction of masculinity

As an opening caveat, not all research that explores boys, masculinities and PE has been necessarily concerned with sport (Gard, 2006), yet as Gard argues, “the nexus between sport, masculinity and PE rests at or near the heart of the moral agendas
which have driven research in this area” (2006, p. 784). For example, historically, the codification of many modern sports and the emergence of organised competitive sport during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in England “can be seen as an antidote to what was seen as the corrosive effects of modern life on boys and men” (Gard, 2006, p. 785), brought about by industrial urbanisation. It was thought that participation in competitive sports was character building, where “participation … could promote courage, chivalry, moral strength and military patriotism among men” (Dowling Næss, 2001, p. 126). Others have argued that it was through competitive, organised sport that young men could be educated on a specific way to become male in a climate where competition, success, strength and a hard work ethic could be promoted (Messner, 1992). It was against these socially constructed ‘masculine attributes’, heavily embedded and played out through codified sports, that young men’s masculinities were appraised. On this, Connell (1995) argues that “the exemplary status of sport as a test of masculinity, which we now take for granted, is in no sense natural. It was produced historically, and … deliberately as a political strategy” (p. 30).

The uptake of these ideas in an educational sense were perhaps most prominent in the “games ethic” discourse central to English Public schooling in the 19th century (Mangan & Hickey, 2000). The emergence of, and increasingly popularity of, team games within boys’ education at this time, reflected the “perceived ability of these activities to not only develop the physical dimensions of the participants, but to foster desirable character traits that encompassed obedience, leadership, courage, morality and perseverance … developed within dominant notions of heterosexual masculinity” (Phillips & Roper, 2006, p. 132). In his historical examination of public boys’ schools in Australia, Martin Crotty (2000) explains that although such schools initially “pursued intellectualism and Christian morality as their main goals” (p. 12), during the mid to late 19th century “fighting, bullying and vandalism were common problems” (p. 16). To address this, “a new generation of headmasters devoted to instilling ‘character’ into boys … saw games as the best means of doing so” (p. 17), especially given that games offered boys ways to channel (perceived) natural masculine attributes positively (Crotty, 2000). In critique of this, Gard (2006) cautions that this “idea that sport is a form of magic, imbued with transformative powers not present in other areas of human endeavour … formulated with ruling and middle-class boys in mind” (p. 788) is problematic as there are
“cracks in this construction of sport as a maker of men” (p. 785). He argues that sport cannot simultaneously be “held up as being a natural expression of a pre-given and fixed masculinity, while on the other hand … assume a crucial role in shaping and preserving masculinity against the perceived degenerating potential of modern Western life” (Gard, 2006, pp. 785-786).

Consideration of the historically gendered nature of PE and sport more widely across educational settings in Britain, America and Australia highlights trends marked by the available discourses in each context (Phillips & Roper, 2006). Beyond the similarities that all three nations at various times adopted forms of gymnastics heavily imbued with a European influence (Germany, Sweden and Denmark) and that “the importance of games as part of school life which had its origins in England also found resonance in America and Australia” (Phillips & Roper, 2006, p. 130), PE practices at the localised level were undoubtedly shaped by historical, social, economic and political factors.

Phillips and Roper (2006) believe that PE, “in these countries was individually shaped by debates about the body, eugenics, health concerns, nationalism and militarism, and interwoven in unique ways with class, gender and race” (p. 131). For example, in Britain and Australia (which is not surprising given the British colonial legacy in Australia), PE was initially characterised by militaristic ‘drills training’ with a view to ensuring citizens were ‘fit to fight’ in the event of war or national threat (Phillips & Roper, 2006). Interestingly, PE practices that espoused these ideals continued for up to two decades more in Australia than they did in Britain (Phillips & Roper, 2006).

From the 1880s to 1950s various forms of gymnastics were prevalent in PE programs, although the specific purpose they played in the construction of gendered identities differed across contexts. For example, in America it was the German inspired “Turner movement” that popularised apparatus-based exercises that emphasised the display of masculine strength and power, whereas in Britain and Australia the adoption of ‘Swedish gymnastics’ was prominent (Kirk, 2002; Phillips & Roper, 2006) and was taken up differently in boys’ and girls’ PE classes. As Kirk (2002) describes, “when women performed Swedish gymnastics, their movements were required to be dainty, nimble and flexible. When men performed Swedish
gymnastics they were required to be strong and powerful” (p. 27). In Australia at this time, in the absence of any formal training for female physical educators (Kirk, 2000a), a shortage of female teachers had significant implications for “the gender appropriateness of physical education offered to girls” (Kirk, 2000b, p. 21). Despite the nuances of how gymnastics has been taken up in PE programs across various countries and settings (and acknowledging that the above discussion was limited to three countries only in the interest of brevity), the above commentary has aimed to highlight that particular historical iterations of PE have very much been implicated in the construction of gendered identities.

A significant body of literature now exists to examine the historically gendered nature of PE (see for example Crotty, 2000; Harris & Penney, 2002; Kirk, 2000a; Kirk, 2002; Mangan, 2000). More recently, attention has focussed on the specific ways in which particular power-relations, produced in PE and sport more widely, have shaped the (re)construction of gendered subjectivities and in particular masculinities (Aitchison, 2007; Azzarito, 2009; Connell, 2008; Gorely, Holroyd, & Kirk, 2003; Hauge & Haavind, 2011; Hickey, 2010; Kehler, 2010; Light, 2007; McCaughtry & Tischler, 2010; Messner, 2005; Oliver & Lalik, 2004; Parker, 1996; Swain, 2003; With-Nielsen & Pfister, 2011; Wright, 1996a).

It is important to highlight at this point that it is not the intention of this study to narrowly conceptualise learning in PE and sport settings to only that of ‘gender’, for as others highlight, “long-term engagement in sport [and PE] can play a highly significant role in the social, moral and personal development of … young people and their sense of who they are in the world” (Light & Georgakis, 2007, p. 25). Further, as others have suggested, gendered subjectivities, and how they are constituted, should never “be viewed in isolation from the many other dimensions of sociocultural and economic life that shape our identities” (Penney & Evans, 2002, p. 17). For this reason, it is important to acknowledge that the formation of gendered subjectivities are inherently forged though the intersections of other dimensions of identity, namely “class, ethnicity, ability, sexuality, age and religious and cultural values” (Penney & Evans, 2002, p. 17). For example, Laberge and Albert (2000) in their analyses of masculinity and sport in Canada, revealed intersections between social class and the construction of masculinities. They report that boys from higher social classes were more inclined to regard ‘intelligence’ and social attributes as
markers of masculinity, where boys from working-classes were more likely to prioritise displays of masculine privilege, chauvinism and showing off (Laberge & Albert, 2000), where sport and PE provided vehicles for these performances. This concept is explored herein.

3.1.1 Physical education, sport and gender identity

As signposted above, “sport is a key terrain of contest for gender (and race, class, sexual and global) relations” (Messner, 2005, pp. 313-314), and given the centrality of sport to contemporary versions of PE (Kirk, 2010b) particular practices that act to promote various versions of masculinities deserve consideration. With-Nielsen and Pfister (2011) argue that “gender is embedded in identities, enacted in social situations and ‘embodied’” (p. 647) and as such, bodies can be both objects of, and agents in, social change. With this in mind, they consider gender as a ‘social embodiment’ which is a “highly relevant concept for PE because it is a social practice that focuses on the formation, regulation and control as well as on the performance, comparison and evaluation of bodies” (With-Nielsen & Pfister, 2011, p. 647). It is the intent of this section to discuss the ways in which PE and sport as social practices impact on the (re)construction of gendered subjectivities and performances of gendered identities.

According to With-Nielsen and Pfister (2011) the process of subjectification, that is becoming a self or creating a specific identity, is “influenced by the inherent power hierarchies and the available subject positions in the relevant discourses” (p. 648). Previous research has considered how boys use their bodies in physical pursuits to construct particular versions of adolescent masculinities (see for example Connell, 2005; Hauge & Haavind, 2011; Hickey, 2008; Renold, 1997), but as others contend, how this process is undertaken within and against discourses of masculinity has been subject to less attention (Hauge & Haavind, 2011). In their study of adolescent boys in Oslo that examined how boys drew on discourses of masculinity relevant to the male body in constituting themselves, Hauge and Haavind (2011) report that all of the discourses about the body that were described by their participants strongly aligned to traditional notions of a ‘masculine body’. They explain that none of the discourses discussed (namely, the technical body, the strong body and the defending body), “challenged notions of masculinity as being equivalent to mastery or skills …
hard muscles or physical endurance” (p. 12). Rather, these taken-for-granted assumptions were uniformly accepted and employed uncritically.

Research that discusses the privileging of ‘hegemonic’, ‘dominant’, ‘stereotypical’ or ‘hyper-masculinities’, (terms that are often used synonymously to describe masculinities that “denote traits such as strength, aggression, and…heterosexuality” (Millington & Wilson, 2010, p. 98)), in school PE is extremely prevalent through the sociological literature (see for example Berg & Lahelma, 2010; Bramham, 2003; Brown & Evans, 2004; Connell, 2008; Gorely, et al., 2003; Hickey, 2008; Mooney & Hickey, 2011; Paechter, 2003; Parker, 1996). Collectively, this research has highlighted several factors that impact on the social construction of gender in boys’ PE. Here, the centrality of the body in PE settings especially as a space where gender differences and heteronormativity are emphasised, the role of competitive team sport in the curriculum, and the potential for the cultivation of hierarchical gender relations, have all been reported to contribute to the privileging of particular versions of dominant masculinities at the expense of marginalised others.

O’Donovan and Kirk (2007) explain that the act of ‘undressing’ and changing, which is usually undertaken privately, becomes a semi-public act in the school PE changing room. Kirk (2010a) reports:

> The changing room ritual signals to children the commencement of a period of activity in which the body, their bodies, will be the centre of attention. There are few places to hide in physical education classes set as they are on playing fields, courts, in swimming pools and gymnasiums. Physical competence or lack of it is there for all to see (p. 52)

In their analysis of PE in Finnish secondary schools (where PE is generally taught in single gendered groups), Berg and Lahelma (2010) explain that given the centrality of the body to PE practices, differences between competent bodies and those that are less physically skilled become visible. Importantly, they highlight, that “it is not only students’ bodies that are evaluated and ranked, so too are the bodies of male and female PE teachers” (p. 31).
Often the differences within genders are emphasised through particular PE practices. As Clarke (2006) comments, “those who fail to perform and/or conform and/or display behavioural characteristics outside of accepted stereotypical heterosexual norms are likely to be ridiculed and subject to homophobic abuse. Boys are judged by their sporting achievements and must prove their heterosexual self” (p. 727). Similarly, Carless (2011), in his account of same-sex attracted males in school sporting settings, reports that heterosexism and homophobia perpetuated by hegemonic forms of masculinity make, “developing a coherent and authentic sense of self within this cultural setting … difficult or impossible” (p. 15). As Wright (1996a) explains, “not all boys are comfortable with a masculinity that expects them to be aggressive and tough in the face of pain” (p. 76). An emphasis on heteronormative identities can have some alarming consequences for individuals who embody identities that contrast dominant identity positions. McCaughtry and Tischler (2010) assert, from their analysis of boys’ PE that “boys embodied characteristics carried enormous weight in determining their social positioning and whether they were [considered] privileged or marginalized” (p. 183). These findings point to the significant role that PE and sporting contexts can have in the negotiation of masculine identities for some adolescent boys.

A commonly reported concern in the literature is the continued dominance of competitive team sports in the PE curriculum, particularly those that champion violence and aggression, for their role in the creation of gender hierarchies amongst adolescent boys (Kirk, 2010a; Millington & Wilson, 2010; Parker, 1996). In McCaughtry and Tischler’s (2010) study the pervasiveness of team sports in the PE curriculum content “played a central role in elevating certain masculinities and bodies to dominant, hegemonic status, whilst relegating others to subordination” (p. 184). On this point, Kirk (2010a) asserts that the gender-making processes of PE are as much influenced by the school as an institution as it is by the subject matter of PE, highlighting the importance of ‘contextually-based’ research in the quest for more equitable pedagogies in boys’ PE.

Kirk is critical of the common uptake of a multi-activity model of curriculum (Ennis, 1999) in school PE where sports are sampled in short six to ten lesson sequences before moving onto another sport. He states, “because of the way in which the school timetable invariably works, PE is most often reduced to the practice of de-
contextualised sports techniques rather than the full-blooded playing of intact sports” (Kirk, 2010a). As a result it is possible that students who are physically skilled across a range of sporting pursuits can be presented with a ‘stage’ upon which to demonstrate their physical competence and students who lack the range of skills required for many of these traditional team sports can often be subjected to ridicule, harassment and bullying. The following section explores multiple masculinities in practice within school PE and sport contexts.

3.1.2 Practising masculinities - Boys’ experiences in physical education and sport

The growing amount of work that examines the intersection of sport, PE, schooling and masculinity has provided many examples of the practice of multiple masculinities (see for example Bramham, 2003; Gard & Meyenn, 2000; Hickey, 2008; Kehler, 2010; Light, 2007; McCaughtry & Tischler, 2010; Parker, 1996). Kehler (2010) reports that “boy’s decisions to engage or disengage with PE within secondary schools are underscored by the socio-cultural understandings they have of their bodies and specifically, how these understandings relate to … masculine identities” (p. 159). Further, Wellard (2009) indicates that school experiences of PE and sport do not only impact on the development of masculine identities, but can also shape future participation in physical activity.

Other research has indicated that for many adolescent boys, the nature of their participation and the types of sports in which they are involved are heavily drawn on to define their masculinity (Wright, 1996a). In his study of ‘how young schoolboys become somebody’, UK researcher Swain (2003) found that sporting success was often drawn on as a signifier of “successful masculinity” (p. 302) and that high levels of performance in sport and games “was generally the single most effective way of gaining popularity and status in the male peer group” (p. 302). Interestingly, in an earlier paper Swain (2000) asserts that particular activities, such as football, were more commonly implicated in this process than other activities. Drawing on Connell’s theorising of masculinity (1992; 1993; Connell, 1995), he explains that for the participants in his study, football “and its practices [with competitive displays of skill and strength were] … a major influence on hegemonic masculinities which are performed and defended in relation to other masculinities and femininities that
become subordinated and marginalised” (Swain, 2000, p. 95). Whilst Swain does discuss the wider role commercialisation and media has had on the image of football in the UK, particularly for its “social and political currency” (Swain, 2000, p. 100), he argues that for many of his participants “the image of the ideal, quintessential (heterosexual) man resides in the professional game of football, and … many boys use the game as a model to construct, negotiate and perform their own versions of masculinity” (p. 101).

More recently working from an Australian setting, Hickey (2010) discusses the drivers for young males involvement in an Auskick programme indicating that “participation … was widely undertaken as a medium through which young males could access high masculine social capital” (p. 113). Although he comments that friends and peers were key to participation and enjoyment in the program, many of the participants in his study commented that “being able to identify themselves within or alongside the ‘sporty kids’ was clearly a badge of honour” (Hickey, 2010, p. 113). Hickey explains that “in the making of their own identity a number of the boys spoke about how a football identity improves one’s peer status and provides opportunities for increased connection” (p. 113).

What emerges from these accounts, and the growing body of literature examining sport, PE and masculinity, are patterns of practising masculinities, and more alarmingly, the ways in which dominant hegemonic forms of masculinity are privileged within sport and PE at the expense of marginalised others. For example, Parker (1996) describes boys’ PE as a “strategic site … [in] the development of masculinity” (p. 141). On the basis of his study of adolescent males in a multiethnic, inner-city secondary school in the UK, he reports that the school’s academic ethos, together with the internalised values of his participants in relation to PE and sport, contributed to a hierarchical peer group position of particular identities. Specifically, he comments that the ‘hard boys’ drew on a discourse of violence to “structure their own educational agenda … by which they could implicitly and explicitly manipulate the ordering and routine of class activity, and generally dominate others with their physical presence” (Parker, 1996, p. 147).

2 Auskick is the Australian Football League’s (AFL) introductory programme for children aged 5 to 12 years of age designed to promote and foster interest and potentially recruit participants to the game.
Similarly, Gard and Meyenn (2000) report that the boys in their study strongly supported and valued elite male contact sports given their perceptions that a key part of “becoming a man” was participation in contact sports where the risk of injury was high and where tolerating pain when injuries were sustained was paramount in displaying an acceptable embodied masculine identity. In a later paper, Gard (2008) reflects on this earlier work commenting that “what this study showed was that, rather than the usual things which adults often assume fuels children’s participation in organised physical activity such as friendship and belonging to a group, it was the physicality of different activities which mattered” (p. 185; original emphasis). Although there were different responses to body contact in that some boys absolutely feared it, whilst others relished it, Gard comments that what was surprising was that they “all talked about it” (2008, p. 185).

Similar sentiments were offered by Pringle (2008) in his use of a collective story account of boys’ experiences of rugby union as a culturally dominant activity in New Zealand as a “pedagogical tool to disrupt … conceptualisations between heavy-contact sports and masculinities” (p. 232). Specifically, his collective story worked to demonstrate how “sporty boys” that embodied sport-based hegemonic masculinities were privileged, whilst Tony, an individual who performed an alternative version of masculinity was bullied and marginalised. Unfortunately, such experiences are not limited to this collective story only, and alarmingly there is an increased frequency of the reporting of similar experiences of bullying, violence and oppression towards those who embody alternative masculinities, usually perpetrated by hypermasculine identities (see for example Atkinson & Kehler, 2010; Hickey, 2008; Kehler, 2010; McCaughtry & Tischler, 2010; Mooney & Hickey, 2011; Pringle & Hickey, 2010).

In considering how masculinity practices impact on student experience in sport and PE, recent work by Atkinson and Kehler (2010) in Canadian secondary schools reveal two distinct trends. Firstly, the proliferation of an anti-jock movement by adolescent boys and secondly, growing attrition rates in Year 9 PE classes which they suggest is clearly related to the first trend. They surmise that boys are “choosing to withdraw from gym class as soon as they are institutionally allowed … as a reaction to a victimizing jock culture in gym settings” (Atkinson & Kehler, 2010, p. 73). They argue that spaces such as the locker room are “saturated with a
hidden gender curriculum” and that given their lack of regulation by teachers and coaches can become significant sites in the “alienating climate in physical education for scores of boys who neither embody nor identify with dominant masculinities” (Atkinson & Kehler, 2010, p. 76). Emphatically, they claim this “social fishbowl setting is one in which there is little opportunity to escape surveillance and the reminding of how one’s male body does not make the grade” (Atkinson & Kehler, 2010, p. 81). Interestingly, they observe that whilst the Canadian government response to concerns of youth attrition has been to introduce curricular initiatives that mandate 30 minutes of physical activity per day in primary-junior schools, many boys are opting for physical activity in a “do-it-yourself fashion outside of school time” (Atkinson & Kehler, 2010, p. 82) or foregoing physical activity all together.

In attempting to understand how those who embody alternative non-hegemonic masculinities experience school PE and sport settings, Kehler (2010) describes many of the practices that students engaged in to avoid participation. Although not an exhaustive list, he cites repeatedly missing class, being ill-prepared to participate, lacking initiative in class and obvious discomfort with some activities as key indicators of student’s reluctance to participate. Although similar trends have also been reported in girls’ PE (Flintoff & Scraton, 2001; Garrett, 2004b; Wright, 1997), Kehler argues that in boys’ PE, such practices are intimately linked with one’s expression of manliness. He claims that “the ways in which boys are positioned among boys and by boys in PE class significantly underscores the kinds of experience and impressions these boys develop about the masculine body” (Kehler, 2010, p. 164).

In research that explored the complex and interconnected ways that boys who embodied marginalised, non-hegemonic masculinities lived and survived school PE, McCaughtry and Tischler (2010) reveal ways in which “boys “wear” their oppression through guarded bodies, but also conversely how their bodies resist and subvert the marginalizing social practices of their teachers and fellow classmates” (p. 183). Whilst they claim, “the totality of research in school PE suggests that at least a moderate proportion of boys (and most likely plenty of girls) find PE irrelevant if not destructive to their self-esteem and health” (McCaughtry & Tischler, 2010, p. 181), they do signpost examples of resistance that some boys employ as active agents in subverting oppressive conditions. For this reason it is important to acknowledge,
that even within particular practices of various masculinities, identity positions are not static and passive but rather fluid and active. In his re-examination of hegemonic masculinity in high school rugby, Light (2007) reminds us that there is a danger of “adopting a reductionist view … that obfuscates diverse forms of masculinities, and their complex relations to each other operating in and around sport” (p. 324). He states:

No matter how dominant one form of masculinity becomes there is never only one form operating within an environment of absolute compliance … While a particular form of masculinity may develop a hegemonic status, variations and differing degrees of compliance and resistance operate within that hegemony (Light, 2007, p. 324).

This section has argued that gender identities are performed in context, and in the case of adolescent boys, school PE and sport have been discussed as key sites of masculinising practices “through which boys learn, embrace and embody, or are damaged by particular codes of dominant masculinity” (Atkinson & Kehler, 2010, p. 73). Perhaps one of the most alarming trends reported in the literature is the role that the teacher, and their pedagogies, can have in the legitimation of a masculine hierarchy in the class (Atkinson & Kehler, 2010; McCaughtry & Tischler, 2010). On the basis of their observations of PE lessons in a Swedish context, Larsson et al. (2009) describe how the heteronormative nature of PE supported the dominance of some boys and that despite teachers being aware of unequal power relations, they viewed this dominance as a ‘normal’ part of boys’ PE which was to be managed rather than challenged. As Rich (2004) argues, “research in the area of gender relations needs to account not only for the constraining social structures of PE but also the expressions of agency exhibited by PE teachers” (p. 216). For this reason it is important to examine literature that enhances understandings of how teachers constitute particular “truths” about effective teaching in PE, particularly for boys’ PE, and to explore what is known about how these are taken up in PE pedagogy.

3.2 Teacher constructions of ‘good’ pedagogical practices in boys’ PE

Over the past few decades significant debate about what constitutes ‘good’ pedagogy in PE has emerged through the literature. In their article on ‘Educational truth
telling’, Kelly, Hickey and Tinning (2000a) comment that “[b]roadly speaking, this debate has emerged as a consequence of certain practical and theoretical differences with regard to the form and substance, the nature, of good pedagogy in PE” (pp. 112-113). Further, in reference to Kirk’s (1992) arguments, they comment that “it is the sorts of ‘self-evident’ truths which attach to signifiers such as ‘good’, ‘bad’, ‘true’, ‘false’ and even ‘teaching’ that need to be rendered problematic” (p. 113). They contend that one of the key strengths of poststructuralist and postmodern discourses is that “in the process of problematising what intellectual work looks like … new spaces in which an examination of the processes of intellectual knowledge production” (Kelly, et al., 2000a, p. 111) have been opened up. By way of illustration, contemporary debates about what words such as ‘good’, ‘effective’, and ‘quality’ mean in relation to pedagogy have also been considered (Tinning, Macdonald, Wright, & Hickey, 2001).

The introduction of the term ‘effectiveness’ has been linked to the discourses of accountability that emerged through school reforms in the 1970s and 80s, particularly in the United States, and is associated with a more technical view of teaching (Tinning, et al., 2001). Predominantly connected with researchers interested in establishing links “between what teachers do in class (or in the gym) and what pupils learned” (Tinning, et al., 2001, p. 302), judgements were made regarding the degree to which the teacher’s intentions, in relation to student achievement, were actually accomplished. As a result of this technocratic way of thinking about teaching and education, the focus was directed towards ‘efficiency’, and this “had the tendency to position teachers as more like technicians than professionals” (Tinning, et al., 2001, p. 303). In critique of this, Tinning and colleagues caution that in order to be judged ‘effective’, teachers were merely required to implement a predetermined curriculum produced by an ‘expert’, rather than actually consider the “worthiness, the educational purpose, of a curriculum activity” (p. 303). In their consideration, the term ‘quality teaching’ is preferred for its potential to move beyond a focus on effectiveness and efficiency that equates to merely the accomplishment of “pre-specified objectives” (p. 303).

In light of these contributions, I have employed the term ‘good’ pedagogy for two reasons. Firstly, drawing on Lusted (1986), the term ‘pedagogy’ offers a more interactive conception of how we come to know which will be discussed in further
detail in the section below. Secondly, I wish to avoid lengthy debates around the terms ‘effectiveness’, ‘efficiency’ and ‘quality’ given their contestable nature, although a consideration of factors that have shaped these notions of expertise, particularly with respect to PE, will be discussed in more detail in subsequent sections of this chapter. In accordance with Tinning (2006):

There is no doubt, in the Australian context in particular, the last decade has seen some significant changes in the way in which quality education is conceptualised … The schooling process is increasingly orientated to, and shaped by, a concern for preparing citizens to take their productive place in a globalised market economy. We now see skills and dispositions such as lifelong learning, problem solving, critical thinking and multiliteracies as the desired outcomes of schooling. Moreover, the development of such knowledge, skills and attributes must take place in a supportive context that respects and values difference. It is within this context that good teaching in HPE must now be judged (p. 238).

3.2.1 What is understood by the term ‘pedagogy’ in physical education?

The notion of ‘pedagogy’ is also reported as a frequently contested term (Watkins & Mortimer, 1999), and as Green (2008) points out ‘pedagogy’ “tends to find employment as a catch-all term for the ‘science’, ‘art’ or even ‘craft’ of teaching; that is, what we come to know and understand about the process of teaching via empirical research, reflection and theorizing” (p. 219). On the one hand, it has been employed to describe the ‘science of teaching’ (Gore, 1993), whereas on the other, alternative definitions focus more on the process of learning and (re)production of knowledge, and sometimes even refers to the ways in which particular knowledge(s) are authorised or legitimised (Lusted, 1986; Tinning, 2010).

Green (2008) is critical of the definition proffered by Watkins and Mortimer who describe pedagogy as, “any conscious activity by one person designed to enhance learning in another” (p. 3). Rather, he suggests, “pedagogy encompasses such diverse aspects as teaching and learning styles, subject and lesson content, and the organization of lessons as well as the grouping of pupils therein” (Green, 2008, p. 219). Further, he explains, that these are interdependent dimensions in teaching, for
in PE classes, “the skill and ability levels of pupils and the number of pupils in a class tend to have a substantial impact upon the delivery of lesson and, in particular, the teaching style(s) employed” (p. 219). A concern here is the focus predominantly on aspects of ‘teaching’ with little consideration of the (intended or unintended) ‘learning’ that pedagogy fosters.

In a detailed account, Tinning (2010) explains that whilst the use of the term ‘pedagogy’ has increased in PE literature over the past two decades, an increased usage does not necessarily equate to a shared or coherent understanding of the term. He explains, “the ways in which people think about pedagogy are underpinned or informed by particular knowledge paradigms and ways of seeing the world” (Tinning, 2010, p. 7). Tinning describes that one of the most popular conceptions of the term pedagogy is as the ‘science of teaching’. He reports that this was underpinned by a behaviourist perspective that “predicated … that teaching can be reduced to a set of variables that can be observed and measured” (p. 8). Further, he claims that during the 1970s and 1980s research in PE pedagogy was overwhelmingly scientific in nature (Tinning, 2008).

Tinning comments that by the time research into pedagogy as a process was taken up in PE research, mainstream educational research had moved “beyond attempts to find the best teaching method or the laws that underpin teaching … [yet] PE researchers were still seeking answers to those very questions through quasi-experimental research” (2010, p. 9). Tinning also highlights research that considered pedagogy and didactics associated with the ‘art of teaching (see for example Haag, 2005), and phenomenological pedagogy (see for example Nilges, 2004) that explored relationships between the teacher and the learner (Tinning, 2010) as being taken up at various times, although in a limited sense. Rather, he comments that with an increase in scholars drawing on critical perspectives, pedagogy as knowledge (re)production became subject to significant critique. In wider educational circles, this work considered “whose interests [were] being served by particular curriculum choices and pedagogical practices … [giving] attention to both the intentions and the consequences of pedagogy” (Tinning, 2010, p. 11). In a PE sense, similar approaches were adopted (see for example Bain, 1989; Kirk, 1986).
As a key figure in this ‘radial discourse’ (O'Sullivan, Siedentop, & Locke, 1992), Tinning critiques the narrow conceptualising of pedagogy as the ‘science of teaching’ and draws on the work of Lusted (1986) to offer a broader understanding of the term that acknowledges the teacher, the learner and the knowledge they produce through their interactions. Lusted (1986) claims that pedagogy:

- draws attention to the process through which knowledge is produced.
- Pedagogy addresses the “how” questions involved not only in the transmission or reproduction of knowledge but also in its production. Indeed, it enables us to question the validity of separating these activities so easily by asking under what conditions and through what means we “come to know” (pp. 2-3).

Advancing this thesis, Tinning (2010) contends that *pedagogical work* describes the consequences of pedagogy, or rather, the result of pedagogy. As he explains, “someone may learn something from an experience or an encounter with a device or piece of equipment … but if there was no explicit intention to pass on knowledge by someone…then there has been no pedagogy and no pedagogical work done” (Tinning, 2010, p. 19). Additionally, he contends that it is not necessarily “what particular pedagogical practices are said to do, but rather is concerned with what knowledge(s), ways of thinking, dispositions and subjectivities are actually (re)produced in/through particular pedagogical encounters” (p. 19). This is a very different conception from Siedentop’s (1983) claim that “for pedagogy to have occurred, certain student outcomes must be attained. No outcomes, no pedagogy!” (p. 7). As Tinning (2010) argues, outcomes, or consequences of learning, are not always that which are intended (Tinning, 2010).

For the purpose of this research, the notion of pedagogy as a purposeful encounter between each of the three agents – the teacher, the subject matter and the learner with the intent purpose of (re)producing knowledge (Tinning, 2010) is adopted. Moreover, an interest in both the intended and unintended learnings that both students and teachers take from these pedagogical encounters, particularly in terms of how this influences gendered subjectivities and identities, is taken up and discussed in the results within the context of boys’ PE.
3.3 Shaping competing notions of expertise in PE

In considering the ways in which various notions of ‘good’ pedagogy in PE have been constructed, literature suggests that “[v]arious experts have offered, at different times, complimentary and/or competing notions of what constitutes good teaching in physical education” (Kelly, Hickey, & Tinning, 2000b, p. 285; original emphasis). It is explained that these ‘expert’ discussions have generally emerged “out of the intellectual positions associated with two different paradigms: one scientific (behaviouristic) and the other critical theory” (Kelly, et al., 2000b, p. 285).

Drawing on assumptions that foreground empiricism and objectivity, scientific approaches to studying social life “proclaim that the truth about human existence can be pursued and hopefully revealed, understood, and implemented according to the disinterested principles of science” (Kelly, et al., 2000b, p. 285). When applied to researching pedagogy, Kelly and colleagues explain, “the principles of good pedagogy are to be rendered identifiable, quantifiable, and predictable via the practise accorded value in the natural (hard) sciences” (Kelly, et al., 2000b, pp. 285-286; original emphasis). In contrast, ideas about what constitutes ‘good’ pedagogy that emerge from a critical paradigm are underpinned by “assumptions that, by the critical theorist’s own reckoning, are not widely accepted. Truth within this discursive domain is self-referentially constructed within the self-estrangement and activist logics … fundamental to the educational, empowerment, and emancipatory aspirations of the Enlightenment project” (Kelly, et al., 2000b, p. 286). From these perspectives, it was considered that PE pedagogy could be improved by addressing “the dominant ideological suppositions of individualism, meritocracy and technocratic rationalism” (Kelly, et al., 2000b, p. 286). For example, McKay, Gore and Kirk (1990) contend that teachers:

have a responsibility to alert students about the inherently political nature of education, including physical education, and how it has been and continues to be inextricably involved in the key moral and political issues that conform members of all societies – questions of freedom, justice, equality (p. 66).

According to Kelly et al (2000b) such work is often characterised in a form of oppositional politics that aim to reveal more equitable practices in PE which “can serve to unmask the ideological nature of concerns with merit, performance,
measurement and predication in PE pedagogy” (p. 286). It is perhaps worth commenting that this type of work in PE pedagogy has drawn significant critique over the years, with one of the most pointed and earliest by O’Sullivan, Siedentop and Locke (1992). Describing the work of critical theorists, feminists, postmodernists and poststructuralists as a radical discourse in the PE literature, they claim that several of the “accusations about work within the dominant [scientific] discourse and some of their assertions about the new discourse” (pp. 267-268) are “less than responsible. There have been too many instances where arguments have been unobjective, assertions have been erroneous, and language and analogies have been destructive … assertions … individuals might well take … personally” (O'Sullivan, et al., 1992, p. 268). Rather these authors espouse a “vive la difference!” (p. 279) where gains can be made by learning from other perspectives, with an awareness “that we shall never perfectly understand each other” (O'Sullivan, et al., 1992, p. 279). Acknowledging that questioning the processes of knowledge production can generate tensions, Kelly et al (2000b) comment, “rather than call for the acceptance of difference as truce in intellectual debates about the definition of good teaching, our call is underpinned by a practical and theoretical recognition of uncertainty and contingency” (2000b, p. 294).

In relation to PE pedagogy in particular, literature highlights that many descriptions of good pedagogy have emerged from the scientific tradition and that such understandings tend to dominate constructions of ‘best practice’ (Kelly, et al., 2000b). Early behaviourist research drew on processes of systematic observation to describe the behaviour of teachers and students in PE classes and evolved into what was known as the “process-product” research where “researchers attempted to … collect data on teacher behaviour in the gym and then to determine the correlation between … behaviours (process) and some measure of pupil learning (product)” (Tinning, et al., 2001, p. 291). In an effort to synthesise the available research findings, Siedentop (1983) produced the following eight strategies for effective teaching in both classroom and PE practical settings:

1. Devote a large percentage of time to content.
2. Minimise management/wait/transition time in class routines.
3. Devote a high percentage of content time to practice.
4. Keep students on track.
5. Assign tasks that are meaningful and matched to student abilities.
6. Keep the learning environment supportive and set high but realistic expectations.
7. Give lessons smoothness and momentum.


An emergent theme from the above account is the importance of managing time in the construction of notions of effective practice in PE. This idea became manifested in, and an important underpinning of, the ‘academic learning time’ (ALT) research (Tinning, et al., 2001). Adapted from the broader educational research, ALT-PE refers to the time a student is engaged with a set task and data is gathered by an observer making judgements about “whether or not a majority of the class are engaged in doing the task which has been set by the teacher within a certain time interval” (Tinning, et al., 2001, p. 294). Despite its popularity and perceived ‘essence’ of teaching effectiveness in PE (Siedentop, Maud, & Taggart, 1986), ALT-PE has been critiqued for its use as a “proxy measure of pupil achievement” (Tinning, et al., 2001), particularly when statistics suggest many students are only active in PE for approximately 25 per cent of the time (Tinning, 2006). As Tinning provokes, if “ALT-PE is the best measure of teaching effectiveness then we could only conclude that most PE lessons are woefully ineffective” (Tinning, 2006, p. 236).

An analysis of the early PE literature that attempts to determine what ‘effective’ or ‘good’ teaching in PE looks like reveals relatively little research that works with teachers as opposed to working on them (Kirk, 1989 cited in Parker, 1995). In her research with 14 secondary PE teachers in the United States, Parker revealed that the majority of teachers defined effective teaching as a “hierarchy of pedagogical practices in which organisation, management, discipline and control form the base, with student success being the ultimate goal” (p. 127). In another study, Placek’s (1983) results revealed discrepancies between what teachers/student teachers and researchers conceived successful lessons to look like. Although almost half of her participants related success to student learning, she concluded that perceptions of success were “related to the immediate, observable happenings in the gym. Are the students participating (busy), enjoying themselves (happy), and doing what the teacher directs (good)?” (Placek, 1983, p. 54).
Whilst there have been some advancements in the ways in which ‘good’ pedagogy is conceived in PE, recent work still reveals ‘control’ as central to this process. In their work with pre-service teachers, Wrench and Garrett (2012) conclude that effective teaching is “understood as being in control, planning for teaching and student learning as well as managing the learning environment for participation and maximising participation” (p. 10). Further, they claim, “given the focus on teacher effectiveness and efficiency in meeting desired objectives ‘good’ physical education teachers … [are] constructed as using performance pedagogies” (Wrench & Garrett, 2012, p. 10; original emphasis). Drawing on Tinning (1991), Wrench and Garrett explain that performance pedagogies “situate teaching as the presentation of a discrete series of isolated skills and practices that can be applied in a systematic manner and encourage learning that is reproductive rather than transformative” (p. 9). A more detailed discussion of the competing pedagogies in PE will follow.

In considering how particular ‘truths’ about effective PE pedagogy are shaped, Kelly et al (2000b) ask, “[w]hat is it about the contemporary conditions of existence that enable certain articulations to function as powerful truths in and of PE pedagogy?” (p. 288). They consider that this process of knowledge production is more than some “mere representation of some transparent reality” (p. 287) but rather something that is constructed within available discourses. As Kirk (1992) contends, “activities like teaching and learning physical education take place in a nexus of discourses that provide the means of making sense of the world” (p. 43). Acknowledging that various constructions of ‘truth’ can exist, research has linked the importance of a teacher’s pre-professional background (Rich, 2004) and socialisation into the profession (Armour & Jones, 1998; Brown, 1999; Green, 1998), particularly given this occurs within discursive fields, as central in the development of beliefs and knowledge about ‘good’ pedagogy in PE (Tsangaridou, 2006a, 2006b) which will be discussed below.

3.3.1 Physical Education Teacher socialisation – Occupational socialisation and cultural (re)production

It is claimed that PE teachers’ beliefs about ‘good’ pedagogy in PE are strongly influenced during the socialisation process (Curtner-Smith, 2001; Lawson, 1983a, 1983b; Schempp & Graber, 1992; Sofó & Curtner-Smith, 2010; Templin & Schempp, 1989). Applying findings from the medical profession, socialisation
research in PE “became organised around three distinct stages: anticipatory socialization, professional socialization and entry into the workforce” (Stroot & Ko, 2006, p. 425). In one of the earliest socialisation studies in the field of education, Lortie (1975) defined socialisation as “a subjective process – it is something that happens to people as they move through a series of structured experiences and internalize the subculture of the group” (p. 61). In a PE sense, Lawson (1986) articulates this process as “all of the kinds of socialization that initially influence persons to enter the field of physical education and that later are responsible for their perceptions and actions as teacher educators and teachers” (p. 107). A decade later, Macdonald and Kirk (1996) report socialisation as “a subjective process with the goal being for the teacher to build and maintain a sense of personal identity, self-worth and professional competence within the constraints of occupational standards, ethics and regulations” (p. 60).

Whilst five subcategories of occupational socialisation have been identified, it has been the organisational socialisation sub-category that has most often been the theoretical framework drawn on in research that has explored the socialisation of PE teachers (Stroot & Ko, 2006). After Van Maanen and Schein (1979), Lawson (1986) explained organisational socialisation occurs when “an individual is taught and learns what behaviours and perspectives are customary and desirable within the work settings as well as which ones are not” (pp. 211-212). In Lawson’s pioneering model of PE teacher socialisation in the early 1980s, he identified that most recruits entered Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) with one of two ‘subjective warrants’, described as “a person’s perception of the requirements and benefits of work in a given profession weighted against self-assessments of aspiration and competence” (Lawson, 1983b). In summarising this work, Green (2008) states:

One form of subjective warrant … is a ‘coaching orientation’; that is, the desire to coach school sport and school teams in particular … The other prominent … subjective warrant is, according to Lawson, a ‘teaching orientation’, wherein the teacher’s main concern is with teaching curricula PE (p. 213).

Interpreting Lawson, Curtner-Smith (2001) explains that those pre-service teachers with a ‘coaching orientation’ were reported to be more likely to have participated in a “high level of inter-school sport, be male, and have attended schools in which there had been little emphasis on instruction during physical education lessons but a great
deal of importance … attached to the performance of extracurricular school teams” (p. 83). In contrast, those with a ‘teaching orientation’ were more likely to have been involved in “physical activity other than organized, traditional, competitive sport, be female, and to have experienced and been successful in good quality physical education during their own school careers” (Curtner-Smith, 2001, p. 83). The implications of Lawson’s work in terms of PE pedagogy here, according to Curtner-Smith (2001), is that those with a ‘coaching orientation’ are more likely to have a “low career commitment to teaching, use ineffective teaching behaviours, and not work from formal curriculum plans … they would support low-quality school physical education programs” (p. 83). In his own work, Green (2008) claims that this distinction is a somewhat false dichotomy as PE teachers in his research did not often clearly distinguish between these roles in either a theoretical or practical sense (p. 213).

Lawson (1983b) described three kinds of socialisation as important for PE teachers. Firstly, *acculturation*, which occurs from birth and incorporates the childhood and adolescent sporting and PE experiences that shapes individuals values, beliefs and predispositions (Green, 2008). Secondly, *professional socialisation*, which occurs during PETE, and was defined by Lawson as “the process by which…teachers acquire and maintain the values, sensitivities, skills, and knowledge that are deemed ideal for physical education teaching” (p. 4). Thirdly, *organisational socialisation*, which refers to the process by which teachers “acquire and maintain a custodial ideology and the knowledge and skills that are valued and rewarded by the organization” (Lawson, 1983b, p. 4). With respect to how these processes have shaped notions of ‘good pedagogy in PE’, it is worth a brief consideration of relevant research contributions.

As Green (2002) comments, “people’s thoughts, as well as their behaviours, tend to bear the hallmark of past as well as present experiences” (p. 68). In the case of PE teachers, their own experiences of school, PE and sport can act as “potentially potent socializing agents during acculturation” (Sofo & Curtner-Smith, 2010, p. 348). In fact, extensive research from the UK (see for example Brown, 1999; Evans & Williams, 1989; Green, 2002), the USA (see for example Chen & Ennis, 1996; Curtner-Smith, 1997; Lawson, 1983b; Templin & Schempp, 1989) and Australia (see for example Macdonald & Kirk, 1996; Macdonald, Kirk, & Braiuka, 1999) has
suggested that the biographies of pre-service PE teachers, and particularly their own
guides to the development of values, beliefs and ideologies in relation to PE, professional socialisation experiences through PETE have been reported to have relatively little influence on pre-service teachers’ ‘philosophies’ in relation to ‘good’ PE pedagogy (Curtner-Smith, 2001; Green, 1998; Green, 2002; Sofo & Curtner-Smith, 2010). Indeed, evidence suggests that teacher training tends to confirm rather than challenge pre-service teachers’ beliefs about PE (Capel, 2005). However, much of this research has been conducted in the UK and the USA where students normally complete an undergraduate degree in sports science or related field and then a one
year postgraduate teacher training course. It is possible that the pervasive discourses and experiences of undergraduate degrees of this nature act to reinforce firmly established beliefs held upon entry, and that one-year programs do not provide adequate opportunity to disrupt or challenge these perceptions. In Australia there are many PETE programs that are four-year degrees in which discipline studies (predominantly from the sports science domain) and educational studies are undertaken concurrently. Perhaps greater analysis of these degree programs for their potential to disrupt deeply ingrained beliefs over time may yield more productive insights.

School placements as an area of PETE training have also featured prominently in the socialisation research and as Green (2008) observes, although extended placements “may have improved trainees’ preparedness to teach PE, this may have more to do with introducing them to the realities of teaching and the preferred pedagogic practices of their mentors than enabling delivery of the ideal-type PE lessons” (p. 211) espoused in university degree programs. Tinning (1988) refers to this as a ‘pedagogy of necessity’, whereby pre-service teachers make short term situational adjustments (Green, 2008) to the immediate demands of their mentor teachers in order to achieve their goal of qualifying to become a PE teacher. Behets and Vergauwen (2006) observed that school mentors appear to have a greater impact on the teaching behaviours of pre-service teachers than their PETE training programs. As such, Green concludes, “student teachers’ perceived need to emulate what their mentors do means that custom and practice tend to be reinforced rather than challenged” (p. 212) during PETE programs.

The final socialisation stage, organisational socialisation, occurs when the beginning teacher commences employment in schools. Schempp and Graber (1992) comment, “as teachers live their lives in schools, they both shape and become shaped by the experience. So on it goes…” (p. 344). Upon entry into the workplace where new colleagues, departments and administrators influence discourse and by extension the pedagogical practices valued, beginning teachers can feel obliged to adapt to align with dominant constructions. Capel (2005) explains that for beginning teachers, the workplace, especially early-on in teachers’ careers, is important in supporting and restricting their practices. According to Stroot and Ko (2006) the negotiation of dominant values and beliefs held by colleagues and the wider school community,
together with the practical implications of infrastructure, equipment and facilities, can help to explain why much of what is gained through teacher education courses can tend to be ‘washed out’ or negated in a relatively short space of time.

In their overview of research into the experiences of beginning teachers, Stroot and Ko (2006) describe three responses to the socialisation process as proffered by Van Maanen and Schein (1979) – custodianship, content innovation and role innovation. Fundamentally their premise is many beginning teachers exhibit either a ‘custodian’ approach that accepts the status quo and rarely questions colleagues or their practices; an approach that seeks to make changes to improve current practices (content innovation) or alternatively an inclination to completely reject the current system (role innovation). Van Maanen and Schein explain that role innovation is characterised by a teacher potentially “attacking and attempting to change the mission associated traditionally with that role” (1979, p. 228), although the dearth of research that points to examples of this approach in PE settings suggests a negligible uptake. In contrast, evidence does highlight the tensions involved for beginning teachers across different contexts and circumstances, for example in rural schools (Macdonald & Kirk, 1996) and when attempting to implement a new pedagogical approach in PE (Curtner-Smith, et al., 2008). Unfortunately, in Macdonald’s work (1995) we see examples of PE teacher attrition when these tensions are perceived to be irreconcilable.

3.4 Mapping competing discourses that shape pedagogies in PE

Enduring cultural practices in PE and potential tensions that can arise for beginning teachers are often the result of competing discourses that shape notions of what constitutes ‘good’ pedagogy in PE. Much of what has been presented in the previous two chapters has already signposted the significant influence particular discourses, specifically those related to gender and sexuality, have had on the wider school and PE experiences of adolescent boys. This section overviews what is known about the various discourses that shape ‘regimes of truth’ (Wright, 1996b) about ‘good’ pedagogical practice in PE. Whilst the impact of gendered discourses on PE pedagogy is of prime interest to this study, this section will discuss the ways in
which additional prominent discourses, from both within the field of education and outside of it, have shaped contemporary notions of PE pedagogical practice.

Foucault (1972) used the term ‘discourse’ to refer to articulated systems of ‘statements, terms, categories and beliefs’ that act to “regulate and control social relations and social practices within particular social formations” (Wright, 1996b, p. 334). After Tinning (2010), discourse is employed here to “refer to the language, patterns of speech, metaphors, and general way of thinking about our field” (pp. 68-69). As a cautionary note however, I acknowledge Penney and Waring’s (2000) point that in any analysis of discourse and pedagogy it is important to be mindful that “all pedagogies inevitably feature multiple discourses, and there are thus overlaps between ‘different’ pedagogies that need to be acknowledged” (pp. 8-9, original emphasis).

An analysis of Australian school PE from the 1900s to today would reveal various curriculum models present at different historical points such as “Swedish gymnastics, movement education, health related fitness (HRF), fundamental movement skills (FMS), sport education, Teaching games for understanding (TGfU) and Games sense” (Tinning, 2010, p. 50) amongst others. Whilst they have been called different things, and presented differently in terms of curriculum models, teaching methods or instructional approaches, Tinning (2010) reminds us, each iteration “also embraced particular pedagogical strategies that were considered necessary for the implementation of the curriculum” (p. 50). This suggests a somewhat blurring of the boundaries between what is considered ‘curriculum’ and what is considered ‘pedagogy’ (Tinning, 2010), however returning to Lusted’s (1986) notion of the interrelationship between the two, he argues “how one teaches … is inseparable from what is being taught and, crucially how one learns” (p. 3). Therefore making clear distinctions between them may be unhelpful, or perhaps artificial, for the purpose of this study. As Tinning (2010) argues, “considering the assumptions underpinning these curriculum models and pedagogical practices provides important insights about the changing and enduring ideas regarding what forms of physical activity are considered important to learn and how they should be taught” (p. 50).

In the States and Territories of Australia, how PE curricula is packaged and delivered can vary somewhat, however common threads do appear in that it is generally
organised around four key themes, namely sports (both individual and team games); health related activities (such as fitness circuits, running etc.); recreational or adventure based pursuits (such as canoeing, orienteering etc.); and sports scientific knowledge, “which consists mainly of the teaching of biophysical knowledge about the body and physical activity” (Tinning, 2010, p. 169). As Wright (1996b) reminds us, curriculum is always the outcome of struggles and negotiations between particular parties with their own vested interests “in having their version of physical education recognized as the one legitimate version” (p. 332).

As a result, what PE ‘looks like’ across different contexts is very much a result of discourse-power relations, yet whether this is necessarily beneficial to all participants is often questioned. For example, Ennis (1999) explains the multi-activity curriculum model as one of the most prominent ways in which PE is organised across much of the Western world. In his critique, Tinning (2010) claims these short units of activity (usually 6 to 10 lessons in length), “present a de-contextualised and non-authentic activity experience for students” (p. 60). Moreover, Tinning suggests that the dominant pedagogical form in most of the multi-activity model sessions is predominantly teacher directed. He comments, “it was assumed that children participating in multi-activity curricula would develop skills, knowledge and favourable dispositions towards the activities such that they would transfer their learning to sport and physical activity contexts beyond the school gate” (Tinning, 2010, p. 60). In reality, however, evidence suggests that this de-contextualised knowledge does not transfer to alternative settings and that young people do not find meaning and connectedness to their lives beyond school in PE and that many even consider the knowledge as irrelevant and boring (Tinning, 2010; Tinning & Fitzclarence, 1992). Importantly, in any consideration of pedagogy Tinning implores that we should ask, “What are the purposes of PE which a particular pedagogy is purporting to facilitate?” (2010, p. 50).

As others have argued, various iterations of PE pedagogy and curriculum have been shaped by the workings of dominant discourse and power (Kirk, 2010b; Penney & Waring, 2000; Tinning, 1991). Tinning (2010) explains that versions of PE are generally shaped by discourses about, and for, the body and health. According to McCaughtry and Tischler (2010), “certainly the most dominant discourses of the body in physical education centre on performance (Tinning, 1997b),
physiology/fitness (Quennerstedt, 2008) and body health (Rossi, Tinning, McCuaig, Sirna, & Hunter, 2009)” (p. 182). Central to many of these discourses is the role played by science in constructing the body as a bio-physical construct, a notion that is definitely privileged within the wider field of human movement studies (HMS) (Tinning, 2010). The metaphor of the body as a machine conveys perceptions of the body as an object, in need of training, discipline, exercise and manipulation. Tinning (2010) argues, “[w]hen … students come to accept science as the privileged way of knowing about the body, there is a danger that they come to believe that certain … social problems can best be solved through the application of scientific-type knowledge” (p. 103).

One of the most pervasive discourses about the body in PE is what Tinning termed ‘performance discourses’ after the work of Whitson and McIntosh (1990). Performance discourses are “essentially concerned with improving human performance ... Science is used as the method (or means) of obtaining improved performance” (Tinning, 2010, p. 69). In this discourse the body is positioned as a biological object (like a machine) that can be measured and tuned and the language of this discourse is about “selection, training intensity, measurement, survival of the fittest, competition, peaking...progressive overload”(Tinning, 2010, p. 69). In contrast to ‘performance discourses’, Tinning (2010) also refers to ‘participation discourses’ to describe discourses that underpin a focus on increasing participation in physical activity for a wide range of benefits (e.g., social and emotional) in addition to the physical. Tinning (2010) acknowledges that whilst improving performance might be a contributing factor to increasing participation, it is not the only one. He explains that the knowledge most frequently drawn on in these discourses is “derived from the social sciences and education. The language of participation discourses is about fun, inclusion, equity, involvement, enjoyment, social justice, caring, sharing, listening, cooperation etc” (p. 70).

PE is also strongly influenced by discourses about health that are perpetuated from both within the HMS discipline and the wider community. Increasing evidence now exists to demonstrate that regular physical activity can improve health, and that Australian society is witnessing an increase in the number of citizens who lead sedentary lifestyles (Begg et al., 2007). As a result, the field of HMS has over the past two decades, progressively aligned itself more closely with “medico-scientific
research to enhance the status of the subject and to provide legitimacy in educational contexts” (Gard & Wright, 2001, p. 535). Commentators argue that “embedded in a discourse of ‘healthism’ … this approach to physical education … relies most heavily on epidemiological and biomedical research to legitimate its research agenda, its presence in the curriculum and its pedagogical practices” (Gard & Wright, 2001, p. 536). In their research with rural young women, Lee and Macdonald (2010) explain the healthism discourse, most prominent in popular media and health promotion, encapsulates a range of beliefs and attitudes manifested in various health and fitness discourses.

The healthism discourse suggests that ‘good’ health can be achieved “unproblematically through individual effort and discipline, directed mainly at regulating the size and shape of the body” (Crawford, cited in Kirk & Colquhoun, 1989, p. 149). Closely aligned with obesity discourses that position overweight or obese people as primarily responsible for their condition through self-indulgence or laziness (Evans, 2003; Lee & Macdonald, 2010; Rich, 2010), this individualistic notion of health contends that improvements can be made through individual effort and determination alone. This discourse fails to acknowledge the unhealthy orientations to the body that it can cultivate (Lee & Macdonald, 2010). Further, Tinning (2010) argues that a major concern of this discourse is that there appears to be “little recognition of the strong social, cultural, emotional, ethnic or economic constraints/factors that also must be understood in any analysis of individual action or non-action” (p. 179).

According to Penney (2010), “from a curriculum and pedagogical perspective, there are risks inherent in HPE engaging with discourses of health, obesity, overweight and inactivity and more specifically, with those discourses framed as crisis discourses” (p. 10). It is suggested that drawing on ‘crisis discourses’ to promote specific pedagogical and curriculum practices has been a pervasive strategy in HPE that has been used strategically to position competing interests in Governmental policy debates (as highlighted in Chapter 2 discussions of the Australian Parliamentary inquiry into boys’ education). Swabey and Penney (2011) describe the accession of the FMS discourse in the 1990s in Australia as politically motivated. They claim that through the voices of some members of the professional community who perpetuated the idea of ‘PE in a state of crisis’ (p. 67), this discourse gained
enough momentum to result in the 1992 Senate Inquiry into “Physical and Sport Education in Australia” (p. 67). They explain:

the production of the 1992 Senate inquiry report…represents a valuable exemplar of the power of discursive strategies in shaping policy development … Substantively, it describes how two established specialist discourses within PE, skill development and fitness, were strategically promoted and linked as the foundation of a new discourse [Fundamental Motor Skills] that ultimately gained a privileged position within and beyond the 1992 senate inquiry (p. 68).

Evans (2009) reminds us that such acts are not isolated to one country alone, but rather, that on an international scale, PE is often viewed as a form of “compensatory education” (p. 171, original emphasis). He points out that, “PE cannot compensate for society’s ills, either in its own right, or trading as sport and health” (p. 171).

Recently, Macdonald (2011) has signalled another discursive shift on the HPE landscape, describing the ways in which discourses of neoliberalism and globalisation have been taken up in PE contexts. She claims that as a field there appears a willingness to “accept and accrue more of the vestiges of this [neoliberalism] ideology as a way of buying into the dominant policy agendas (e.g., accountability; reducing health costs; supporting choice)” (p. 36). Macdonald presents high stakes measurement and testing in fitness classes and the outsourcing of PE to private providers (particularly in primary school settings) as examples of ways in which neoliberalism has infiltrated PE practice. Perhaps most alarmingly, Macdonald signposts some of the potential implications this discursive shift may have for the profession, including the recasting of the role of a PE specialist. Rather than accept these changes uncritically, Macdonald argues:

PE’s challenge is to take a reflexive position here … and along with policy makers, principals, teachers and the community ask questions … [such as] ‘Who is driving what PE should be?’ The PE profession? The health profession? Large businesses? Are we comfortable with where this power is residing?” (p. 43).
3.4.1 Linking discourse and pedagogy in physical education

As discussed above, dominant discourses as historically produced and socially contingent, become powerful devices through which PE pedagogy and practice is shaped. Tinning (1997a) broadly categorises the various iterations of PE pedagogy/curriculum initiatives within one of three pedagogical groupings – traditional pedagogies, progressive pedagogies or radical pedagogies. He explains dominant and pervasive ‘traditional’ pedagogical approaches, or ‘performance-orientated’ pedagogies are characterised by practices that foreground ‘demonstration, explanation, practice’, ‘drill style’, ‘direct instruction’, or ALT-focused approaches to teaching and learning in PE. Progressive pedagogies or ‘participation-orientated’ pedagogies describe movement education, sport education and approaches such as Games Sense or Teaching Games for Understanding (TGfU). Located within his radical pedagogies category, are critical, feminist and post-modern pedagogical approaches (Tinning, 1997a).

Although literature does caution that making any generalisations about pedagogy can be fraught with danger (Penney & Waring, 2000), Tinning’s framework for thinking about PE pedagogy and various initiatives is a helpful way of guiding discussion around the multiple ways in which particular discourses do, and have, shaped developments in PE. As Penney and Waring (2000) point out, addressing “the underpinning points of commonality that associate particular practices with a specific initiative or approach … with reference to the values and interests that inform, define and shape the initiative or approach” (p. 10) is a helpful exercise in any consideration of future opportunities.

In considering these various pedagogical approaches, Tinning (2010) draws on Mosston’s (1966) ‘spectrum of teaching styles’ to explain that different “pedagogical methods or strategies can be understood as representing a continuum that characterizes the degree of involvement which teacher and pupil have in creating the conditions for the learning environment” (Tinning, 2010, p. 43). He explains that at one end of Mosston’s continuum is a pedagogical approach characterized by “maximum teacher control over the decisions which effect what is to be taught, how it is to be taught and how it is to be evaluated” (Tinning, 2010, p. 44). Mosston termed this ‘command style’ teaching, yet it has also been referred as the ‘traditional
method’ (Hoffman, 1971) and more recently, ‘direct instruction’ (Metzler, 2005). At the other end of Mosston’s continuum are pedagogies that are characterized by “maximum pupil control over the decisions that are made about the subject matter, the class organization and the means of evaluation” (Tinning, 2010, p. 45). These approaches are described as an ‘indirect method’ (Billaborough & Jones, 1966), and ‘teaching for personal and social responsibility’ pioneered by Don Hellison (1983, 1985). As Tinning (2010) reminds us:

> Teachers seldom employ pedagogical methods in a pristine fashion or according to a particular definition (they will usually teach with more a hybrid method – a bit of this, a bit of that) … When considering a teacher’s role in using a particular pedagogy it is easy to slip into the belief that the pedagogy exists, as it were, independent of the teacher and it is simply to be implemented by the teacher. The extent to which the teacher can, or does, implement a range of method strategies is perceived by some as the mark of a good teacher. Of course good teaching is much more than the implementation of a set of pedagogical strategies of a specified curriculum. It is in essence an interactive process in which the pupils and the task also play a large part in allowing certain things to happen or not happen (p. 44).

Acknowledging the role discourses have had on the privileging of various approaches to PE pedagogy, Tinning argues that different pedagogies are “more like a set of beliefs about the ways certain types of learning can best be achieved. They are as much statements about ideology and valued forms of knowledge as they are about procedures for actions” (2010, p. 44). To that end, given the dominance of bio-physical scientific discourses, it is not surprising that the traditional method of PE teaching has been considered as “THE way to teach physical activity” (Tinning, 2010, p. 45, original emphasis). Traditional PE pedagogies are underpinned by an objectivist view of learning where knowledge is transmitted from the expert (teacher) to the learner (Evans, 2006; Light & Georgakis, 2007). Penney and Waring (2000) argue that traditional pedagogies are based upon performance discourses that reinforce an approach to learning that focuses upon “the acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding relating to performance in specific activities included within the curriculum” (p. 11). Further, they claim an important characteristic of traditional pedagogy is the focus on acquiring skills that have “been pre-defined as desired learning outcomes” (Penney & Waring, 2000, p. 12).
In critique, Penney and Waring (2000) highlight that this approach somewhat disempowers both teacher and learner in that the teachers are positioned predominantly as technicians required to facilitate pre-defined learning whilst students are “denied scope to negotiate the outcomes of teaching and learning and their own role in the education process” (p. 12). Further, they argue that by privileging performance discourses in this pedagogy, issues relevant to the ‘social’ world of the participants are rarely considered in curriculum planning and teaching, and this has the propensity to produce a “form of the subject that is invariably narrow and [one] that fails to engage with the educational needs and interests of many pupils” (Penney & Waring, 2000, p. 13).

FMS curriculum is a prime example of how ‘traditional’ pedagogies become manifested in teaching and learning practices. FMS aims to teach motor skills such as running, jumping, catching and throwing (amongst others) that are considered ‘fundamental’ to “involvement in most sports, games and other forms of recreational physical activity” (Tinning, 2010, p. 56). Tinning explains that FMS advocates argue that these skills are best taught independently of the “pressure and contextual complexity that come from games participation” (2010, p. 57). In drawing on the scientific sub-disciplines of biomechanics and motor learning, analyses of sport has produced a series of ‘sub-component’ skills to be mastered to effectively participate in the game. Tinning explains that FMS pedagogy tends to rely on skill training that usually draws on traditional ‘demonstration, explanation and practice’ approaches.

In critique, others outline the potentially ‘gendered’ nature of this pedagogy (Wright & Okley, 1997) where fundamental skills privilege ‘masculine’ competitive sporting activities as the more ‘feminine’ aspects of movement such as rhythm, timing and general aesthetics are overlooked. Additionally, Tinning highlights that there is also concern that FMS approaches with their emphasis on “correctness” of technique occur in a context “that is stripped of meaningful connection with the activity/sport to which it is fundamental” (Tinning, 2010, p. 59). As Tinning argues, “this is the conceptual antithesis of the situated learning approaches like TGfU” (Tinning, 2010, p. 57).
In contrast, some progressive pedagogies tend to bear the trademark of Lave and Wenger’s (1991) situated learning theory, introduced to the PE setting by Kirk and Macdonald (1998). As examples, TGfU/Games Sense (Bunker & Thorpe, 1983) and Sport Education (Siedentop, 1994) were derived from a dissatisfaction with the way in which both games and sport were being taught in schools (Penney & Waring, 2000). Whilst both initiatives can be considered as strategies to “extend the legitimate knowledge and discourses of physical education” (Penney & Waring, 2000, p. 13), it is suggested that although they do offer potential to integrate new discourses they have remained somewhat “marginal, and furthermore, complementary to, established dominant discourses” (Penney & Waring, 2000, p. 14). For example, TGfU requires teachers to take greater account of the contextual nature of games (including commonality in skills, knowledge and understanding of tactical approaches across various game classifications), with respect to the age and experience of the learner (Penney & Waring, 2000). Yet, its uptake appears to be limited to that of a “foundation programme for games modules that have continued to privilege the discourses and practices of performance pedagogies” (Penney & Waring, 2000, p. 15).

Similarly, Sport Education as a curriculum model aims to “constitute a more authentic and complete educational sport experience for boys and girls” (Penney & Waring, 2000, p. 17) through a focus on the structural aspects of the curriculum and the introduction of new roles for both teachers and students. Often referred to as a curriculum model more so than an actual pedagogy, Sport Education in Victoria, Australia is commonly adopted in PE programs through the Sport Education in Physical Education Program (SEPEP) where students participate in sport education seasons designed to enhance an ethic of fair play and to promote exemplary sportsmanship. As others have highlighted, the teacher’s role thus shifts from prime instructor to facilitator (Parker & Curtner-Smith, 2011) in an effort to help students become competent, literate and enthusiastic sports people (Siedentop, 1994). SEPEP requires students “to take on more responsibility for their own learning by filling a number of roles which make sport the cultural event it is including coaching, captaining, officiating, scorekeeping, collecting statistics…and writing newspaper reports” (Parker & Curtner-Smith, 2011, p. 2).
Whilst aspects of Sport Education are certainly laudable, Penney and Waring (2000) comment that a key purpose is still to celebrate and promote sport as an integral part of the culture. These authors believe that “socio-critical discourses are destined to remain marginal to, and be subsumed within, the discourses dominant in traditional pedagogy” (Penney & Waring, 2000, p. 19). The issue here, they claim, is that “despite the emphasis of improvement of the sporting culture, Sport Education has not been directed towards redefining that culture, nor challenging the overall framework for, and focus of (traditional) physical education” (Penney & Waring, 2000, p. 18).

HRF, Health Based Physical Education (HBPE) or Health Orientated Physical Education (HOPE) describe pedagogies based on the fundamental premise that there is:

a positive relationship between physical activity and health...[where] physical education has a primary responsibility to address this decline by providing opportunities for vigorous activity during lessons and by providing physical skills and positive experiences which are likely to increase students’ participation in physical activity now and in the future” (Gard & Wright, 2001, p. 536).

Drawing on healthism discourses, these approaches are characterised by strategies aimed to improve fitness levels, promote awareness and understanding of behaviours that will enhance health and well-being and to address the role of participation in physical activity that contribute to better health (Penney & Waring, 2000). Gard and Wright (2001) describe how HRF has introduced new monitoring procedures, such as fitness testing and weight measurements as indicators of body size and shape and they argue, such approaches common to many PE programs often have little regard “for their effects on individual children or for the messages they suggest about bodies weight and normality” (Gard & Wright, 2001, p. 535).

Key writers in the field question the lack of concern for deconstructing established knowledge and understandings of what constitutes healthy and desirable bodies (Gard & Wright, 2001; Lee & Macdonald, 2010; Penney & Waring, 2000; Tinning, 1985). If PE is to maintain a role in health promotion more broadly, we must recognise, after Tinning (2010) that “it is unrealistic to expect that individuals will
change their behaviour (their lifestyles) simply by acquiring some new knowledge” (Tinning, 2010, p. 181). As Penney and Waring (2000) summarise:

> although these initiatives … have provided important prompts and a forum for the expression of different discourses, and have drawn attention to the need to address the connections that teaching and learning in physical education has…with pupils lives beyond schools … surrounding discourses and contexts have again been left largely unchallenged (Penney & Waring, 2000, p. 22).

With respect to how various socio-critical and postmodern/poststructural discourses have been taken up in PE pedagogy, Tinning’s (1997a) category of *radical pedagogies* describes various iterations of critical, feminist and postmodern pedagogies aimed at challenging various conventional categories of ability or skill, conceptions of the body, or issues associated with gender, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status and sexuality (Evans & Davies, 2006). Whilst the scope of this thesis prevents an in-depth analysis of each variation, fundamental to each is an interest in deconstructing and challenging the taken-for-granted notions of dominant established discourses that underpin PE pedagogy and that act to privilege some students and teachers at the expense of (marginalised) others.

Some of this work has advocated feminist agendas through the inclusion of feminist-inspired pedagogies (see for example Dewar, 1991; Smeal, Carpenter, & Tait, 1993), addressed socio-critical issues through various critical theory perspectives (see for example Evans & Davies, 2008; Hickey & Fitz Clarence, 2004; Tinning, 2002; Wright, Macdonald, & Burrows, 2004) and even examined the potential for, and limits to, the uptake of critical social discourses within various pedagogies (Hickey, 2001). Very little empirical work to date exists to articulate what ‘poststructural’ pedagogies may look like as they may apply to PE settings, but the early work of Evans and Clarke (1988), Gore (1990), and Kirk (1992, 1998) have certainly provided foundations on which to build. In summarising some of this work, Wright explains that, in recent times, there has been a significant growth in contributions drawing on ‘post’ perspectives that have examined the “ways physical education discourses and practices have come to be as they are, why and how some forms have come to prominence (in what social, political and cultural contexts) … and with what consequences for individuals and social groups” (2006, p. 65). It is within this
framework that the current study is located with a particular view to investigating the ways in which professional identities, as implicated in approaches to PE pedagogy, are formed and shaped in contexts.

3.5 Pedagogy, power relations and professional identities

What does it mean to wear the label ‘teacher’? What patterns of identity and history are drawn into focus as we think about who teachers are and what teachers do? (Cammack & Phillips, 2002, p. 123).

As Cammack and Phillips (2002) imply above, to carry the label ‘teacher’ denotes a particular professional identity as distinct from other professions, but what do we know about the complex and multiple ways that professional teaching identities are constructed? Further, how are particular educational contexts implicated in the professional identities most valued in certain schools and curriculum areas? Finally what, if any, implications might this have for one’s pedagogical practice?

3.5.1 Pedagogy, power relations and teacher identity in PE

In a PE sense, Wright (2006) describes two distinct categories of poststructuralist research that have been interested in how particular subjectivities and social relations are constructed within this curriculum area. From Wright, the first category tends to draw on interviews to identify which institutional and cultural discourses teachers and students draw on to make sense of their PE experiences (Wright cites for example, Macdonald & Kirk, 1996, 1999; Olafson, 2002; Wright, 1996a). Wright suggests the second category usually involves analyses of texts describing teacher-student interactions in PE classes (she cites, Gore, 1990; Prain & Hickey, 1995; Ronholt, 2002; Wright, 2000a). In these examples, Wright explains “the interest lies in how particular “subjectivities” are formed in relation to competing discourses and how power relations and particular discourses are enacted to constitute physical education lessons” (2006, p. 67). Such discussions are particularly relevant to this study given its’ focus on the construction of PE teacher subjectivities and the performance of professional identities in the context of boys’ PE.

Previous discussions of PE teachers’ professional identities and practices have considered identity formation as an ongoing process that requires constant
negotiation of the social and cultural contexts of their schools and wider society (Rossi, Sirna, & Tinning, 2008). Fernandez-Balboa (1998) asserts that one’s identity, or sense of self, is deeply embroiled with ideas held about appropriate approaches to teaching and learning - their pedagogical work. Drawing on his work, Wrench and Garrett (2012) explain that “in teaching, the personal and the pedagogical cannot be separated and what happens in one area deeply affects the other” (p. 1). Additionally, Rich (2004) links discourse, personal biographies and histories as important factors that can act to shape PE teachers constructions about pedagogy and their own professional identity. She points to, “PE teachers’ backgrounds, sports histories and educational careers as profoundly influencing their gendered understandings of role expectations and professional philosophies” (p. 216).

Perhaps one of the most pervasive themes in the literature that has examined PE teacher’s constructions of professional identities and pedagogical practice has been the impact power relations have had on their ‘sense of self’. For example, Macdonald and Kirk (1996) investigated the ways in which the nature of PE teacher’s work and societal expectations of the ways in which they ‘should’ be, as mediated by the institutional and cultural discourses of sport in rural communities, acted to shape teacher’s identities. Drawing on teacher socialisation research and Foucauldian notions of discourse and identity, they describe how various forms of embodiment are regulated and enforced through social practices of their peers, students and community members. Interpreting this work, Wright (2006) explains:

the teachers regarded themselves as being under constant surveillance with their private and public lives monitored by students and teachers. They were expected to embody the community’s ideas of the sporting healthy body, and to conform to local conservative expectations in terms of expressions of sexuality, lifestyle, dress, and grooming (p. 68).

As Macdonald and Kirk highlight, the consequence of this ongoing surveillance was that many of the beginning teachers in their study chose to leave the profession.

In another study, O’Connor and Macdonald (2002) investigated the degree to which ‘role conflict’ appeared to exist as a result of inconsistencies in teachers’ and others’ expectations for different occupational roles such as PE teachers and sport coaches. Their findings point to the constant negotiation, both self-reflexively and publicly,
that teachers engaged in to “reduce tensions and maximise complementarity across the responsibilities” (p. 49). They claim that “teacher’s identities were created and recreated through continuous reflexive monitoring of their actions and reactions … [and] this process … helped them manage inconsistencies between teaching and coaching” (p. 49).

Working with pre-service PE teachers, others highlight the enduring influence power relations operating within PE department offices during teaching placements can have on the construction of professional identities and pedagogical practices for beginning teachers (Rossi, et al., 2008). Specifically, they highlight department offices as significant social spaces for pre-service teachers because “they afforded opportunities to interact, forge relationships with other teachers and through this participation construct understandings and identities associated with being a HPE teacher” (p. 1033). Their findings point to the propensity for the surveillance of body shape and size and the performance of ‘sports talk’ that privileged some pre-service teachers interested in male-dominated sports. Perhaps most alarmingly here, they discuss the performance of ‘masculine repertoires’ described as “rude and ‘vulgar’ comments and jokes aimed particularly at women … [and] stories of physical taunting which in other contexts would border on abuse and potentially attract harassment charges” (p. 1037) as commonplace practices that were accepted uncritically by their participants. Despite the heavy focus on social justice, equality and fairness espoused through their University degree, these authors report that through daily practices these student teachers were more inclined to reproduce inequalities and normalise unjust practices rather than demonstrate an active resistance to them (Rossi, et al., 2008).

Similarly, Brown and Evans (2004) revealed the ways in which power relations forged through teacher-student relations during their own experiences of school PE and sport actively shape dispositions of beginning teachers. They claim that these relationships can be viewed as intergenerational links which form key moments in the process of cultural production, and in particular, the reproduction of gendered forms of PE. Kirk (2010a) argues that the “cycle of occupational socialisation creates and sustains inter-generational reproduction of like attracting like, and that this process in turn leads teachers to engage in ‘acts of curriculum maintenance’” (p. 124) that reinforces, rather than challenges, the status quo. For these reasons, Kirk
asserts that beginning PE teachers perceive they must live up to the expectations of others to be judged as competent. According to Macdonald (1999), those who cannot, or will not, conform are likely to leave the profession.

3.5.2 The pedagogical practices of female physical educators

In light of the discussions above regarding the potential tensions that can exist for those whose professional identities and practices do not necessarily align to dominant constructions of a PE teacher, the key focus of this study lies in interrogating what is known about how female physical educators go about their professional work. This study finds a warrant in light of existing work that has identified how particular cultural and institutional discourses have operated to marginalise female physical educators (Wright, 1996b). In other work, Wright (1995) has suggested that the development of a masculine tradition in PE, especially given the central role that competitive sport occupies in PE practice, has produced some notable differences in the ways in which male and female PE teachers go about their work. For example, in her study of several case studies of secondary school PE, Wright found that the language used by female teachers suggested that they “were more likely to take into account the girls’ reactions, experiences and needs”, whereby the male teachers “in talking to boys, were more likely to establish what had to be done and how and then let the boys get on with their tasks” (1995, p. 18). Further, Wright outlines:

In contrast to the positioning of most of the male teachers in a sports discourse that emphasized skill acquisition and competitive achievement, the female teachers were more likely to foreground the educational and personal development aims of physical education. As such, they were more concerned to situate skill acquisition within detailed explanations of how and why skills should be performed, as well as emphasizing the harmonious social relations between students and proper attitudes to activity. Although in their language choices the female teachers appeared to be less authoritarian, more tolerant, and even actively productive of more intimate and more solidary social relations, in anticipating student resistance and in their expectations of appropriate behaviour, they regulated students’ behaviour more (1995, p. 18).

Although research with female PE teachers (Rich, 2004) and female pre-service PE teachers (Light & Georgakis, 2005) has been conducted previously, little work has examined female PE teachers’ work in the context of all-boys’ PE. Elsewhere, I
have claimed that the notion of a ‘professional identity’ is not natural but something that is “developed across a range of, formal and informal, experiences, interactions and professional development activities” (Hickey & Mooney, 2007, p. 12). In this work with six female PE teachers in boys’ schools, the findings reveal that each participant recognised gender as an issue they regularly addressed in day-to-day interactions with their students and colleagues. For these participants:

… rather than be threatened by their marginality, they shared a common belief that the position would provide them with an opportunity to contribute to the formation of healthy gender relations…[they] shared a common philosophy that getting boys to respect females (particularly in the context of sport) was a challenge that demanded the input of females (Hickey & Mooney, 2007, p. 13).

In recognising the potential role for female PE teachers in boys’ schools as “front-line gender workers” (Hickey & Mooney, 2007, p. 15), the study reported in this thesis seeks to further understandings of the tensions that can arise for professionals positioned outside the gendered hegemony of the school in which they teach. A deeper understanding of the aspects of their professional identity that are problematised in these masculine environments, and an awareness of the strategies that they employed to mediate these tensions, may help to reveal avenues for more gender-just pedagogical practices in boys’ PE.

3.6 Reflective notes

The purpose of this chapter was to overview pertinent themes from the burgeoning gender and PE literature and to highlight issues relevant to boys’ PE. Specifically, it considered the structural aspects of school PE and sport that appear to impact on the construction of gendered subjectivities and the conditions under which various gendered identities are performed. Initially, an overview of the historical origins of a masculine tradition in PE was undertaken to demonstrate the ways in which particular practices in PE and sport have acted to privilege particular versions of masculinity whilst, at times, marginalising other masculine and feminine identities. Perhaps what this review has revealed is the consistent “social and cultural inertia in gender relations in PE” (Brown & Evans, 2004, p. 49).
In a discussion of the ways in which relations between masculine identities are practiced and performed within PE and sport, I examined the privileging of heteronormative and hyper-masculine identities by contemporary practices. The very nature of PE as a physical endeavour positions bodies as central and therefore becomes a space where differences between bodies can be observed. Further the dominance of competitive team sport in the PE curriculum provides some students with the opportunity to display a high level of physical skill whilst laying bare for all to see the physical deficiencies of others. Whilst I am not arguing that competitive team sport should be abolished from contemporary PE altogether given its potential for a wide range of learning opportunities, I do consider the ways in which it is usually ‘managed’ and ‘delivered’ in boys’ PE contexts as in need of urgent attention. I have used the terms above to suggest that much of the teaching and learning practice that dominates contemporary PE does little to inspire alternative visions of sport and physical activity participation, and as Evans and Davies (1993) argued some time ago, PE continues to makes friends and enemies of young people.

Further, contemporary practices that pervade PE and school sport appear to cultivate, at times, hierarchical gender relations (Parker, 1996). It has been well documented that many boys’ draw on sporting performance as a measure of their own masculine identity and that their physical capital becomes a currency through which to establish peer status (Hickey, 2010). Unfortunately, as outlined in the discussions above, too often this becomes a tool for the domination and on occasion, even violation of those with limited physical ability. Despite the potential of PE to harness positive and tolerant responses to multiple masculinities and bodies, it too often becomes a site of oppression for particular individuals (Gard, 2006; Hickey, 2008). As Atkinson and Kehler (2010) state, “unless discourses and practices sensitive to multiple masculinities are revealed to young men as acceptable and normative, the notion of multiple masculinities often escapes young boys who do not see gender in such complex, contradictory, or challengeable terms” (p. 84).

Also discussed were enduring and culturally (re)produced practices in PE and school sport that contribute to curriculum maintenance (Kirk, 2010a). The privileging of performance and scientifically produced discourses that foreground the mastery and execution of skills in de-contextualised settings (Kirk, 2010a; Tinning, 2010)
remains a persistent practice in contemporary PE lessons. A significant body of literature has been reviewed above to consider how, and why, these practices have remained, and whilst there is a growing body of work that challenges the pervasiveness of these discourses, relatively little work has signposted pedagogic translations (Hickey, 2001). As Curtner-Smith (1999) advocates, if we want ‘real change’ to occur “we need to transform beliefs, values and ideologies held by teachers that inform their pedagogical assumptions and practices” (p. 29).

Drawing heavily from poststructuralist work on PE teacher identity, I have outlined the relationships between professional identities and pedagogical practices and suggested that a greater understanding of how ideas of ‘professional self’ are formed and shaped in context can provide insight into current conceptions about ‘valued’ pedagogical approaches. For as other’s note, “the ability to capture contextual subleties that impact on teacher’s work and their identities is underdeveloped in the research literature” (O’Connor & Macdonald, 2002, p. 51). Through work with two female physical educators (albeit occupying different positions within the department), this research aims to explore the pervasiveness of dominant gendered discourses, amongst others, as they impact on what is considered appropriate pedagogical practice for boys’ PE. The following two chapters address the theoretical underpinnings and methodological procedures of this research.
Chapter 4 - Gendered Teacher Subjectivities: Epistemological underpinnings

The main interest in life and work is to become someone else that you were not in the beginning. If you knew when you began a book what you would say at the end, do you think you would have the courage to write it? ... The game is worthwhile insofar as we don’t know where it will end (Foucault, 1982, p. 9 cited in Peters, 1998, p. 68).

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the theoretical underpinnings of this study with an emphasis on explaining how feminist poststructural thought provided an ideal lens through which to examine my research questions. This chapter, like Foucault’s comment above, outlines the transformative experience that I have undertaken on this research journey in a methodological sense. Before continuing, it is worth a reiteration of how I have employed the terms “subjectivity” and “identity” given their centrality to this study. As discussed in Chapter 1, I acknowledge subjectivity and identity as interrelated, but distinct, concepts.

Following Wrench and Garrett (2012), I recognise that one’s “subjectivity is not essential, given or taken for granted, but is constructed through ongoing processes across time and spaces and mediated by a raft of institutional and cultural discursive practices with inherent relations of power” (p. 2). Identity, on the other hand, is used to describe the performance aspects of subjectivity that “qualify people relationally, including in terms of gender, ethnicity, class and occupation” (Wrench & Garrett, 2012, p. 2). Gard argues that identity can be used to, “indicate the specific content or shape of a particular person’s sense of themselves. That is, identity is the answer to the question ‘who are you?’ As such it is a dimension of subjectivity” (2006 cited in Tinning, 2010, p. 18). Through the poststructuralist approach that shapes this research, I acknowledge multiple subjectivities and identities that are, and can be, produced historically and across different social spaces at various times.
I employ the notion of ‘journey’ to describe herein, the research process that commenced with an ‘archaeological-like’ analysis to explore the “historical conditions, assumptions and power relations that allow certain discourses to appear” (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 496) in the context in which two female PE teachers enacted their daily work. As a previous physical educator in all boys’ schools, I initially set out to explore the pedagogical approaches adopted by other female PE teachers of boys’ PE and to consider how these approaches were received by students as an extension to work previously undertaken (Hickey & Mooney, 2007). Although this was probably incited initially by the increasing prevalence of narrow and limiting advice on the most appropriate ways to educate boys that filled the pages of what Mill’s (2003) termed “backlash blockbusters” (for a discussion of this see Chapter 2), the actual research journey has nurtured and fostered an intense interest in not only boys’ PE, but a much deeper commitment to the critical education project forged around narratives of a more equitable and just society. As Foucault (1976, p. 64 cited in Marshall, 1998) explains, “if one is interested in doing historical work that has political meaning, utility and effectiveness, then this is possible only if one has some form of involvement with the struggles taking part in the area in question” (p. 80), rendering my time in the field as perhaps helpful, rather than a potential source of bias.

Following on from this mapping exercise, and inspired by Foucault’s genealogy work, I became interested in the power relations produced through evident discourses that appeared to influence what these female teachers constituted as true (truths) and meaningful as they negotiated their approach to boys’ education and PE pedagogy. As St. Pierre (2000) points out “[i]f Foucault’s archaeology examines the relation between truth and knowledge, his genealogy examines the relation between truth and power…Genealogy allows the analyst to trace the ways in which discourses constitute objects that can be examined as either true or false according to the codes of the discourse” (p. 497).

As the notion of journey conveys, the next phase in my research process turned attention to the classroom interactions between one of the female physical educators and her students, for which Wright’s (1995) work on the construction of gender in PE and Gore’s (1990) research on ‘pedagogical texts’ became significant signposts. Gore’s (1998) analysis of “how power relations function at the micro-level of
pedagogical practices” (Webb & Macdonald, 2007b, p. 281) proved a useful interpretation of Foucault’s techniques of power to aid theorising about the ‘capillary-like’ functioning of multi-directional power relations evident in the interactions between teacher and colleagues, teacher and students and between students. Such analyses highlight that “the multi-directional workings of power mean that power is not always negative but can be both repressive and productive” (Foucault, 1988, cited in Webb, McCaughtry, & Macdonald, 2004, pp. 208-209).

Finally, I came to understand through the data collection phase that how these female physical educators understood themselves as ‘professionals’ in these spaces was very much a product of self-work. Their professional identities, as performed in an all-boys’ PE setting, appeared, at times, to contravene some of the inherent aspects of their gendered subjectivities. Further, it became apparent that being positioned amongst the dominant gendered discourses of an all boys’ school and in a curriculum area steeped in masculine tradition, might in fact produce certain tensions that would require significant negotiation by these female teachers to achieve a coherent and stable ‘professional’ self. Additionally, I began to question how these negotiation practices might influence their ideas around ‘good’ pedagogical practice in PE. To that end, Foucault’s later work on technologies of the self (1987, 1988b), proved particularly insightful to describe the ways “a human being turns him-or herself into a subject” (Foucault, 1983a, p. 208), in this case competent female teachers in an all-boys’ school. Ultimately, the research journey has proven to be a vastly different end product from that which was first postulated.

From here, I overview the epistemological stance of this research, casing the study broadly in the ‘subjectivism’ theory of knowledge, yet signal the potential uneasy relationship subjectivism can cause for feminist poststructuralists. What ensues is a discussion of the aspects of poststructuralism that have guided and given shape to the study, with an emphasis on how the particular principles of feminist thinking have been incorporated. Recognising the significant contribution that the work of Michel Foucault has made to this theoretical lens, a discussion of the various Foucauldian concepts employed within the study is explored alongside the key arguments levelled in critique, with a discussion of how the study endeavours to reconcile these issues. A final theoretical contribution on how elements of teacher socialisation are taken up and reconciled within the poststructuralist framework of the study is offered given
the intent to explore female teacher’s pedagogic approaches to teaching PE in all-boys’ schools.

4.1 An epistemological note

As others argue, “theorizing can reflexively make you a different person!” (Tinning & Fitzpatrick, 2012, p. 58) and, as the first step in my journey, locating an epistemology to frame my research has demanded personal growth and theorizing. Maynard describes epistemology as “concerned with providing a philosophical grounding for deciding what kinds of knowledge are possible and how we can ensure that they are both adequate and legitimate” (1994, p. 10 cited in Crotty, 1998, p. 8). Crotty (1998) highlights that subjectivism is perhaps closely aligned with poststructuralist modes of thinking and states, “in subjectivism, meaning does not come out of an interplay between subject and object but is imposed on the object by the subject. Here the object as such makes no contribution to the generation of meaning” (p. 9). Crotty points out, “even in subjectivism we make meaning out of something” (p. 9) suggesting an acknowledgement that our histories, experiences and social interactions contribute to a “collective unconscious” (p. 9) that help to shape the meaning we ascribe to particular objects, phenomena and experiences.

Yet, poststructural theory allows us to think about epistemology in different ways. In fact “the point is that poststructuralism is not concerned with asking essentializing questions about the “meaning” of anything, including discourse, since meaning can never be found but must, as Derrida (1974/1967) explains, always be deferred” (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 485). It has been argued that poststructuralism is concerned with asking different sorts of questions that are taken in a specific and localised context such as “How does discourse function? Where is it to be found? How does it get produced and regulated? What are its social effects?” (Bové, 1990, p. 54 cited in St. Pierre, 2000, p. 485).

As mentioned in Chapter 1, any research interested in the contributions ‘female’ teachers make in all-boys’ settings possesses an element of feminist intent, yet the underpinnings of a feminist epistemology did not necessarily resonate with the aims of this study. Alcoff and Potter (1993) explain that feminist epistemology is an
active area that works to reflect diverse feminist interests, and in fact there are many different feminist epistemologies. To that end, St. Pierre’s (2000) position that “poststructural feminist critiques … [seek to] destabilize the foundations of liberal feminist projects along with other Enlightenment projects and take issue with the very concept of epistemology since it is enmeshed in a metaphysics that seeks to rise above the level of human activity” (p. 499) proved a helpful signpost in reconciling how aspects of feminist thinking would be taken up in this research. St. Pierre explains a key underpinning of feminist poststructural theory is its’ “attempt to reframe the problematic of knowledge” (p. 499).

In light of this reframing of how we come to think about knowledge and the way in which meaning is generated, Popkewitz and Brennan’s (1998) notion of a ‘social epistemology’ appeared pertinent. They explain,

We use the phrase ‘social epistemology’…as a strategy to place the objects constituted as the knowledge of schooling in historically formed patterns and power relations…Epistemology provides a context in which to consider the rules and standards that organize perceptions, ways of responding to the world, and the conceptions of “self”…We argue that the statements and words of schooling are not signs or signifiers that refer to and fix things, but social practices through generating principles that order action and participation. The conception of epistemology, then, is not, as in U.S. philosophy, a meta-discourse to find the ultimate truth, but an effort to understand the conditions in which knowledge is produced. (pp. 8-9).

In adopting this perspective, the epistemological journey comes to a somewhat mediated outcome given this approach allows for a consideration of the conditions that led to, and discourses that influence, the production of knowledge in school contexts.

4.2 A theoretical framework – Feminist poststructuralism

...feminists, fond of poststructural theory have given up on finding out “exactly” what is going on. They are sceptical of exactly that kind of question, because it is grounded in descriptions of knowledge, truth, rationality, and subjectivity that humanism put forward centuries ago to make
sense of a world very different from the one we live in today (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 477).

As a theoretical framework, feminist poststructuralism draws from both feminist and poststructuralist thinking and as such has not always enjoyed an easy alliance (see St Pierre, 2000). Given many feminisms, for example liberal feminism (concerned with their ‘equal slice of the pie’); structural feminism (concerned with how society is defined in terms of sex or class systems that act to oppress females) and what Nilges (2006) refers to as a ‘deconstructive strand’ of feminism (concerned with challenging universal and essentialist notions of gender evident in the other strands) feminist thinking offers diverse ways in which to investigate “relationships between gender and the social world” (p. 77).

Similarly, poststructuralism has also been cited as only one strand of ‘post’ work that often also includes postmodernism and postcolonialism (Wright, 2006). Lather (1993) articulates that although these terms are often used interchangeably in the literature, she considers them somewhat different in that “postmodernism raises issues of chronology, economics (e.g., post-Fordism) and aesthetics whereas poststructural[ism] is used more often in relation to academic theorizing ‘after structuralism’” (p. 688). Despite the nuances that exist between different ‘post’ approaches, Sparkes (1992) argues the ‘post’ turn “has the potential to provide us with insights into our own engagement in the research process because it brings to the fore the relationships between language, meaning and power as they act to influence the interpretation of any text” (p. 274). Whilst this appears to hold somewhat different objectives than many of the feminist approaches described above, St. Pierre (2000) believes that existing tensions between the approaches have somewhat eased in the last three decades as evidenced by increases in “feminist work informed by poststructuralism … the relationship of the two bodies of thought and practice is not inimical but invigorating and fruitful” (p. 477).

In considering an appropriate theoretical framework for this study it became apparent that I needed a perspective that did something more than position “women-as-victims” (Weiner, 1994). By the very nature of naming a school as a ‘boys’ school gender is inherently foregrounded in which women are positioned as ‘different’ or ‘other’. Yet, in a previous study that explored female physical educators’
experiences of boys’ schools there appeared to be a degree of ‘agency’ where our participants were *active* in the construction of their current situations (Hickey & Mooney, 2007). The findings from this work suggested that whilst the female teachers may not necessarily endorse dominant discourses that inadvertently impacted on their professional work, they were willing to reconcile and mediate tensions to maintain their employment. Therefore, this study needed to draw on a theoretical perspective that could reveal “new possibilities for understanding … which go beyond seeing girls [and women] primarily as ‘disadvantaged’ and socialised within oppressive patriarchal structures” (Jones, 1993, p. 157).

Nilges (2006) argues that poststructuralism “situates oppression in the discourses and languages through which certain identities, situations, and relationships come to be accepted as natural or normal” (p. 85). Although Weedon (1987) cautions that it is not possible to have every question asked by feminists answered by poststructuralist theory, it does offer a “useful, productive framework for understanding the mechanisms of power in our society and the possibilities for change” (p. 10). As proffered by a number of writers, feminist poststructural theory is concerned with language, subjectivity, discourse and power (Nilges, 2006; St. Pierre, 2000; Weedon, 1987; Wright, 2004) and specifically “offers useful ways of understanding experience and relating it to social power” (Weedon, 1987, p. 1). Further, the usefulness of this particular theoretical lens to the current study is captured by Weiner (1994) where ultimately feminist poststructural theory:

allows for exploration of how girls and women actively position themselves in discourses that subordinate them as well as consideration of the workings of patriarchal structures such as the school and education more generally. It also provides an analytical framework for unpacking the micro-political – that is how power is exercised at the local … levels, how oppression works, is experienced and where resistances might be possible” (p. 2).

In this study, the use of Foucauldian theorising on issues such as discourse and power helps to make explicit the ‘normalising’ and ‘regulative’ aspects of the dominant discourses operating within a boys’ school that actively “subvert attempts at fundamental change” (Weiner, 1994, p. 98). As Wright (2006) eloquently puts it, ultimately feminist poststructuralism seeks “to interrogate the ways the social
practices associated with schooling shape ‘consciousness and social relations’” (p. 62).

4.3 Principles of poststructuralism and Foucauldian thought

Whilst a number of theorists such as Derrida, Lacan, Bourdieu, Giddens and Bernstein could prove generative to this type of research, after others (see for example Kirk, 1998; Wright, 1995) it is the key ideas underpinning the work of Michel Foucault that have been most influential to my study. Ultimately, this study is concerned with the investigation of the conditions under which female physical educators operate in all-boys’ schools. By making explicit such conditions it is possible to consider how they construct, negotiate and work with pedagogy. An understanding of which discourses become dominant in this educational setting, and their impact in rendering some individuals powerful and others as powerless, and in which situations, will underpin interpretations of how male students experience PE with a female teacher. The following section details the key principles of Foucauldian theorising and addresses some of the critiques levelled at this theoretical lens.

4.3.1 Language, subjectivity and meaning

...all categories are unstable, all experiences are constructed, all reality is imagined, all identities are produced, and all knowledge provokes uncertainties, misrecognitions, ignorances and silences (Britzman, 1993, p. 22, cited in St. Pierre, 2000, p. 503).

According to Weiner (1994), poststructuralism “views language as the common factor in any analysis of social organizations, power and individual consciousness. It is in language that our subjectivity as well as social organizations are defined, contested and constructed” (pp. 98-99). St. Pierre (2000) describes how an analysis of language from a humanistic vantage point assumes that “there is a correspondence, an identity, between a word and something in the world” (p. 480), therefore accepting that if objects already exist and words identify them, “then language simply names and reflects what it encounters” (p. 480). Poststructuralism troubles the idea that language mirrors the world and is indebted to the works of
Derrida, an extension of the work of de Saussure, who hypothesised that meaning is not inherent in things but meaning is obtained when compared to other pre-existing language terms. In Weedon’s (1987) discussion of de Saussure’s theory of ‘signs’ she explains:

Each sign derives its meaning from its difference from all the other signs in the language. It is not anything intrinsic to the signifier “whore”, for example, that gives it its meaning, but rather its difference from other signifiers of womanhood such as “virgin” and “mother” (p. 23).

Poststructuralism extends this understanding of how meaning is embedded within language through Derrida’s concept of ‘différance’. Derrida (1970) used this concept to, “explain how the meaning of language shifts depending on social context so that meaning can always be disputed” (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 482). Ultimately, if we subscribe to this way of thinking then it becomes impossible to ever really know the exact meaning of anything, it becomes quite individual and “once this idea takes hold, neither language nor philosophy can ever be the same” (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 482). An important feature of Derrida’s work is his notion of deconstruction that sought to “critique structures that are held together by identity and presence” (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 482). Derrida (1970) suggests that language can be dismantled to reveal the metaphysical and rhetorical structures that are at work. Deconstruction is not proffered in a negative way (i.e., tearing down) but rather in a liberating manner where opportunity exists to reinscribe meaning. As St. Pierre (2000) points out, “deconstruction is … not about pointing out an error but about looking at how a structure has been constructed, what holds it together, and what it produces. It is not a destructive, negative or nihilistic practice, but an affirmative one” (p. 482).

West (1988 cited in St. Pierre, 2000) uses the concept of ‘intertextuality’ to describe how texts, developed in a web of social relations, are “linked to human agency and the context in which that agency is enacted (p. 270). Further, St. Pierre argues that deconstruction becomes an important tool in the analysis of any social organisation (including schools) because “it foregrounds the idea that language does not simply point to pre-existing things and ideas but rather helps to construct them, and by extension, the world as we know it” (2000, p. 483). A deconstructive approach can help in the analysis of school contexts because it allows one to scratch below the surface to reveal the conditions in which particular things have been said, and to
perhaps highlight different possibilities for how language, as a signifier of our social reality, can be interpreted.

Weedon (1987) explains the link between language and subjectivity by suggesting language is:

> where our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity is constructed … subjectivity is not genetically determined, but socially produced. Subjectivity is produced in a whole range of discursive practices – economic, social and political – the meanings of which are a constant site of struggle over power. Language is not the expression of unique individuality; it constructs the individual’s subjectivity in ways which are socially specific … subjectivity is neither unified nor fixed” (p. 21).

In this account, subjectivity refers to the ‘conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individuals, her [sic] sense of self and her [sic] ways of understanding her relation to the world” (Weedon, 1987, p. 32). A central assumption in feminist poststructural theory is that “it is language which enables us to think, speak, and give meaning to the world around us. Meaning and consciousness do not exist outside language” (Weedon, 1987, p. 32). St. Pierre (2000) claims this occurs in localised specific historical and cultural contexts for individuals, which means that how we view ourselves is ultimately influenced by the discourses operating in our social world. As Weedon (1987) declares, this would make the individual always “[a] site of conflicting forms of subjectivity” (p. 33). So how then do we know that what is being said to us is, in fact, representative of that individual’s consciousness (at that point in time) and what they understand as truth and knowledge? There is no definitive answer to this however feminist poststructural theory positions an understanding of the operative discourses as central to aiding interpretations of what individuals say, and what they mean by that which they speak. As Weedon (1987) states:

> In making our subjectivity the product of the society and culture within which we live, feminist poststructuralism insists that forms of subjectivity are produced historically and change with shifts in the wide range of discursive fields which constitute them.”(p. 33).
St Pierre (2000) summarises the issues of subjectivity, language and meaning by highlighting the significance that society and culture play in the formation of our subjectivities and the active role that individuals play in this process. Individuals, or subjects, make choices that exhibit degrees of agency “by taking up available discourses and cultural practices…a subject, that at the same time, is subjected, [is] forced into subjectivity by those same discourses and practices” (p. 502). It is for this reason that this study centralises a mapping of the discourses that exist in the context of an all-boys’ school, and within the curriculum area of PE specifically, before sense can be made of the participants’ responses about pedagogy. The following section explores the assumptions this theoretical perspective makes about discourse.

4.3.2 Discourse, discourse analysis and discursive fields

The principle of discourse is another significant concept in poststructural thought and important for consideration here given that “it is through discourse that meanings, subjects, and subjectivities are formed” (Wright, 2006, p. 61). Weiner (1994) contends that through an analysis of discourse it is possible to explore how power relationships and subjectivity are constructed, rendering it helpful to this research given its concern with what occurs at the micro-political level of boys’ PE, especially for female teachers. So what then can we understand of this notion of discourse?

Foucault argues that discourses can be understood as “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak … Discourses are not about objects; they do not identify objects, they constitute them and in the process of doing so conceal their own invention” (Foucault, 1972, p. 49). The interpretive work of Markula and Pringle (2006), particularly in their application of Foucauldian theory to the world of sport, is helpful in further unpacking this notion of discourse. They outline how Foucault attempted to tackle the complexity of ‘discourse’ in The Archaeology of Knowledge by commencing with a discussion of the “relevance of written or spoken statements within scientific works. He focussed narrowly on ‘statements’ as he believed that they were the building blocks of discourses or ‘the atom of a discourse’”(Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 29). These authors contend that statements constituted “real practices in certain locations at a certain time” (Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 29).
In this understanding discourses are more than just the language employed. As Scott (1988, p. 35 cited in St. Pierre, 2000) explains, “discourse is not a language or a text but a historically, socially, and institutionally specific structure of statements, terms, categories, and beliefs” (p. 485). Another helpful interpretation comes from Danaher, Schirato and Webb (2000) where they outline:

Foucault is not so much interested in language systems as a whole, as in individual acts of language – or discourse. Discourses can be understood as language in action: they are the windows, if you like, which allow us to make sense of, and ‘see’ things. These discursive windows or explanations shape our understanding of ourselves, and our capacity to distinguish the valuable from the valueness, the true from the false, and the right from the wrong (p. 31).

Foucault’s theory of discourse allows one to see how “language gathers itself together according to socially constructed rules and regularities that allow certain statements to be made and not others” (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 485). Furthermore, it enables us to explore particular “relationship[s] between meaning and power; it is used to refer to systems of beliefs and values which produce particular social practices and social relations” (Wright, 2006, p. 61).

These systems of beliefs and values rely on institutions through which they are organised and operative. Weedon (1987) explains “institutions and practices such as the law, the political system, the church, the family, the educational system and the media … [are] structured by a particular discursive field” (p. 35, original emphasis). This concept seeks to understand the relationship between “language, social institutions, subjectivity and power” (p. 35). In their discussion of Foucault’s concept of discursive field, Danaher and colleagues (2000) explain that:

We can think of a field as a piece of territory, or a space within society, that get used in particular ways. Each field lays down rules and procedures, assigns roles and positions, regulates behaviours and what can be said, and produces hierarchies…It’s important to recognise that the roles within the field precede the people who occupy these roles…So in assuming a position within a field, the person enters into the processes which regulate what occurs
within the field, and their identity or subjectivity is shaped by the operations of that field (p. 33).

This is particularly useful when considering the role of a female teacher in an educational institution such as a boys’ school, because as highlighted above, the school (or playing field) has a set of processes and practices, roles and hierarchies already in existence which will bear some influence on shaping her professional self. St Pierre (2000) states, “once a discourse becomes “normal” and “natural”, it is difficult to think and act outside it. Within the rules of discourse, it makes sense to say only certain things” (p. 485). It is from this thinking that the nature of this research resonates – which discourses appeared to dominate the culture of the all-boys’ school and whom did it allow to speak, when and with what authority? Specifically, this research is concerned with how such discourses positioned the female physical educators within their classroom, their department and the wider school community. Further, it seeks to explore how discourses shape student subjectivities and in turn their experiences of PE with a female teacher.

4.3.3 Power relations and resistance

Foucault was ... critical that his theorising on power had degenerated to the crude slogan ‘power is knowledge’ (Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 7).

For feminist poststructuralists the concept of power is another central tenet. Considering that schools, and education systems more widely, can be considered as ‘patriarchal structures’ (Weiner, 1994), a feminist poststructural lens provides an analytical framework for investigating how power is exercised at the local level (i.e. a boys’ school). It foregrounds discourse-power relations that act to position some individuals as powerful and others as powerless with a view to making visible where resistances may be possible.

As a point of difference to the archaeology of discourses described above, Foucault acknowledges that a methodological flaw of this work was his failure to “incorporate a theory of power into the analysis of discourse” (McNay, 1994, p. 85). This was somewhat rectified with his development of a genealogy method, informed by his readings of Nietzsche (Downing, 2008), which aimed to explore the relationship between truth and power. Interested in how statements came to be “true or false
within discourses and domains of knowledge, Foucault … developed a second
historical analysis, similar in some respects to archaeology, called genealogy” (St.

Critical and genealogical descriptions are to alternate, support and complete
each other. The critical side of the analysis deals with the system’s
enveloping discourse; attempting to mark out and distinguish the principles of
ordering, exclusion and rarity in discourse … The genealogical side of
analysis, by way of contrast, deals with … effective formation of discourse: it
attempts to grasp it in its power of affirmation, by which I do not mean a
power opposed to that of negation, but the power of constituting a domain of
objects, in relation to which one can affirm or deny true or false propositions

Wright (2006) points out that genealogies are interested in interrogating the operation
of power in knowledge construction, and as Foucault argues, “power and knowledge
are not external to one another” (cited in Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983, p. 104).
Interpreting Foucault’s concept of a ‘power/knowledge nexus’, McNay explains:

We should abandon a whole tradition that allows us to imagine that
knowledge can exist only where the power relations are suspended and that
knowledge can develop only outside its injunctions, its demands and its
interests … We should admit rather that power produces knowledge…that
power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power
relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any
knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power
relations (1992, p. 27).

Returning to the opening quotation of this section, Markula and Pringle (2006)
discuss the problematic way that such theorising has been interpreted and explain
that Foucault’s acknowledgement of the interrelationship between truth, knowledge
and power does not presuppose that “contemporary forms of power are so complete
that individuals are dominated by totalising forces without possibilities for resistance
or change” (p. 7). With this in mind, poststructuralism troubles the humanistic idea
of power as something that exists outside ourselves, that is “something we possess;
and we can deploy it – give it away, take it back … “empower” those less fortunate”
(St. Pierre, 2000, p. 488). Ultimately, if power is something that can be used in this
way, then individuals should possess the freedom and agency to disrupt it and as St. Pierre (2000) poses, subjects of social justice issues such as racism, sexism and so forth, should be able to emancipate themselves.

Foucault theorises that power does not belong to individuals but exists in relationships, termed *power relations*, and whilst he “defined his understanding of power with reference to what he did not mean it to be” (Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 34), there was a definite shift in his political focus away from questions such as “what is power and where does it come from, to an explanation of how power is exercised and what, as a result actually occurs” (Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 35). Foucault (1983a) explains power relations as what one person will do to direct the conduct or “the possible field of actions of others” (p. 221). This implies that the actions of one individual can influence what another person does, but it cannot force an individual to act under this persuasion (Markula & Pringle, 2006). Furthermore, this highlights an exciting aspect of Foucault’s work, in that “power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free” (Foucault, 1983a, p. 35).

Arguably one of the most significant aspects of Foucault’s theorising on power is his contention that power is not necessarily negative, but rather its productive nature can be quite liberating:

> We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it “excludes”, it “represses”, it “censors”, it “abstracts”, it “masks”, it “conceals”. In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth” (Foucault, 1977, p. 194 cited in McHoul & Grace, 1993, p. 64).

To illustrate the productive nature of power on subjectivities/subjects, Markula and Pringle (2006) describe the role of coaches, as they exist in a power relation with an athlete for the intent purpose of improving their performance. Whilst a coach can provide advice and set training regimes or enact strategies such as making players ‘play’ in certain positions, ultimately it is up to the athlete to choose a response to these actions and to determine if, in fact, they even want to remain being coached. It is in this ‘choice’ that the productive nature of power can be realised and exercised.

Forrestor (cited in McHoul & Grace, 1993) offers a conjecture that Foucault’s theorising on power is not particularly original “because some versions of
structuralist thought had already asserted the positivity and generative capacity of structures. Foucault merely substitutes ‘power’ where the structuralists had referred to a ‘centre’” (p. 64). McHoul and Grace (1993) refute this by claiming that without locating power relations in historically contingent spaces, which most structuralists did not, power can’t be theorised as positive. They argue, “Foucault differed from structuralist analysts by retrieving the concept of power from its vague identification with a general cultural totality. By doing so, he discovered that the economy of ‘power’, like the economy of production, has a history” (McHoul & Grace, 1993, p. 65) and consequently, this understanding allows us to consider “systems of power relations rather than a general concept of power.” (p. 65).

Returning to the example of the athlete and coach described above, Markula and Pringle (2006) further contextualise the workings of power by describing how the actions of the coach may be influenced if the athlete decided to conclude their relationship. Similarly, in a PE classroom, a teacher’s actions may be influenced by student reactions to particular practices. McNay (1992) describes the workings of power as no longer unidirectional, meaning that power operates not only from the ‘top down’ but also from the ‘bottom up’. Gore (1998), in her work in the PE classroom, also explored ‘lateral’ workings of power where peers/colleagues appeared to influence teacher’s pedagogical practices. This “capillary-like network that ends by forming a dense web that passes through apparatuses and institutions, without being exactly localised in them” (Foucault, 1978, p. 96) describes how power can operate both as an objectivising and subjectivising force (McNay, 1994).

Considering the multi-directional workings of power and the numerous power relations that could potentially exist within educational spheres, the concept of power and resistance is of particular interest to this study. An exploration of how power relations are played out, and the effects that this can have as a ‘technology of dominance’ (Markula & Pringle, 2006) will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

### 4.3.4 Rationality and textual authority

Following on from the principles of language, subjectivity, discourse and power discussed above, feminist poststructuralists also assume that rationality, or the exercise of reason, is similarly produced as a result of the interplay between operative discourses and the practices they shape (Lather, 1991). St. Pierre (2000),
in her critique of humanistic rationality, explains that reason defines “humanism’s discourses … by claiming to stand outside those very discourses and the practices they produce. By removing itself from the realm of human activity, reason supposedly remains untainted by the messiness, the chaotic nature – the irrationality – of daily existence” (p. 486). Further, during the period of Enlightenment, it was considered that reason underpinned all scientific undertakings, and that “any kind of rationality not formed by science was considered irrational and therefore suspect” (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 486). Lather (1991) argues that, over time, particular versions of rationality have taken precedence, to the point that they have become what we know as common sense. She points out,

> It is in breaking out of common sense that we escape existing rationality, the exercise of power disguised as reason. To dissolve the rational/irrational binary is to break into some radical disjuncture with what is, some open space form which we can reinscribe otherwise by embracing that which has historically been labelled irrational, a different kind of reason that can only be unreasonable by the hegemonic standards of reason (Lather, 1991, p. 329).

Once again it is the troubling of the taken-for-granted assumptions that feminist poststructuralism offers, that enables an exploration of how such binaries, in this case rational/irrational, but in others perhaps male/female, exist. As Foucault (1981, cited in Dean, 1994) explains, “[o]ne isn’t assessing things in terms of an absolute against which they could be evaluated as constituting more or less perfect forms of rationality, but rather examining how forms of rationality inscribe themselves in practices or systems of practices” (p. 59). This suggests that rationality, like many of the concepts already explored, is historical and contingent upon the discourses operating in particular contexts at particular points in time. St. Pierre (2000) argues, “[r]eason, like all other concepts, is produced within discourses in which certain statements are privileged and others are silenced or excluded. Therefore, poststructuralism acknowledges and investigates multiple forms of rationality produced by the codes and regularities of various discourses and cultural practices” (p. 487).

Given that feminist poststructuralism acknowledges the existence of multiple forms of rationality, it is timely to consider the issue of textual authority as a critical methodological aspect of this research. As Weiner (1994) summates, “[i]f then
reason is value-laden and the truth, socially produced, discursive authority (who
controls the agenda) is of paramount importance” (p. 100), raising questions about
not only the locatedness of the researcher but also about the representation of the
participants’ data. Due to the employment of this methodological framework as a
‘methodology of the particular’, meaning that reason, truth and knowledge are
produced in specific social and historical contexts, and that these contexts are fluid in
nature, it is impossible to ever really capture a complete textual version of the
participants’ perceptions, understanding and experiences. The assumptions that
underpin the methodological framework employed have been made explicit and the
limitations in textual representation reported.

With respect to textual authority, Prain (1997) warns of the difficulties poststructural
writers have encountered in locating themselves or ‘textualizing your self in
research’ (p. 71). There is no claim of a position as “an all-knowing and distanced
seeker of objective knowledge” (Nilges, 2006, p. 88), in fact, given my previous
experience in the field, it is rather more apt to describe my role as the researcher as
“decisively ‘inside’ the research account rather than on the ‘outside looking in’”
(Nilges, 2006, p. 89). Furthermore, the central values of feminist subjectivities and
discourses, which have informed and shaped this study, are made visible by the self-
reflexive stance adopted (Prain, 1997). This self-reflexive position has been
identified as a way that enables researchers to “make explicit both the limits of their
authority and the irreducibly constructed nature of the ways they represent their
research” (Prain, 1997, p. 75). Ultimately, Foucault (cited in Sarup, 1988) argues,
“there is always a proliferation of interpretations, and no interpretation can claim to
be the final one” (p. 50), implying that we can rarely ever reach a point of certainty
about anything. Further discussion of how the study seeks to address these concerns
is taken up in Chapter 5.

4.4 Critical analyses of poststructural theory: acknowledging the
study’s positioning

The polemics of feminist poststructural theory have been debated extensively over
the past decade (Alcoff & Potter, 1993; Diamond & Quinby, 1988; Felski, 2000;
Fuss, 2005) and although much of this work endeavours to critique the alignment of
two distinct theoretical frameworks, there has been consideration given specifically to the generative capacities for change and political usefulness of such an alignment. In the following sections key critiques of this theoretical framework, the problematisation of ‘identity’, and some specific critiques that highlight the limitations of Foucauldian thinking, alongside how the study has attempted to reconcile these, will be explored.

4.4.1 General critiques of feminist poststructural theory

As mentioned previously, feminist poststructural theory can be considered a methodology of the particular. The conditions in which subjectivities are formed are contingent upon the historical, societal and institutional factors that permeate particular contexts and as a result, poststructuralist researchers are always concerned with the specific, localised meanings ascribed by subjects compared with other wider reaching and more universal applications. As Thompson (2003) explains, given that oppression within the deconstructive strand is situational and provisional, the opportunity to offer programs for change can never be definitive. In a similar vein, Nigles (2006) states, “if change can only occur within the here and now, there is reason to argue that the [feminist] deconstructive perspectives overemphasize identity politics to the extent that any … collectivity and common purpose in the feminist community is largely lost” (p. 86).

In contrast, Weiner (1994) argues that feminist poststructuralists, like others feminist researchers, are also active in their “rejection of male-defined knowledge and action” (p. 65), one of the most obvious goals of feminism. Such concerns once again point to the ‘uneasy tension’ (St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000) that exists when trying to align two particular theoretical frameworks. However, as elaborated in the early stages of this chapter, this research works from a feminist and poststructural perspective, sitting beside one another rather than as a fused product. Such a relationship has been described by some as “a relationship that gestures toward fluid and multiple dislocations and alliances” (St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000, p. 3).

Feminist poststructuralism has also been accused of being unhelpful due to the language employed. As Tong (cited in Nilges, 2006) explains, “much deconstructive feminist thinking is accused of originating in the academy” (p. 86) reducing its
practicality for use by the general population. Whilst these limitations are acknowledged I am seduced by the potential of this theoretical perspective and encouraged by sentiments that feminist poststructural work has “generated some of the most vibrant and incisive work related to the cultural politics of gender” (Andrews, 2000, p. 125 cited in Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 19).

4.4.2 The feminist poststructuralist ‘gendered’ identity crisis

Under the guiding principles of poststructuralism the notion of ‘identity’ is questioned and problematised, rejecting essentialist ideas that we can define what it means to be a ‘woman’, a ‘teacher’, a ‘student’ and so on. Poststructuralists acknowledge that a subject is “considered a construction, and identity is presumed to be created in the ongoing effects of relations and in response to society’s codes” (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 503), rejecting essentialist moves to ‘name’ subjects as anything, let alone as masculine or feminine. Seidman (1993) terms this refusal to ‘name’ subjects as an anti-identity politic, claiming that the focus is on deconstructing and troubling the notion of a ‘unitary subject’ to seek alternative social and political possibilities. Whilst he acknowledges the potential that poststructuralist positioning of an anti-identity politic can have, he is simultaneously critical claiming that this logic is incoherent and lacks ability to evoke social change because underlying is, “a vague notion that this will encourage new, affirmative forms of personal and social life” (Seidman, 1993, p. 132).

So returning to feminist thinking, and the concept of a gendered identity, an essentialist position subscribes to “the belief that there is an immutable, eternal, and transhistorical essence of femaleness and maleness” (Kolmar & Bartkowski, 2005). Employing Fuss’s (2005) theorising of the essentialist/constructionist binary in feminist theory, she contends that a more helpful understanding of such terms can be employed by a social constructionist position (which this study adopts) where “women and men are seen as produced through a complex system of cultural, social…and historical differences” (p. xii cited in Kolmar & Bartkowski, 2005, p. 47). Fuss (2005) disputes the credibility of a poststructural subversion of identity claiming that “essentialism is essential to social constructionism” (p. 456) given that: some minimal point of commonality and continuity necessitates at least the linguistic retention of these particular terms. The same problem emerges with the sign “history” itself, for while a constructionist might insist that we
can only speak of histories (just as we can only speak of feminisms or
deconstructionisms) the question that remains unanswered is what motivates
or dictates the continued semantic use of the term “histories”? (p. 457).

In response to Fuss, this study adopts an understanding of identity as fluid and
multiple and one that is constructed within the discursive fields operating in contexts
in which the two teachers live and work. To that end, in an attempt to understand
how particular identities (and by extension, pedagogical practices) are constructed it
is important to consider the cultural conditions that inevitably shape these processes,
hence, for this study, the focus on the ‘context’ of an all-boys’ school. Given the
variability in different school contexts, this study, while drawing on common
essentialist terms such as ‘teacher’, ‘female’ and so on, acknowledges that these
terms can mean different things in different contexts.

Alcoff (2005) adds to this discussion by highlighting the usefulness of
poststructuralist understandings of subjectivity and identity to the feminist cause.
She asserts that firstly, “it seems to hold out the promise of an increased freedom for
women, the “free-play” of plurality of differences, unhampered by any pre-
determined gender identity as formulated by either patriarchy or cultural feminism”
(p. 431) and secondly, that it problematises the construction of subjectivity. She
claims that “we can learn a great deal here about the mechanisms of sexist
oppression and the construction of specific gender categories by relating these to
social discourse and by conceiving of the subject as a cultural product” (p. 431).

However, like her other feminist counterparts, Alcoff questions the over-emphasizing
of society in individual practices in poststructural work and claims that her
“disagreement occurs…when they seem totally to erase any room for manoeuvre by
the individual within a social discourse or set of institutions” (p. 430). She describes
the problematic of a gendered identity by poststructuralists as tenuous, because in
their “defense of a total construction of a subject, post-structuralists deny the
subject’s ability to reflect on the social discourses and challenge its determinations”
(p. 430), yet Foucauldian approaches would question this perspective.

In naming the subjects (the female physical education teacher and her male students)
and by employing the tenets of teacher socialisation theory (explored in the next
section) the study’s methodological stance acknowledges an engagement with essentialism, but sees this, following Fuss (2005), as important and annealing to the poststructural position of this research. The essentialist notion of gendered identities as a biologically determined and pre-given (historically) difference is not employed in the analysis, interpretation or drawing together of the key findings of this research. Rather, my understandings of ‘female teacher’ and ‘male student’ are not considered unitary subjects with shared identities, but they are thought about using de Lauretis’s (1984 cited in Alcoff, 2005) conception of experience as important in the formation of subjectivities. She avoids the essential characterisation of subjectivity by starting from a position of no assumed biological or psychological features, claiming instead that experiences and practices are crucial in the construction of meaning. According to Alcoff (2005):

Lauretis wants to argue that language is not the sole source and locus of meaning … through self-analyzing practices we can rearticulate female subjectivity. Gender is not a point to start from in the sense of being a given thing but is, instead, a posit or construct, formalizable in a nonarbitrary way through the matrix of habits, practices, and discourses. Further, it is an interpretation of our history within a particular discursive constellation, a history in which we are both subjects of and subjected to social construction. The advantage of such an analysis is its ability to articulate a concept of gendered subjectivity without pinning it down one way or another for all time (p. 434).

4.4.3 Critiques of Foucauldian theorising

Although some of the specific criticisms of aspects of Foucauldian thinking have been discussed concomitantly above, this section explores some of the general concerns cited about Foucault’s work. Wright (2004) explains that questions surrounding self/identity and society or culture are not limited to poststructuralist inquiry and reminds us that researchers should explore wider offerings than only that of Foucault in their poststructuralist research. Drawing on the works of Foucault, Derrida and other such theorists, this research is concerned with the construction of female PE teachers’ professional identities and the impact this has on their pedagogical practices. Given the usefulness of Foucauldian theorising as a framework to aid data analysis it is worth a brief consideration of his critics.
Given the breadth and complexity of Foucault’s work, and his resistance to be ‘labelled’, the difficulty associated with categorising his work has been noted (McNay, 1994) and considering the contentious nature of some of his writings, the number of critics is not surprising (Rail & Harvey, 1995). As suggested by McNay (1994), “[h]istorians have rejected Foucault’s work for being too philosophical, philosophers for its lack of formal rigour and sociologists for its literary or poetic quality” (p. 1). More specifically, differences between how Foucault and feminist researchers employ the notion of subjectivity have been highlighted (Diamond & Quinby, 1988; Downing, 2008). As discussed above, and after the reflections of Downing (2008), “where feminism can borrow most profitably from Foucault is in paying attention to his suspicion of subjectivity and his analyses of the ways in which subjects are produced, in order to question essentialist assumptions about the feminine” (p. 106), or masculine for that matter.

On this, McNay (1992) highlights her concern that Foucault’s theory of the self is constituted without consideration of psychoanalytic theories. She argues that “Foucault does not devote enough attention to the overdetermining effects of gender upon the body … he tends to understand individuals solely as bodies and … excludes a consideration of other aspects to the experiences of individuals in modern society” (p. 9). Despite the criticism from historians, generally claiming that his genealogies occur over long periods of time with little empirical data (Rail & Harvey, 1995), or from sociologists (namely Marxists) who criticise his notion of power as not rooted in social struggles therefore a ‘classless power’ (Rail & Harvey, 1995), or from feminists who claim that Foucault is ‘gender blind’ or shows a ‘masculine bias’ (Bartky, 1988 cited in Downing, 2008; McNay, 1992), the generative capacity and illuminating prospects of his work has not gone unnoticed (Danaher, et al., 2000; Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983; Wright, 2004).

In the field of PE and sport, and education more widely we have seen an influx of the amount of work informed by Foucauldian theory (Gore, 1990, 1998; Keddie, Mills, & Mills, 2008; Lee, 1992; Markula, 2003; Markula & Pringle, 2006; Peters & Besley, 2007; Webb & Macdonald, 2007b; Webb, et al., 2004; Wright, 2001). Of course, such work has also attracted the critics – for example, Evans and Davies (cited in Wright, 2006), working from a Bernsteinian framework, have criticised
Foucault for the lack of theoretical resources provided. Similarly, Smart (1986 cited in Markula & Pringle, 2006) asserts:

Despite Foucault’s overt political actions and critical works, he has been variously critiqued for being apolitical; with the prime criticism being that his ‘histories of the present’ graphically point out a range of social problems, yet they do not provide clear or coherent guidelines to help challenge or overcome these problems (p. 17).

Whilst the above concerns are noted, and foregrounded to demonstrate that poststructural thinking, and Foucauldian thinking, have not been digested uncritically, such lenses have potential to provide an understanding of “the educational subject - the pupil, the student, the teacher etc. – in terms of a history of subjectivity and … [through] genealogical investigation … [allows] educational theorists to understand the effects of education and pedagogies” (Peters & Besley, 2007). Ultimately it is sentiments such as these that resonate with the intentions of this research study.

4.5 Additional theoretical concepts – Acknowledging limitations of teacher socialisation theory

Much of the teacher socialisation work that has been completed in the past has been descriptive and pre-theoretical (Lawson & Stroot, 1993), relying on the frameworks of occupational socialisation to inform this work. Stemming from the work of Lortie (1975), Lawson (1983b, 1986) and more recently Curtner-Smith (1997; 1999, 2001), the application of the occupational socialisation research in PE, whilst initially descriptive, has made some methodological shifts since first emerging in the literature. The major stages of occupational socialisation have not changed in conceptual terms to a large degree, known as the stages of acculturation, professional socialisation and organisational socialisation (see Chapter 3), but the methodological underpinnings of research employing this theory have.

As Lawson and Stroot (1993) explain, work from a functional perspective where individuals are considered passive, assumes that “once they receive their “appropriate socialisation” they may take their “proper” place in the social order” (p. 126).
Furthermore, recognising that this view failed to acknowledge the role of the individual in negotiating their ‘socialisation’ process, social psychological research that drew on social interactionist theoretical perspectives, emerged with the intent of recognising “the abilities of individuals to make meanings from their experiences, establish goals and engage in social negotiations” (Lawson & Stroot, 1993, p. 443). Acknowledging the shortcomings of this methodological frame, Lawson and Stroot describe a series of theoretical perspectives then employed to consider “the effects of social structure on life chances and experiences of individuals” (p. 443).

Whilst it is not the intention of this thesis to debate the history of teacher socialisation or occupational socialisation theory, what is of significance here is that there has been a notable shift towards a poststructural way of thinking. Lawson and Stroot (1993) argue the need for a framework that considers more than the individual as paramount, they suggest that “we require more understanding of the histories of the organizational settings included in our research. In other words, we must proceed beyond individuals to the study of organizations, their subcultures and occupational communities” (Lawson & Stroot, 1993, pp. 444-445), which a poststructural analysis would facilitate. Of course, returning to the analogy of a ‘journey’ the seemingly easy transition to a poststructuralist way of thinking was not particularly straightforward.

Weiner (1994) has highlighted how poststructuralism has troubled the teacher socialisation theory, explicating that “people are not socialized into their worlds, not passively shaped by others but rather each is active in taking up discourses through which he or she is shaped” (p. 64). She goes on to explore the notion of a ‘reverse discourse’ (p. 64) to demonstrate how subjects can be active in their resistance of dominant discourses and in the creation of new discourses that provide alternative ways in identity formation. That said, this research is positioned to explore, in the organisational socialisation phase of a teacher’s career, the discourses female PE teachers have been active in taking up as they shape their professional identity. Further, the usefulness of teacher socialisation theory is applied to the research to facilitate a reading of how the teacher’s biographies and experiences, as discursively produced across various historical points (classified here as acculturation and professional socialisation) are considered influential in ideas they have constructed about ‘effective teachers’ and ‘good’ pedagogy.
4.6 Reflective notes

This chapter has examined the study’s epistemological and theoretical underpinnings from a feminist poststructural perspective and described the journey-like experience that I have undertaken to not only learn about, but to apply and reconcile aspects of this theoretical perspective with the intentions of the study. It has signposted the assumptions that underpin not only a feminist poststructural approach, but also much of the Foucauldian thinking that has informed the analyses of how the professional identities (and gendered subjectivities) of the two female PE teacher participants have been shaped within the context of an all-boys’ school.

This chapter has revealed that whilst many theorists may be helpful in this kind of research, it is the various dimensions of Foucault’s work that allows for a particular ‘reading’ of how these identities have been shaped in certain contexts. Much of the existing work on PE teachers’ identities tends to draw on the work of Bourdieu to explain durable norms and practices (see for example Brown, 2005; Gorely, et al., 2003). In an attempt to build on this work, but extend our understanding of the ways in which the wider school context (discourse and practice) impact on how these two female PE teachers understood themselves, and their pedagogies, in this school Foucault’s theorising of discourse, power and subjectivities (through the technologies of the self) facilitated this analysis. To that end, poststructural concerns with language, power and the production of meaning were discussed in relation to how these concepts informed the study’s conceptualisation of female teacher’s subjectivities and embodiment of a professional identity.

Much of the above discussion has focused on the significance of discourse and discourse-power relations in framing the analyses of not only the social practices of PE in an all-boys’ school, but also how “subjects” are formed. As Wright (2006) explains, much of the genealogical work undertaken in the field of PE has been interested in examining the ways in which PE, “discourses and practices have come to be as they are, why and how some forms have come to prominence (in what social, political and cultural contexts) and others not, and with what consequences for individuals and social groups” (p. 65). Whilst part of this research examines these concepts in the context of an all-boys’ school it seeks to extend much of this existing work by examining the links between how professional identities (and gendered
subjectivities) are shaped and to consider how this may impact on approaches to pedagogy. In addition, consideration of power relations, and a discussion of how these can operate in multidirectional ways, was offered to help frame how the study will approach the analysis of factors that influence participants’ constructions of what constitutes ‘good’ pedagogical approaches in boys’ PE.

Understood as a key tool to enhancing the methodological soundness of this research, particular critiques of poststructural theory and Foucauldian thinking were acknowledged and reconciled within the study’s theoretical positioning. Further, teacher socialisation work based on Van Maanen and Schein’s (1979) functionalist approach to organisational socialisation was critiqued for its essentialist orientations and this discussion acknowledged that “a major tension between various theoretical models is grounded in the assumptions about the role of the…teacher in the socialization process” (Stroot & Ko, 2006, p. 432). By assuming that teachers will learn the cultural norms, practices and expectations of a particular educational institution through the process of socialisation, this approach foregrounds a maintenance of the status quo with little recognition of the agency teachers have in the active construction of their place within the organisation or their practices (Stroot & Ko, 2006). In Chapter 5 the specifics of the research methodology and design are discussed.
Chapter 5 - Methodological approach and research methods

Strongly informed by feminist poststructural theoretical perspectives, this chapter outlines the research procedures adopted within a case study methodology, and details its potential to reveal an “extensive and in depth description of …social phenomena” (Yin, 2009, p. 4). As Wright (2006) proffers, “…there is no research design/paradigm that is particularly unique to “post” work. In general, it is likely to be qualitative…and to be interested in text(s). It is likely to take account of relations of power between participants and the researcher…and at its best should be reflexive” (p. 64). Considering Wright’s comments, the discussion surrounding the choice of methodology employed in this study will continue herein with a justification for the employment of an analytical case study approach. Inherent in this discussion will also be recognition of the way in which the position of the researcher can impact on the research, and a discussion of how the issues of textual authority aim to be reconciled.

The chapter continues with an overview of the procedural aspects of the research. Specifically it will introduce and contextualise the site in which the research took place and provide a brief description of the participants. An explanation of participant recruitment and methods employed for data collection, as they relate to the methodology and specific research questions will be offered. Furthermore an exploration of the tools of analysis and representation will focus on how these have been employed in the interpretation of data to explore the key research questions. This account of my research journey concludes with a consideration of ethical issues relevant to this study and a note on the trustworthiness of the data.

5.1 Case study methodology

Considering the aims of this study it was important that the selected methodology facilitated a detailed analysis of the contextual conditions and complex interactions that shaped the professional identities and pedagogical approaches of the female PE
teachers involved. According to Creswell (2007), a case study methodology allows for close inspection of “a bounded system (a case) … over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information” (p. 73, original emphasis). It could be argued that aspects of this work could be richly informed by a life history approach, particularly for its potential to reveal how individuals negotiate their contextual environments to “show how social, cultural, economic and historical forces ‘frame’… individual lives and … how unique individual responses to their framing either reinforce or challenge social forces acting upon the individual” (Brown, 1999, p. 149). Similarly, it could also be argued that ethnographic approaches that place “researchers in the midst of whatever it is that they study… [to examine] various phenomena as perceived by participants” (Berg, 2007, p. 172) would prove insightful to this research. As Creswell (2007) notes, however, the major intent of these approaches is to investigate how ‘culture’ works as opposed to seeking to understand “an issue or problem using the case as a specific illustration” (p. 73).

Considering the intent to explore how professional identities and pedagogical approaches are shaped in context, a case study methodology facilitates deep analysis of a real-life phenomenon whilst recognising “important contextual conditions – because they were highly pertinent to [the] phenomenon of study” (Yin, 2009, p. 18). Further, the employment of a feminist poststructural lens to analyse data allows for “a patient and rigorous description, a documentary, an accumulation of details, “errors,” “minute deviations,” “false appraisals,” and “faulty calculations” (Foucault, 1984) that operate to produce truth” (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 497).

Consistent with the methodological underpinnings of this research, Merriam’s (1998) description of an analytical case study where, “a case study researcher gathers as much information about the problem as possible with the intent of analysing, interpreting or theorising about the phenomenon” (p. 38) was employed in the research design phase. In addition, the adoption of a longitudinal approach to this case study research (Berg, 2007; Yin, 2009) allowed for the analysis to occur “in one research entity at multiple points in time” (Yin, 2009, p. 49). Data were collected across one school semester (a six month period) and the methodology of this research is seen as strengthened by this approach.
Returning to the ‘journey’ metaphor, another important concept in case study methodology was the delimitation of “what is and is not the case” (Stake, 1995). Acknowledging the influence of wider educational structures and societal discourses it is difficult to view the specific school site as isolated from this macro-environment (Brown, 1999). To this end, the research methodology delimits the study to the investigation of a school site at the micro-political level, but accepts that the case and specifically the subjects (including their identity, values, knowledge and rationality) are inevitably influenced by wider social discourses.

The criticisms of this particular methodology are well documented and numerous writers warn of the limitations of case study research (Anderson, 1990; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000; Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). Literature suggests that researchers more entrenched in a positivist research tradition disregard case study research on the grounds “that it lacks rigour, incorporates no statistical tests and it does not readily permit generalisation” (Anderson, 1990, p. 158). Yin (2003) blatantly cautions, “do case studies, but do them with the understanding that your methods will be challenged … and that the insights resulting from your case studies may be under-appreciated” (p. xiii). A major criticism is that due to the specific, localised context of case study research, the ability to provide a basis for scientific generalisation is relinquished (Yin, 2009). Moreover, Stake (2006) explains that without previous experience with the case, or in this situation time in the field, “etic issues” (p. 10) are brought in by the researcher from outside providing another potential methodological flaw. However, I contend that my previous experience in the field proves advantageous in filtering the diffusion of etic issues in the data collection processes to reveal what Stake (2006) calls the “emic issues” of the case to emerge.

Acknowledging the limitations and criticism levelled at this particular methodology, a case study approach was selected as an appropriate methodology given:

Case study research shares the burden of clarifying descriptions and sophisticating interpretations … [it] does not require the researcher to avoid delivering generalisations … [but] encourages providing readers with good raw material for their own generalising. The emphasis is on … “thick description”… of the interpretations of the people most knowledgeable about the case” (Stake, 1995, p. 102).
Ultimately with an interest in the particular workings of discourse at localised levels, the exploration of the power relations forged through discourses and the impact this has on the female teachers’ subjectivities, a case study methodology was selected to allow for an analysis of the subtleties operating within each case. Given the concern of feminist poststructuralists centralises around the local and specific levels (St. Pierre, 2000) it was significant that a methodology that allowed for an analysis at this level was adopted.

5.2 The position of the researcher

Another important methodological consideration of this research was the relationship between the researcher and researched. As explained previously, characteristic to “post” work is the need to take account of the relations of power that might exist between the researcher and the study’s participants (Wright, 2006). Hickey (2010) argues that a key feature of poststructural research is a greater acknowledgement of the place of the researcher in the research process and as others point out, “the analyst is very much an ‘insider’ and must start with a recognition of the cultural assumptions they carry into the project and their own ways of interpreting a discourse event” (Fairclough, 2001, pp. 279-280).

In an attempt to demonstrate a self-reflexive approach to this study I commenced with an autobiographical preface to clearly position myself with an emotional and intellectual connection to the research as a previous PE teacher in all-boys’ schools. This reflexive account was offered to enable readers to interpret my research in a more knowledgeable manner, and similarly, through greater visibility of me as the researcher in this section, readers are made aware of the power relationships that have shaped the research. As Nigles (2006) states, “[s]ince researchers have a history and a gender that enter into any research interaction, feminists often foreground their own subjectivity within their work to establish a rapport with participants” (pp. 88-89). The concept of reflexivity has been adopted in this research as it acknowledges that “detachment is impossible so the researcher’s influence must be taken into account” (Wetherell, Taylor, & Yates, 2001, p. 17). Stake’s (1995) notion of the ‘case researcher as interpreter’ perhaps most aptly describes my position within the research. As he explains, “the case researcher as
interpreter … recognizes and substantiates new meanings … whoever is a researcher has recognized a problem, a puzzlement and studies it, hoping to connect it better with known things” (Stake, 1995, p. 97), or in the case of a feminist poststructuralist to trouble the taken-for-granted and the familiar (Wright, 2006) to reveal potential sites for resistance and change.

It has been suggested that the identity of the researcher influences the selection of the topic for research, the data collection process and the interpretation, analysis and representation of results (Wetherell, et al., 2001). With respect to data collection, I was particularly conscious of my potential impact in observations of classroom interactions and interviews with participants. During the weekly visits to the school site over the six month data collection period, it was possible to cultivate relationships where my physical presence in the field became ‘normal’ and accepted. As Stoddard (1986 cited in Berg, 2007) explains, to be afforded the status of an invisible researcher, one requires the “ability to be present in the setting, to see what’s going on without being observed, and consequently, to capture the essence of the setting and participants without influencing them” (p. 187).

Stoddard’s concept of “erosion of visibility over time”, explains the phenomenon that when researchers “have been present in the domain for a long time, the inhabitants tend not to be aware of them anymore” (cited in Berg, 2007, p. 187). As Sallee and Harris (2011) comment, “women who study predominantly male settings are often challenged in gaining access and building rapport with participants” (p. 411). Given my attendance at PE classes on a weekly basis it was assumed that, over time, the participants would come to see me as ‘part of the furniture’, and more importantly, this would allow for the development of positive relationships with both teachers and students.

With respect to the interview process, others have highlighted that the gender of the researcher can influence how participants respond to them (Sallee & Harris III, 2011). Further, participants “may feel ill at ease with an interviewer who appears older, younger, more confident … or because of numerous differences … conveyed in a first impression by the interviewer’s appearance” (Wetherell, et al., 2001, p. 17). To account for this, often I would attend the interview in PE clothing simulating that of other PE teachers in the school, and attempted, where possible, to invite my
principal supervisor (who is male) to be present at some interviews. This invitation was considered a methodological strength of the research as, in addition to providing a gender balance throughout particular interviews, it also afforded me the opportunity to “learn the craft of interviewing...through direct exposure to interview practice in a research apprenticeship” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 91).

To acknowledge the position of the researcher in the data analysis, interpretation and representation phase, reflexivity was achieved “by the researcher adopting a policy of openness with the aim of showing her or his place within the research process” (Wetherell, et al., 2001, p. 19). Positioned within the research in which meaning was constructed, troubled, and negotiated, the constructed nature of the researcher and researched relationship is made visible. Following the advice of Hickey (2010):

…it needs to be acknowledged that the researcher can work only with the experiences and insights that the interviewee contributes. There is almost certainly much that is withheld from the research conversation…To the extent that the participant exercises control over what is offered, he or she retains power in the conversation” (p. 111).

To this end, commentary locating myself within the research process has made transparent the processes that have shaped researcher-researched interactions. Along with the reflexive stance adopted, this section demonstrates my intent in “assessing and qualifying claims as they are made, rather than presenting them as statements of truth” (Wetherell, et al., 2001, p. 19) or as a detached researcher’s authorial understandings. The following section introduces the ‘case’ and the participants involved in the research.

5.3 The case study school – St. John’s College³

In earlier chapters the link between gendered identities, PE and sport, and all-boys’ schools was established, highlighting the relevance of a Catholic independent boys’ school as the case study site. Stake (1995) points out, “our time and access for fieldwork are almost always limited. If we can, we need to pick cases which are easy to get to and hospitable to our inquiry, perhaps for which a prospective informant can

³ Pseudonyms have been employed in the naming of the school, participants and community to protect identities
be identified” (p. 4). Given this advice, the primary research participants, the female PE teachers, were selected on the basis of professional and personal networks established during my time as a practising teacher and following their initial acceptance to be involved the case site was selected. It is also worth noting, that at the time of participant recruitment (2007) the prevalence of female physical educators in all-boys’ schools was relatively low. After personal contact with the Head of PE in all Victorian boys’ schools during March in 2007, it emerged that the only types of schools that female PE teachers were in fact employed were schools governed by the Catholic order of Christian Brothers.

5.3.1 St John’s College

St. John’s is a Catholic all-boys’ school under the governance of the Christian Brothers Education Commission (CBEC) and located in a large regional city (Bayside) in Victoria, Australia. It caters for students from Grade 6 (approximately aged 12) through to Year 12 (approximately aged 18). Whilst the city has pockets of variable socio-economic status, the school is located in a relatively affluent area as indicated by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) socioeconomic indexes for areas (SEIFA) measure of above 1060, compared to the average for Australia of 1000 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008). The school enjoys a healthy enrolment with the school’s annual planning report for 2007 detailing enrolment at just over 1300 boys. The same report indicated that the majority of students are Catholic (96%), and approximately 9% (or 120 of 1305 students) are from non-English speaking backgrounds, suggesting the majority of the student population is of Anglo-Saxon descent.

Of the total staff (teaching and non-teaching) employed in 2007 (approximately 138), 72 were male and 66 were female. Of the teaching staff, there were approximately 59 male teachers and 41 female teachers and the student-teacher ratio was outlined in the report as 13.6 students to every teacher. The school year, as with most schools in Victoria, is divided into four terms, with the first term in 2007 commencing late January, and the end of term four, which signifies the end of the school year, concluding mid-December.
The school itself is situated on a hilltop, with ovals spanning most of the valley space. The buildings range in era from the 1850’s (of which the original bluestone building is still utilised as a creative arts wing) to contemporary designs, creating an impressive school environment that oozes tradition and grandeur. Upon entering the main administration building the past sporting successes of students from various eras are showcased with a multitude of trophies, shields and sporting pennants displayed. Given the personal and professional rapport that I had established previously with the female physical educators in this school, the site was selected to allow for an ease of access to the PE classroom and school environment. It was deemed illustrative and typical of an independent, Catholic all-boys’ college and, as I had never been employed at this school, I was able to visit the school environment as a researcher and therefore avoid being classified as a teacher by both staff and students of the school community.

5.3.1.1 The participants

Initially the female Head of Department was contacted via phone to establish her interest in being involved in the project and upon gaining her consent I also asked her to suggest another female physical educator within the department whom I should approach to be involved in a series of classroom observations and reflection interviews over the course of the semester. After their registration of interest some documentation explaining the project and the proposed methods of data collection were mailed (see Appendix 1). The school Principal was also contacted to obtain approval (see Appendix 2) for the research to occur in the school, along with the necessary approving bodies (Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee and the CBEC).

Upon approval being granted, a letter detailing the research project was sent to parents/guardians to advise that I would be attending their son’s PE class to observe and recruit participants for the study (see Appendix 3). Following this initial visit where an invitation to participate on either an individual basis (in a one-on-one face to face interview) and/or on a group level (in a focus group situation) was disseminated; the first ten students (from a class of 25) who returned a signed consent form via the self-addressed envelope enclosed were recruited to participate. The PE teacher involved in the classroom observations was asked to rank the
physical ability of the students in her class using the nomenclature of high, medium or low so that all ability levels were represented amongst the students recruited. Whilst a poststructuralist would tend to avoid such forms of classification, the ranking system was employed purely to ensure students of various (albeit perceived) abilities were recruited, and the study does not consider these to be stable and fixed descriptions.

Following this recruitment period, at the commencement of classes in semester two 2007, I attended the double-period practical PE lesson on a weekly basis for the first six weeks of the semester, during which the topics of football codes and golf were covered. During these observation periods, the class was video-taped for later use in discussions with the female teacher and observations were documented in the form of field notes. I continued to attend the school on a weekly basis for the remainder of the term where I recorded observations and conducted interviews with students, the female Head of Department and other key informants. The final phase of data collection occurred in the middle of the final term, where I once again attended the PE class for a period of four weeks, recording and observing the interactions of the class during a cricket unit. These observations were used as the basis of the conversations conducted with the female teacher at various points throughout the semester. In total, five interviews of approximately 40 minutes to one hour were conducted with the female physical educator over the course of the semester.

In addition, particular members of the school community were invited to participate in a face-to-face interview. These staff members were purposively selected on their basis as potential ‘key informants’ on the case under investigation. As Stake (1995) reveals, “the case will not be seen the same by everyone…qualitative researchers take pride in discovering and portraying the multiple views of the case…the interview is the main road to multiple realities” (p. 64). After indicating a willingness to be involved the staff members were forwarded documentation and consent forms. The staff members recruited included the Principal, two Deputy Principals (one male and one female), Year 12 Coordinator and three other PE faculty members. Below is a brief introduction to each of these participants.
5.3.1.2 The female physical educator: Rachel Moore

Rachel was in her late twenties and after six years of teaching in a variety of educational settings had commenced teaching at St. John’s in the final weeks of semester 1, 2007. She hailed from a small regional community in Western Victoria and had been a very active sportswoman during her youth, representing her region in netball, basketball and athletics at State level. At the time of data collection she was actively involved with triathlons, touch rugby and mountain bike riding. After attending a regional university to complete her degree, Rachel returned to her home town where she taught at the Catholic co-educational school for two years. Following an overseas trip, where she described her teaching experiences as ‘interesting’, she taught for a year and a half at another regional Catholic co-educational school, about one hour from Bayside where she lived. During the first term of 2007 she was successful in obtaining a replacement position at a Catholic girl’s college in Bayside and moved to her current position at St. John’s in the latter weeks of term 2 after completing some casual-relief teaching around Bayside for the first half of the term.

This research was conducted during Rachel’s initiation period at St. John’s, I observed her to be a particularly reflective teacher. She made constant references to the sources of support she relied on in her negotiation of what she considered to be the ‘right’ way to teach boys’ PE, and often discussed what she considered to be her areas of weakness as she constantly strived to maintain consistency in her behaviour management strategies. She was a dedicated and enthusiastic teacher, and quite meticulous with her organisation and planning. She often commented on what she considered to be the ‘non-transferability’ of teaching skills from a co-educational setting to an all-boys’ setting, claiming that she would often need to be reactive and be able to ‘think on her feet’ when selected activities did not achieve their desired effect. Despite these challenges, Rachel enjoyed being in this teaching environment and was ecstatic with her appointment to an ongoing position in the latter half of term four.

5.3.1.3 The students of Rachel’s Year 8 PE class

To further add to the understanding of the case, the experiences in PE with a female teacher were explored with ten Year 8 students (approximately aged 14 to 15 years). At the core of this investigation was a belief that dominant forms of masculinity are
regulated and reinforced through groups (Connell, 1995), and that this was an important concept when considering PE pedagogy (Parker, 1996). For this reason it was deemed important to consider the boys’ perceptions in both a group setting, as a focus group, and in an individual setting. Two focus groups were conducted, with five boys in each, early in the semester with the intention of capturing some of the pre-conceived gendered perceptions about PE teachers held by the boys. To decentralise the actual identity of Rachel and avoid a situation that facilitated a ‘group airing’ of their possible negative perceptions that could impact on the classroom environment, a vignette about two boys who had a change of teacher (from male to female) mid-year was used to guide discussions. This vignette explored the ways in which students perceived the experience for the two boys might be different with a female teacher and asked for students to consider the advice they may offer to the two apprehensive fictional boys.

During the final phase of data collection in term 4, the same students (with the exception of two students who did not consent to being involved on an individual level) were involved in an individual interview of approximately 30-45 minutes in duration. This interview explored background biographical information, including their involvement in sport and physical activity, their perceptions about PE and more specifically their interpretations of their experiences in PE with a female teacher this semester. Some biographical information about each student participant is detailed in Table 1.

Table 1: Biographical details of student participants from St. John’s College

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Biographical details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brian</td>
<td>Medium skilled participant and described himself as a keen participant in sport and physical activity. Participates in football, basketball and tennis outside of school and represented the school in tennis in Year 7. He describes himself as reasonably committed to his studies and was quite thoughtful in the responses given.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sebastian</strong></td>
<td>Low skilled participant although he describes himself as ‘very enthusiastic’ about PE. He participates outside of school in karate and is involved in a dramatic arts academy twice weekly. He has tried out for the netball team in both Year 7 and 8 but has not been successful in being selected to represent the school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Craig</strong></td>
<td>Low skilled participant and is relatively reserved in nature, but offered some insightful comments during his interviews. He participates in indoor cricket and table tennis and has been selected to represent the school in table tennis in both Year 7 and 8. During the summer he plays cricket for a local club.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Paul</strong></td>
<td>Medium skilled participant who plays football for both the school and a local club and plays cricket outside of school in the summer. He describes his Dad’s influence as a major factor in his decision to become involved in these sports.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nigel</strong></td>
<td>Medium skilled participant who participates in tennis coaching outside of school, although self-confesses he hasn’t been overly successful so far in improving. Nigel appeared to be on the ‘outer’ during group discussions and often appeared to make comments to ‘rise’ particular members of the group. His PE teacher describes him as ‘antagonistic’ with his comments to other students in class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jimmy</strong></td>
<td>Highly skilled participant who plays representative cricket for both the school and local district and football at club level on the weekend. As a very tall boy he has also been selected for representative squads in basketball. He appeared to be a relatively quiet boy in class observations but appears to have the respect of his peers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Matt  
Described as a particularly gifted athlete who excels at a wide range of sporting pursuits. He describes himself as competitive with a particular love of football, cricket, surfing, basketball and golf. He has been selected for both school and district representation in football and cricket for the past two years. Matt appeared as a very dominant character within the classroom environment and was often an instigator of resistance behaviours.

Dale  
Dale is Sebastian’s cousin and described as a highly skilled participant. Dale’s dad played football in the Victorian Football League (VFL) and he and his two brothers play football with their Dad on weekends. Further, in the summer, both boys and their Dad play in the senior cricket team for their local club. Dale claims that he and his cousin get along ‘ok’ at family functions, yet during the classroom observations he appeared to constantly target Sebastian with negative comments.

Brendan and Kyle  
Both boys were described as medium skilled participants. They participated in the group interviews, but did not consent to participate in individual interviews.

5.3.1.4 The female Head of Department (Health & PE) – Hannah Marks

Hannah, a female PE teacher in her early thirties, was appointed as the Head of HPE in 2004. She hailed from a small country town in Western Victoria and following her graduation from a regional University, was successful in obtaining a teaching position at St. John’s College. After two years in this school, she travelled overseas and then upon returning to Australia took up a teaching position at another Catholic all-boys’ school in Melbourne. When she returned to Bayside in 2004 she was offered the Head of PE position as the female previously occupying this role had taken leave to travel also. Whilst she acknowledged the huge contribution that the
previous Head of PE had made in terms of normalising the place of females in this particular teaching faculty, she still described aspects of managing the faculty as difficult because of her gender. At the time of data collection, Hannah taught only a Year 7 PE class with the rest of her teaching load comprised of senior Health and Human Development and duties related to the management and administration of the department.

5.3.1.5 Other members of the school community – Key informants

To further assist in my understanding of the case, individual interviews were conducted with a range of key informants (Stake, 2006). These interviews were often conducted during ‘free periods’ or at lunchtimes and ranged in length from 40 minutes to just over an hour. It was during some of these interviews that I acted as a ‘research apprentice’ (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), as described above, with the involvement of my principal supervisor.

Mr Grey, was the Principal of St. John’s College during the period of data collection and had been the Deputy Principal of the College prior to his appointment as Principal in 2000. His major responsibilities entailed the overall administration and leadership of the school. Schooled in a Christian Brothers all-boys’ setting in Melbourne, Mr. Grey has spent the majority of his time as a teacher also in similar schools (since 1977), with the exception of his time as Deputy Principal at a Catholic College in a coastal town of Victoria. In his time at St. John’s he has worked exceptionally hard to change the culture from a very ‘macho, macho boys’ school’ to a more inclusive and inviting educational environment.

Mr Wood was one of two Deputy Principals and primarily responsible for the welfare and discipline of students in Year 10, 11 and 12 (senior school). Mr. Wood also attended an all-boys’ school in Melbourne, governed by an order other than the Christian Brothers, however claimed the cultural experience appeared to be very similar to that of other boys’ colleges at the time. He had taught in two larger metropolitan boys’ schools and held the position of Head of Sport in both teaching environments. In 2000 he was appointed as Deputy Principal at St. John’s and although he coaches the senior representative football team did not have any direct teaching responsibilities at the time of data collection.
Mrs White was also appointed as a Deputy Principal at St. John’s College in 2000. Prior to this her background experience in schools had primarily been in co-educational settings in both Government and Catholic schools. She held a Deputy Principal position preceding her appointment at St. John’s, and was primarily responsible for pastoral care and discipline for Year 6 to 9 (junior school). Mrs White indicated that her early years at St. John’s were extremely challenging and she was not sure whether the students or staff provided the greatest resistance to her authority.

Mrs Andrews, aged in her early thirties, held the position of Year 12 Coordinator during 2007. Educated at a Catholic co-educational college in Melbourne’s south-east, Mrs Andrews attended a Catholic University in Melbourne to complete her teaching degree before accepting a job in a co-educational Catholic College also in the south-east region of Melbourne. Moving to Bayside for her partner, she accepted a position at St. John’s College in 2003 and taught predominantly in the areas of English, Drama and Religious Education. In 2006 she was one of six people approached to apply for the Year 11 coordinator position which she obtained and has followed the same year group into Year 12 as their coordinator.

Mr Zanders, Mr Small and Mr Western are all PE teachers at St. John’s College. Mr Zanders attended St. John’s College as a student and after completing his University degree applied for a position at St. John’s in 1999. He played football and cricket as an old collegian for St. John’s and coaches both school and club football teams. In addition to his teaching duties he was also the Year 8 Coordinator.

Mr Small attended another Christian Brother’s college in another regional city. He taught PE, science and health in the same regional Catholic College as Rachel before applying for jobs in Bayside. He was successful in obtaining the position at St. John’s in 2003. Mr Small described his sporting involvement as quite traditional, with football and cricket being the predominant sports of his youth.

Mr Western attended a Catholic co-educational College in a coastal town (the same school where Mr Grey was Deputy Principal) before attending University in a regional city. Upon graduating he spent four years teaching PE and outdoor
education in a Catholic girl’s college in a north-western suburb of Melbourne. He
was then successful in obtaining a position in a Christian Brother’s boys’ college in
Melbourne’s eastern suburbs where he spent three years before opting for a sea-
change with his current position in 2007. He was actively involved in surfing and
described his sporting interests as more activity based compared to the football and
cricket that he played growing up.

5.4 Methods of inquiry

In describing the techniques for gathering empirical evidence, Yin (2009) claims a
major strength of case study methodology lies in its focus on collecting multiple
sources of evidence. Conscious of the need to allow for polyvocality (Lawson &
Stroot, 1993), this study foregrounds methods of inquiry that investigates the case
from a variety of perspectives (staff and students). Further, a poststructuralist
perspective acknowledges knowledge, power, discourses and subjectivities as fluid in
nature and historically contingent, therefore the structuring of data collection at
various points throughout the semester was strategic to explore changes in participant
perceptions over time. For this reason data collection was structured in three main
phases across the semester (see Appendix 1). Phase one was concerned with
participant recruitment, initial site visits and collection of biographical information
from the two female PE teachers. Phase two coincided with the commencement of
the semester and focused on the observation and recording of six PE lessons,
interviews with the female PE teachers, student focus groups and interviews with key
informants. The final phase, conducted in the latter half of the semester involved the
observation and recording of four PE lessons and individual interviews with both the
female PE teacher and her students.

5.4.1 Tools of data collection

5.4.1.1 Site visits

Site visits are essential to allow time for the collection of data that establishes the
context for the case. As Webb (2001) explains, site visits facilitate gathering
information about “the context of the school, the staffroom climate, the nature of
day-to-day decisions, [and] patterns of interaction and rapport between the
participant and the school community” (p. 15). These observations, recorded in field
notes and reflective journals, were collected to enrich data analysis and often included informal conversations with teachers, students and other members of the school community. Stake (1995) argues, “our accounts need to be personal, describing the things of our sensory experiences, not failing to attend to the matters that personal curiosity dictates….personalistic descriptions…provide rich ingredients for vicarious experience” (pp. 86-87).

5.4.1.2 Interviews – semi-structured, focus groups and video-stimulated reflection.

“If you want to know how people understand their world and their lives, why not talk with them? Conversation is the basic mode of human interaction” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. xvii).

Interviews are a relatively common method of inquiry for qualitative researchers, and case study researchers in particular (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). From a conventional perspective, interviews are considered to illuminate and bring to the fore the constructed ‘reality’ that the interviewee has about particular concepts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). From a poststructural perspective, Scheurich (1997) argues:

that the researcher has multiple intentions and desires, some of which are consciously known and some of which are not. The same is true of the interviewee. The language out of which the questions are constructed is not bounded or stable; it is persistently slippery, unstable, and ambiguous from person to person, from situation to situation, from time to time (p. 62).

This perspective recognises that the interpretations and meanings that I, as the researcher, have ascribed to particular words may not hold the same meaning for the interviewee, and that over time that both the researcher and the researched may alter their understanding or meaning. As a result, although the questions asked of participants were relatively similar due to their semi-structured nature, from a poststructuralist viewpoint, the “same questions asked by the same interviewer of the same interviewee can often elicit significantly different answers at different times or different places” (Scheurich, 1997, p. 62). For this reason, it is acknowledged that the interviews can only even be a partial representation of their experiences. As Britzman (2000) explains, “subjects may well be the tellers of experience; but every
telling is constrained, partial and determined by the discourses and histories that prefigure…representation” (p. 32). Considering this, the use of the interviews was not employed to determine absolute truths but rather as a tool to investigate the discourses that produce particular versions of truths.

Whilst most of the interviews took the form of a semi-structured, one-on-one, face-to-face interview, as outlined earlier in the chapter, focus group interviews were conducted with some of the students. Other researchers have identified the significant influence group dynamics can play in the enactment of masculine subjectivities (Connell, 1995; Keddie, 2003). Considering this, these interviews were employed to look specifically at the power relations between groups of boys of varying sporting ability as potential microcosms of the PE classroom. I was also interested in gaining some understanding of the discourses that influenced the boys’ gendered perceptions of their PE teachers and how such understandings impacted on the boys’ interpretations of their experiences with a female PE teacher. As Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) convey, “the aim of the focus group is not to reach consensus about, or solutions to, the issues discussed, but to bring forth different viewpoints on an issue” (p. 150).

The interviews with one female teacher employed the use of a ‘video-stimulated reflection’ with clips from the recorded classes used in the discussions to extrapolate the teacher’s perceptions of pedagogical issues. In a previous study of female PE teachers (Hickey & Mooney, 2007), it was noted that teachers did not often have an academic grasp on pedagogical language and given variability in language outlined above, there was a need to employ a method of inquiry that allowed for reflection and comment on the reasons why particular decisions about pedagogy were made during classes and not others. The use of the video-tape was not employed in the true methodological sense as a ‘video-stimulated recall’ exercise. Unlike other studies, it was not used for the teacher to specifically stop and comment on particular incidences regularly (Byra, 1996; Byra & Karp, 2000), nor was it used as a measure of their “concurrent cognitive ability” (Lyle, 2003). Further it was not always completed within the recommended two-hour post activity (Byra & Sherman, 1993). That said, it was helpful in channelling the discussions around issues of pedagogy. In her critique of a video-stimulated recall method, Tjeerdsma (1997 cited in Lyle, 2003) expresses a concern about “supplementing incomplete memories” (p. 864)
claiming that the participant may be reacting “to what is viewed on the videotape, rather than recalling the taped episode” (p. 864). Whilst these concerns are acknowledged, the use of video-stimulated reflection was employed to make conscious some of the pedagogical decisions made by the female teacher, and allow for an exploration of the reasons underpinning these decisions rather than relying purely on shared understandings of pedagogical language to describe such situations.

5.4.1.3 Classroom observation and field notes

In addition to the observations recorded during site visits, ten PE lessons (100 minutes in duration) were observed during the semester. These observations enabled me to record, in the form of field notes, my inferences, insights and reflections of particular events as they occurred in the PE classroom. Furthermore, many of the observations occurred in the non-formal parts of the lesson, for example in the classroom before the class had commenced, moving from the classroom to the venue for the practical class, during ‘drink breaks’ or informal discussions with students sidelined with injuries. These observations and reflections provided a means of maintaining a self-awareness of the factors that impacted on the study’s data collection, and although they were not always an exact replication of what had occurred as they were documented in a break after the event, they proved useful in the preparation of the semi-structured interview questions used to guide the discussions with the female PE teacher. Additionally, the field notes enabled a corroboration of the data collected from other sources and a medium to document the emotional and affective aspects of the class interactions that the interview transcript and videotape did not always convey.

5.4.1.4 Document analysis

Yin (2009) describes the important role of document analysis in case study research as a vital method to, “corroborate and augment evidence from other sources” (p. 103). To aid in the archaeological-like analysis of the discourses in operation in the context of each school, documents such as the school website, the school annual planning report and the weekly school newsletter were reviewed. These documents were scanned for examples of the reinforcement or incongruity of, dominant discourses. The adoption of a self-reflective stance in the document analysis phase was quite important considering Yin’s (2009) reminder that it is “important in
reviewing any document…to understand that it was written for some specific purpose and some specific audience…the documentary evidence reflects a communication among other parties attempting to achieve some other objectives” (p. 105). In exploring the pedagogical processes privileged in this particular teaching context, documents relating to curriculum and the delivery of that curriculum were explored. In both cases, curriculum outlines and assessment rubrics for the topics covered during the semester of data collection were made available. In some cases the individual teacher’s lesson plans were also made available for perusal.

Finally, to corroborate the data collected from both focus groups and individual interviews with students, a reflective piece of writing was undertaken by all students in the class. Students were asked to describe “their best PE lesson ever” which they completed as an introductory activity in the first single lesson of the semester. This task required students to reflect on what they considered to have been the best PE lesson they had ever participated in and to describe what they did during the lesson, who their teacher was and what made it so memorable. Upon conclusion of this activity the documents were collected by the teacher and returned to me for analysis.

5.4.1.5  Reflective journal

Throughout the semester of data collection I maintained a reflective journal where I would record detailed impressions and anecdotes from my time in the field. This provided a central place for the recording of how I had evolved as a researcher and was important in the maintenance of researcher reflexivity. Further, it allowed me to provide comment on any observations detailed in my field notes from each day of data collection. Finally, all observations from the document analysis process were recorded in this journal along with any additional annotations, inferences, impressions and interpretations that I encountered through the data analysis stage.

5.4.2  Nomenclature

Considering the multiple sources of evidence collected, a particular approach to representing data from each source of evidence was required. Data were collected via interviews with various participants – the female PE teachers, boys’ focus groups, individual students and key informants; field notes recorded during the days of data collection, and my personal reflections about being at the school or what was
conveyed through various documents. The nomenclature is organised to represent the type and name of the data source and the date of data collection. For example, (int. Rachel, 29/7/07) indicates the source of data as an interview with Rachel on the 29th of July 2007. Alternatively, (f.g. int. Nigel, 4/09/07) indicates the source of data as a boys’ focus group interview in which Nigel’s contributions have been used, conducted on the 4th of September, 2007. Finally, the representation of my field note observations (f.n. A.M. 29/06/07) and reflective journal entries (r.j. A.M. 12/12/07) have been organised correspondingly.

5.5 Tools of data analysis and representation – Conceptualising a Foucauldian inspired feminist poststructural analysis.

Recalling the epistemological underpinnings of this research as very much grounded in ‘knowledge construction’ rather than ‘knowledge collection’ (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) the metaphorical role of the researcher as a traveller on a journey that ultimately culminates in stories to tell at the conclusion of their journey proved a helpful analogy when considering how best to represent data. As Kvale and Brinkmann explained:

> The interviewer-traveller wanders through the landscape and enters into conversations with the people he or she encounters. The traveller explores the many domains of the country, as unknown terrain or with maps, roaming freely around the territory. The interviewer-traveller … walks along with the local inhabitants, asking questions and encouraging them to tell their own stories of their lived world … The journey may not only lead to new knowledge; the traveller might change as well. The journey might instigate a process of reflection that leads the traveller to new ways of self-understanding, as well as uncovering previously taken-for-granted values and customs in the traveller’s home country (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 48).

Given my familiarity with the ‘landscape’ of PE teaching in all-boys’ schools, the use of feminist poststructural perspectives allowed me to re-enter this site with new tools of navigation. This approach has encouraged new ways of looking at
previously taken-for-granted principles and ideals that guide the pedagogical
behaviours of female physical educators.

Representation of data is incorporated into Foucauldian inspired thematic case
stories. The case stories, as recommended by Polkinghorne (1992 cited in Kvale &
Brinkmann, 2009) are best communicated with the inclusion of anecdotes, dialogues,
narratives and metaphors derived from data collected. The analysis of interview
texts, field observation notes and my reflective journal will follow the general
principles outlined in the case stories below, but will allow for multiple readings of
the texts. Such an approach to analysis involves not only a ‘literal’ interpretation of
participant responses and observations, but also the ‘subtle readings’ or the ‘not said’
(McLeod, 2000).

5.5.1 Case story 1 – An archaeological-like analysis of an all-boys’ school

Research question 1:

- Which discourses appear to dominate the culture of an all-boys’ school and
  what effects do they appear to have on gendered subjectivities?

This research is concerned with an analysis of the operative discourses in the
discursive field of a Catholic all-boys’ school to contextualise the culture and
conditions in which these female PE teachers work. This analysis seeks to explore
the effects of these discourses to determine who is allowed to speak, when and with
what authority? Further, it investigates how such discourses contribute to the
formation of gendered subjectivities and professional identities and to examine how
this influences ideas of ‘good’ pedagogical practice.

Employing the concepts underpinning Foucault’s archaeology, a poststructural
analysis allows us to investigate, “how … one particular statement appeared rather
than another” (Foucault, 1972, p. 27 cited in St. Pierre, 2000, p. 496). Whilst
Marshall (2007) explains that Foucault often claimed that “he did not advocate
theories or methodologies which were to be adopted or followed” (p. 15), Marshall
interprets Foucault’s approach to research as “problematisation” (p. 15), that is,
rather than focusing on a particular historical period or event, he selected a problem
for investigation (Kendall & Wickham, 1999). As such, this research problematises
the role dominant discourses can play in shaping gendered subjectivities, professional identities and pedagogical practices. Ultimately, this analysis seeks to better understand the conditions under which the two female PE teachers go about their work in an all-boys’ school.

To understand how Foucault used the word ‘discourse’ is to accept his position of multiplicities, or an acknowledgement of the ways in which the usage changes as a result of the context in which it is employed. For example, Foucault explains three main ways in which he has employed the concept of discourses – sometimes treating it as the \textit{general domain of all statements}, sometimes as an \textit{individualizable group of statements} and sometimes as \textit{a regulated practice that accounts for a certain number of statements} (1972, p. 80). The first meaning relates to the way that particular statements combine within particular social contexts to produce a particular meaning and effect (Markula & Pringle, 2006). In a sporting example, “the discursive effect could accordingly produce…a soccer ball…this does not mean, however, that an object such as a soccer ball does not exist in material terms before the discourse of a soccer ball is enunciated” (Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 29), just that it may not be possible to identify it by this name and that the “related task of the archaeologist is to expose this emergence and examine the workings of discourse as related to social change and transformation” (Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 30).

Additionally, Foucault acknowledges that individuals are often subjected to a range of discourses at any one time (Markula & Pringle, 2006), and that these discourses are comprised of many identifiable individual statements. To illustrate this in the context of this study, discourses of femininity as they apply to a female PE teacher may encompass statements such as ‘butch’, ‘lesbian’, ‘dyke’ or ‘tomboy’ which have entirely different connotations to that of ‘a feminine PE teacher’. It is suggested that “discourse should, therefore, \textit{not} be considered as a simple translation between reality and language but as \textit{practices} that shape perceptions of reality” (Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 30). The third use of ‘discourse’ by Foucault, is interpreted as “referring to the unwritten ‘rules’ that guide social practices and help to produce or regulate the production of statements, that…control what can be understood and perceived but at the same time, act to obscure” (Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 31).
Whilst the scope of this research study does not permit a detailed archaeological analysis of this context, the aim is to identify key discourses that are privileged in this social context and the individual statements within these key discourses that act “on the way statements produce subject positions … [that is] ways of being and acting that human beings can take up – such as ‘principal’, ‘teacher’ … ‘pupil’” (Kendall & Wickham, 1999, p. 27). Further, it aims to identify the unwritten rules that exist in this context to privilege some teaching practices and obscure others.

**5.5.2 Case story 2 – Genealogical inspired interpretations of truth and power**

**Research question 2:**
- Which pedagogical approaches do female PE teachers deem to be appropriate in teaching boys’ PE and how have they constructed this understanding?

To investigate how these female teachers have constructed an understanding of what ‘good’ pedagogy looks like in this particular teaching context, Foucault’s thinking around genealogy has proven insightful. It is Foucault’s concern with the “the ways in which discourses constitute objects that can be examined as either true or false according to the codes of discourse” (St. Pierre, 2000) that is useful when considering how a teacher negotiates their approach to pedagogy. In Chapter 4 a point of difference between archaeology and genealogy was discussed, but to reiterate briefly, genealogical methods work alongside archaeological endeavours to “uncover the discursive formations and practices of different historical periods” (Danaher, et al., 2000, p. 46). Genealogy, however, further delves into questions of power and the manifestations of discursive power on bodies and subjects, albeit positive or negative in nature (Danaher, et al., 2000), and in the history of the present (Kendall & Wickham, 1999).

So how then does one conduct a genealogy? Kendall and Wickham (1999) describe genealogy as a “methodological device with the same effect as a precocious child at a dinner party: genealogy makes the older guests at the table...feel decidedly uncomfortable by pointing out things about their origins and functions that they would rather remain hidden” (p. 29). Applying this analogy to the school context, and in particular the PE department, the employment of genealogical thinking encourages an analysis of the ways in which “dominant knowledges shape human
life by naturalizing and normalizing the construction of personal and social identities” (Seidman, 2004, p. 180).

Essentially, a genealogy is interested in uncovering the ways that dominant discourses act to normalize certain behaviours, practices or ways of being. Markula and Pringle (2006) argue a genealogy seeks to “raise critical consciousness of the workings of discourse and power” (p. 34), and applied to the current research project, the aim is to flush out, but not sit in judgement of, the assumptions that underpin a female teacher’s notion of ‘good’ pedagogy. How have the dominant discourses evident within this context contributed to the ideas that these female teachers have about the most appropriate ways to teach boys, and how do these ideas actually translate in practice? That is, through observing the daily nuances of PE practice in an all-boys’ school from afar, as Dreyfus and Rabinow (1983) point out, “when viewed from the right distance and with the right vision, there is a profound visibility to everything” (p. 107).

A final methodological caution is offered by Dreyfus and Rabinow (1983) where they claim that “genealogy avoids the search for depth” (p. 106). By this, they contend, we are interested in the superficial happenings as opposed to the excavation of some underpinning interpretation of the occurrence of such phenomena. They elaborate on Foucault’s contention that “underneath it all everything is already an interpretation” (Foucault cited in Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983, p. 107) by claiming that the more one searches for an apt interpretation of what they have uncovered, that is, a hidden meaning, the more they realise that there is no fixed meaning, rather just more interpretations, and as highlighted “if there is nothing to interpret, then everything is open to interpretation” (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983, p. 107). The concept of troubling the taken-for-granted assumptions that underpin teachers’ constructions of appropriate pedagogy can then be explored using this viewpoint with particular considerations of the workings of power and the ways in which this influences how they come to think about PE pedagogy.
5.5.3 Case story 3 – Power relations within the PE classroom

Research question 3:

- How do students receive and interpret their experiences in PE with a female teacher?

In considering this research question, the work of Wright (1995) and Gore (1990, 1998) provided useful signposts. As elaborated on earlier, Wright’s poststructuralist methodology for exploring what occurs at the micro-political level of the classroom has been useful in considering the particular social, economic and political conditions that impact on the way in which teachers and students are (self) positioned. Further, it prompts investigations of how this ‘positioning’ shapes negotiation of meanings and social relations between subjects within the PE classroom.

Similarly Gore (1990, 1998) drew on Foucault to interrogate her practice as a physical educator to “answer questions about the effectiveness of the lesson and the ways in which the students engaged with the lesson” (Wright, 2006, p. 63). In a study of her own teaching, Gore (1990) categorised the responses students had to her pedagogical approaches (that emphasised reflective practice and student-centred learning) as a PE teacher educator, into three distinct categories – recalcitrant, acquiescent and committed. In a different study, she raised concerns that much of the educational research previously conducted had “paid little attention to the micro-level functioning of power in pedagogy” (Gore, 1998, p. 232). As interpreted by Wright, researchers should be more aware that “research approaches to pedagogy which draw only on technical or even transformative perspectives close down multiple readings, multiple ways of understanding students’ responses” (2006, p. 63). Gore contends that Foucault’s concept of disciplinary power “explicitly shifts analysis of power from the ‘macro’ realm of structures and ideologies to the ‘micro’ level of bodies” (Gore, 1998, p. 233). Given the previously established link between masculinity, subjectivity and PE (see Chapter 3), Gore’s application of Foucault’s techniques of power to the PE classroom has provided some useful conceptual tools to explore how boys’ experience PE with a female teacher.
As McNay (1994) explains, in Foucauldian thinking, power is defined “both as an objectivizing and a subjectivizing force” (p. 85). Others comment that Foucault’s main concerns lay in examining the “forms of power or technologies of domination that work to control social relations and shape individuals” (Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 16). Markula and Pringle identify three modes of objectification employed by Foucault - **scientific classification**, **dividing practices** and **subjectivation**, which “relate to processes associated with the social construction and modification of humans, so that humans acquire ‘certain attitudes’ (Foucault, 1988b, p. 18) about themselves and others” (Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 24). Further, Markula and Pringle suggest that scientific classification and dividing practices describe the ways in which people are “classified, disciplined and normalised by social processes that they have little direct control over” (p. 24). Scientific classification was used by Foucault to describe the ways in which “the human sciences construct particular ways of knowing so that people come to recognise themselves as objects and subjects of scientific knowledge” (Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 25) whereas dividing practices, operating at the institutional level, provided a means to classify (or divide) subjects into categories such as good/bad, healthy/unhealthy, sane/made (Foucault, 1983a). Therefore, dividing practices were concerned with “social and spatial divisions and the control of individuals and, more broadly, populations” (Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 26). As Foucault (1983a) encourages, an analysis of the impacts of such practices needs to occur at the micro-level of society, and this research, concerned with the classification and dividing practices that impact on the way in which male students experience PE with a female teacher attempts to do this.

To specifically analyse this I return to the work of Gore (1998) as a particularly helpful conception of the workings of power in pedagogy. The term pedagogy has been understood in this research as “defined by its three key elements of learning, teaching and curriculum” (Kirk, et al., 2006, p. xi) and each element is understood to be interdependent in nature. After Gore, I was interested in investigating whether the same techniques of power were recognisable in all-boys’ PE classes (or pedagogical interaction) and to explore any impact they may have on student perceptions. This analysis focuses on how techniques of power functioned in the construction of knowledge, relations between students and between students and teachers, and how this impacted on the disruption and maintenance of particular subjectivities (Gore, 1998). Acknowledging that Gore’s selection of the ‘techniques of power’ employed
in her study does not encapsulate every technique of power explored by Foucault, and that there are multiple forms of power, this framework was adopted to explore forms of power “susceptible of producing discourses of truth” (Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 38). In particular, Gore’s categorisation of surveillance, normalisation, classification, individualisation, totalisation and regulation as techniques of power (discussed below) were helpful in identifying power relations that act to control, classify, judge and normalise subjects in ways that ensure they were “destined to a certain mode of living or dying” (Foucault, 1980, p. 93 cited in Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 38), or in the context of a PE class, to shape experiences of pedagogy.

Surveillance, is a Foucauldian notion based on Bentham’s panopticon building design constructed in prisons to “maximise the efficient workings of power” (Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 43). With a tower located centrally, the windows that provided a view directly into the individual buildings or cells created the impression that each inmate was constantly being observed, even in fact if this was not the case. This effected a “state of consciousness and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power” (Foucault, 1991, p. 200). Surveillance, as an effect of panopticism, can be described as “the existence of a whole set of techniques and institutions for measuring, supervising and correcting the abnormal “(Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 42). Normalisation is described by Gore (1998) as “invoking, requiring, setting, or conforming to a standard – defining the normal” (p. 237) and exclusion was used by Gore to explain the negative effects of normalization. As she explains “Foucault refers to exclusion as a technique for tracing the limits that will define difference, defining boundaries, setting zones” (Gore, 1998, p. 238).

Classification refers to categorising groups or individuals as different from another and is closely linked to Foucault’s notion of dividing practices discussed above. Distribution can be explained as the distribution of bodies in space (Gore, 1998) through separating, removing, grouping together, ranking and so forth, can “contribute to the functioning of disciplinary power” (Gore, 1998, p. 240). Gore explains individualisation as giving an individual character to one person whereas, in contrast, she used the term totalisation to describe the “specification of collectivities, giving collective character” (Gore, 1998, p. 242) to groups and she notes that this acts in opposition to individualization. Addressing a class of students as a group, or teachers as part of a profession or school staff, is one example of totalisation, but as a
technique of power it can be employed to govern and regulate groups in pedagogic activity. The final technique of power, regulation has been defined as “controlling by rule, subject to restrictions, invoking a rule, including sanction, reward and punishment” (Gore, 1998, p. 243), and whilst some of the previous techniques of power explained above could offer regulating effects, such as isolating a student from an activity (distribution), after Gore, it allows for a discussion of explicit incidents where regulation was employed (p. 243).

Following Gore’s works and findings, I am conscious of the multiple ways in which these techniques may be employed within a boys’ PE classroom and as a tool of data analysis these techniques aim to reveal, through an analysis of power relations in pedagogy, how the students perceive and understand their experiences in PE with a female teacher. Further, they were also employed to clarify the actions and interactions between the teacher, her pedagogies and the students.

5.5.4 Case story 4 – The construction of a female physical educator’s subjectivity

Research question 4:

• How do female PE teachers mediate competing tensions of gendered identity in an all-boys’ school?

As illustrated earlier, for the purpose of this research subjectivity has been defined as a theoretical concept to explain the way in which subjects are formed. The employment of Foucault’s technologies of the self has provided insight into how a female PE teacher and female Head of Department negotiate their subjectivities in this teaching context. As explained by Danaher and colleagues, “although we think of ourselves as unified, concrete individuals with certain unchanging qualities, in fact we are a number of different people: the person we are at home is not fully identical with the one at work” (Danaher, et al., 2000, p. 124). In their discussions of Foucault’s interpretations of ‘multiple’ subjectivities, Markula and Pringle (2006) point out that “Foucault understood the subject as a ‘form’ (rather than a fixed substance) that can be modified under different cultural conditions” (p. 139). Given the first three case stories have aimed to explore these cultural conditions and the power relations that exist within them, this final case story is concerned with the
process of subjectivation – “how an individual acquires an identity within power relations that both ‘subjugeate and make subject to’” (Foucault, 1983, p. 212)” (Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 138).

Foucault rejects the notion of a straightforward social identity, based on gender, class, sexuality and so on, instead suggesting that “an individual’s understanding of their own identity changes, depending on the circumstances” (Danaher, et al., 2000, p. 88). *Technologies of the self*, as described by Foucault, focus on the ability of a subject to create or craft a particular subjectivity. As Foucault (cited in Rabinow, 1984) explains:

The goal of my work during the last twenty years has not been to analyse the phenomena of power, not to elaborate the foundations of such an analysis. My objective, instead, has been to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects (p. 7).

This suggests that what we understand as ‘the subject’ can be considered from the perspective of a person who exists within a particular community, with its own systems of government and from the perspective that the “specific identity is owned by the self” (Danaher, et al., 2000, p. 117). At the population level, Foucault’s concept of *bio-politics*, developed to aid in the understanding of the ways in which government institutions attempt to manage human bodies, or perhaps more pointedly how “people’s physical bodies were seen as resources available to meet the interests of the state” (Danaher, et al., 2000, p. 125) is essentially underpinned by the concept of ‘naming subjects’. As highlighted by Danaher and colleagues:

So we become subjects by naming ourselves as particular individuals, and as the occupiers of particular sets of subject positions (such as mother, daughter, worker). The naming process also works to make us subjects by naming and identifying what we are not … through technologies of differentiation … These sorts of practices force human beings to work on themselves in order to meet and comply with the models normalised by the individuals’ culture (2000, p. 127).

The *technologies of the self* are described as a range of techniques that enable an individual to conduct work on themselves by regulating “their own bodies and souls, thoughts and conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to
attain a certain level of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality” (Foucault, 1988b, p. 18). Markula and Pringle (2006) describe the primary aim of an analysis of the technologies of the self is “to identify the actions of an individual within discursive power relations and then map how these actions have moulded discourses and the individual’s identity alike” (p. 140). Whilst they warn that Foucault’s work does not necessarily demonstrate that the employment of the technologies of the self leads to changes in power relations, they do highlight that some sport researchers “have understood the technologies of the self as coping strategies that athletes use to succeed within the often contradictory discursive requirements of their sports” (p. 145).

The transformative potential of ‘self’ work is revealed, as Markula and Pringle (2006) argue, through the problematisation of the “codes that govern … actions” (p. 140) because it is through this critical thinking that the limitations of particular subjectivities can be identified. Further, Markula and Pringle point out that unless an individual takes issue with their various subjectivities, they are unlikely to engage in practices of freedom. Foucault described “the process of ‘individualising’ the code as the mode of subjectivation. Foucault divided the mode of subjectivation, or self-constitution, into four ‘aspects’: the ethical substance, mode of subjection, ethical work and telos” (Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 141). The ethical substance refers to the aspect of one’s self that has been problematised and identified as an area for work on the self. The mode of subjection describes “the ways of adhering to what is considered ethical” (ibid., p. 141). So essentially, one determines their position on particular rules, and then negotiates how they will choose to practice them, and to what degree. The ethical work aspect describes work “one performs on oneself, not only in order to bring one’s conduct into compliance with a given rule, but to attempt to transform oneself into the ethical subject of one’s behaviour” (Foucault, 1985, p. 27 cited in Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 141). The telos describes the image that individuals possess about the type of subject that they are aspiring to be by performing ethical work on themselves (Markula, 2003).

Whilst it is acknowledged that the technologies of the self, like many other Foucauldian concepts attracts criticism, it has still proven a useful guiding tool in the data analysis of how female teachers constitutes themselves as a ‘female’ subject, a ‘teacher’, and a ‘PE teacher’ in an all-boys’ school.
5.6 Ethical issues

The general ethical implications for qualitative research, particularly with reference to case study methodology and the role of the researcher in interpreting and reporting data accurately, has been discussed in earlier sections. This research was approved by all necessary governing bodies, namely the Deakin University Human Ethics Committee and the Edmund Rice Education Commission. The key ethical consideration of informed consent was discussed concomitantly above in the participant recruitment section. It was acknowledged that potential harm could result if the participants have had some very negative experiences in this particular teaching context as either teachers or students, and this was accounted for with the provision of exit strategies and the offer of counselling services in the event that any participant became distressed or uncomfortable. Issues of confidentiality and anonymity have been addressed via the allocation of pseudonyms to all participants, however it was conveyed to participants through the Plain Language Statements that due to the small number of Christian Brother’s Boys’ Schools in Victoria that it is possible that they could be identified by their position or viewpoint.

5.7 Trustworthiness of data

Issues of trustworthiness, reliability and validity have been discussed throughout this chapter. The design challenges inherent in a feminist poststructuralist case study methodology have been made explicit throughout this methodological journey, as have the assumptions that underpin the particular theoretical perspective informing the research. To increase the trustworthiness of the data, the process of triangulation, that is, an assurance that the researcher studies the particular phenomena from more than one standpoint (Stake, 1995) has been considered with the inclusion of multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2003). Furthermore, investigator triangulation was observed with the involvement of my principal supervisor during some school visits and data collection period. In addition, methodological triangulation, or the use of the same method on different occasions (Cohen, et al., 2000) was achieved through the case study design. Reliability refers to the ability to replicate the research and arrive at the same conclusions – ultimately reliability seeks to minimise the errors and biases in a study (Yin, 2009). Explicit discussion of how interpretations relating to the theoretical perspective employed; the specific address of the research
questions; and an account of how the research was conducted have all been included to enhance the reliability of the research. Finally the foregrounding of the reflexive approach I have adopted throughout the study acknowledges my own role in shaping the data that was created and the reporting of key findings.

5.8 Reflective notes

This chapter has discussed the methodological journey undertaken during this research study. It has explored the key concepts of an analytic case study, drawing particular attention to the delimitations and limitations employed within the research design. A discussion around the suitability of this methodology to investigate ‘the particular’ was foregrounded as was the role of the researcher in shaping and impacting upon the research process and end product. The reflexive approach adopted throughout this particular part of the journey was an important methodological consideration, especially given it illuminated relationships between the researcher and researched prior to, and during, data analysis. For as poststructuralist commentators acknowledge, “fundamental to a poststructuralist… perspective is an acknowledgement of a particular epistemological and ontological position that requires a great deal of reflexivity about how the research is conducted and what interpretations can be made” (Macdonald et al., 2002, p. 144).

Specifically, this chapter has overviewed the procedures employed for the recruitment of participants, a description of the research participants, the collection of data, and finally the representation of and the analysis of data. Whilst I maintain that this research is not purely a Foucauldian study given it is impossible to employ each of his major works (and that of all his critics) within the scope of this study, the case study stories that follow in the data chapters are strongly entrenched with particular Foucauldian concepts. Despite being able to offer any clear and specific definitions and methods for employing Foucauldian thinking, it is often reiterated throughout this chapter that this work is interested in making visible the ways in which power and knowledge operate to privilege particular practices and forms of subjectivity (Wright, 2006) in the climate of an all-boys’ school, and PE classroom, and to explore how this impacts on both teachers and students. As Gore (1998)
explains “we must know what we are and what we are doing (in education), in order to begin to address adequately how we might do things differently” (p. 248).
Chapter 6 – Examining discourse-power relations in context: Gender ‘positioning’ and pedagogies

In this Chapter and the next, I discuss the ways in which the context of a Catholic all-boys’ school contributed to the construction and regulation of gendered subjectivities and professional identities and examine the impact this has on notions of ‘good’ pedagogical practice. As others caution, each school context is marked by their own inherent qualities and characteristics, unique with localised nuances (Smyth & Shacklock, 1998) that can impact upon the perceived ‘culture’ of the school. So, although overall governance for this school lies with the EREA who also oversee a number of other Catholic all-boys’ schools that purport a similar educational ethos, it is likely that what is actually taken-up at the micro-level of the school and manifested in pedagogic intentions could vary across different school sites.

For example, reflecting on his time in both metropolitan and regional boys’ schools, Mr Western observes:

“There is a distinction between boys’ schools located in the country and city I think...especially in terms of how it shapes the types of students you are dealing with. The way I see it, the boys at St. John’s are really country boys despite what they think...they have a more relaxed approach to life I think...Up there (in city) kids are really highly strung and far more intense, and this means you have to teach them differently...” (int. Mr Western, 7/12/07).

In light of these comments, the data represented in this Chapter seeks to offer an insight into how the wider school context (discourse and practice) of St John’s College is implicated in not only the construction and positioning of gendered subjectivities, but more specifically how discourse-power relations shape which particular pedagogical approaches become valued and taken up in context. Drawing on the key elements of Foucauldian thinking as they relate to the research questions (see Chapter 5), this section commences with a discussion of the key discourses that appeared to dominate the culture of St. John’s College with a view to understanding the ways in which subjectivities are shaped, and identities performed, in context.
Subsequent discussion explores how discourse-power relations shape ideas that underpin approaches to pedagogy in the teaching of all-boys generally, and boys’ PE more specifically. As Wright (2006) proffers, “any interrogation of the ways in which teachers take up particular notions of physical education generally requires some discussion of the discursive resources available for meaning making” (p. 67).

6.1 An archaeological analysis: Excavating dominant discourses in a regional boys’ school

Wright (2000b) argues that it is “through discourse that meanings, subjects and subjectivities are formed” (p. 153) and as such that “schooling, as a set of practices specifically intended to shape and train bodies, becomes a fruitful site to examine this process of subjectification” (p. 153). In considering the key discourses that appear to dominate the culture of St. John’s College with the intent of examining their influence on the construction of gendered subjectivities, it was apparent through discussions with many participants that the historical origins of this school context invariably and explicitly acted to shape ‘gendered’ subjects, or more particularly, specific types of ‘masculinities’.

6.1.1 The pervasiveness of hypermasculine and heteronormative discourses

The intersection of broader cultural discourses around gender and sexuality that permeate society and become “widely circulated through day-to-day interactions” (Wright, 2000b, p. 158), appear to have manifested historically in their more sinister discursive forms, namely hypermasculinity and heteronormativity, in the context of this school. For example, Mr Grey, the school Principal, laments that the school was a very different place when he first arrived 13 years ago.

“...when I came here it kind of took my breath away initially...Just the first couple of months I thought God (sic), what have I got myself into, ‘cause 13 years ago not only was this a boys’ school but it was a very, very macho boys’ school...very sledgy...Even in class boys would comment, “You’re a faggot...you’re gay”,...it was just incessant. I really wondered if I had made a good move” (int. Mr Grey, 23/11/07).
Despite being six-feet, three inches tall and having a somewhat imposing presence, Mr Grey points to the potentially intimidating environment of the school for not only some students, but also teachers. Similarly, Mr Western who had previously taught in other Catholic boys’ schools, also comments on his initial apprehension when accepting a position at the school.

“Well you hear a lot of stories about the boys here...a friend of mine teaches at a nearby girls’ school and she had stories of bullying that goes on here and I came here thinking that the boys must belt the shit out of each other every chance they get...Then I came here and realised that it’s not like that at all...anywhere that has 1300 boys in one area is going to have the occasional niggle...It is disappointing that these are the sorts of things people say without really knowing what actually goes on here...Hearing those things definitely caused me to be apprehensive at the start, I wondered if I would have major classroom management issues...” (int. Mr Western, 7/12/07).

Although Mr Western normalises the ‘occasional niggle’ as an inherent by-product in any context where large numbers of boys’ congregate, within this school context Mr Grey highlights that homophobia and bullying were commonplace. He suggests that the hypermasculine and heteronormative culture embodied and lived out by students at the time were in part attributed to the allegations of sexual assault of students by individual Christian Brothers and the community’s response to these claims.

“When I first arrived as the Deputy Principal the thing that was really prevalent was the bullying...it was a really undisciplined place in terms of kids’ behaviour and probably some of the staff, well their professionalism was questionable, so I really spent the first couple of years just doing a lot of head-kicking and calling kids to account for what had happened...This was a very, very macho place...I arrived just as all the paedophilia stuff had happened and the boys were really copping it, say on public transport from other kids, and their response was to sort of macho up...for example, my son decided he didn’t want to play football for St. John’s Old Collegians because he didn’t want to be called a faggot...so he went and played for another club and when I would pick him up from training I would ask, “How’d you go?” and he would say, “Not very well...as soon as the guys knew I went to school here they would say the teachers touch you up...”. The kids were getting it from everywhere because the court cases had been in the local press and that
seemed to ramp the macho stuff up even more within the school” (int. Mr Grey, 23/11/07).

Of concern is the way that this ‘macho stuff’ appeared to manifest in the day-to-day interactions of students within the school environment. As Mr Grey comments, the ongoing bullying of students was something that required urgent attention.

“I thought, how can I change this culture? It’s student culture because I don’t think the teachers are driving this...On the bullying issue another Principal mentioned that the kids always know who the bullies are, so I decided to ask the students through a bullying survey that also included some questions on it about staff...the staff were pretty miffed... This was a really significant change for us...I got the student leaders involved in interviewing kids that had been named multiple times, sometimes up to 30 or 40 times at a year level and this really sort of started to change the culture...When you have these leaders who are basically indicating that this sort of behaviour is not on, well they can make some inroads into the student culture, and infiltrate it in a way that I couldn’t...”(int. Mr Grey, 23/11/07).

Reflecting on his time in the school as a past student, Mr Zanders (a PE teacher) comments that particular types of masculinities were certainly privileged at the expense of others as a result of this ‘macho’ and hypermasculine culture. Specifically, he recalls that the types of students usually responsible for much of the bullying were those who enjoyed an elevated hierarchical status as a result of their sporting prowess. He explains:

“When I was a student here it was an extremely macho culture, every boy was out to prove himself all the time, there were obvious pecking orders, as a boy you had to find something to do that you were good at to prove yourself and gain respect amongst your peers. It was a real old school boys’ school, a rough jailhouse culture...For most boys this meant being good at sport, there was a real macho sporting culture here...if it wasn’t sport then it was bullying tactics basically and it was usually the sporty boys who were at the top of the hierarchy that metered this out...For boys that were a bit more effeminate or into music (unless it was really hard rock music or grunge stuff) their life must have been hell...” (int. Mr Zanders, 18/09/07).
As discussed in Chapter 3, similar sentiments about the ways boys draw on sporting prowess to achieve status and recognition amongst their peers has been reported elsewhere (Hickey, 2010; Swain, 2003). In particular the work of Parker (1996) in his analysis of boys’ PE, and Martino’s (1999) work examining masculinity construction in a Catholic co-educational secondary school reveals the significant role that physical ability can play in the construction of masculine hierarchies amongst groups of boys. In the same way that Mr Zanders suggests that ‘every boy was out to prove himself’ and that there were ‘obvious pecking orders’, Martino reports that for his participants, “being cool, is a priority…and is established within the context of a hierarchical set of social relations with their peers in which there is a constant jostling of hegemonic and subordinate masculinities” (p. 254). Recognising the potentially negative implications that these dominant cultural practices could have on particular types of students, Mr Zanders comments that the school administration was quite active in implementing strategies to address this.

“The administration of the school, the staff and the parents worked really hard to try and soften this culture. They have introduced music to the school and this has really exploded, same with Drama, in fact all of the arts have been given a greater profile, it has tried to move away from a macho, sporting culture that use to run rampant here” (int. Mr Zanders, 18/09/07).

It is interesting to note that one of the key strategies to culture change within this school environment at this time was the active recruitment of females and the increased prominence of more ‘creative’ and arguably ‘feminine’ curriculum areas such as music and the arts in an attempt to ‘soften’ the culture. As Mr Grey comments:

“My predecessor was really enlightened in this regard...he had really good things in place, like an emphasis on employing female staff and really strongly promoting drama and music...even though they hadn’t really gained any sort of currency yet...I think there’s something about having the courage to have young females teaching boys and you are going to have some inappropriate stuff but then there’s an opportunity to address that as a male. It’s a little bit of baptism by fire and in the early days there was certainly occasions where some of those females needed a lot of support, kids were just plain inappropriate!” (int. Mr Grey, 23/11/07).
Inherent above is a consideration of the ways in which gendered discourses were implicated in the perceived ‘cultural change’ of this school context. As Kirk (1992) reminds us, discourses are evident in “the ways in which people communicate their understanding of their own and others’ activities and of events in the world around them” (p. 42). Although the above account illustrates the dichotomous social construction of “masculinity” and “femininity” and reinforcement of a gender binary that “naturalizes specific feminine and masculine behaviours” (Azzarito & Solmon, 2009, p. 176), it appears that through a deliberate effort to bring ‘femininity’ into the all-boys’ school environment there was a perception that some of the more caustic manifestations of hypermasculine and heteronormative discourses could be tempered.

6.1.2 ‘Femininity’ as antithesis…Challenging and disrupting hypermasculine and heteronormative discourses at the ‘front line’

The deliberate and active recruitment of female teachers to this school context could be considered a somewhat progressive undertaking. As Mr Wood, the Deputy Principal (DP) indicates, such events would not have occurred in a previous all-boys’ school he taught at.

“I can certainly say having interviewed for positions in both my previous schools we would go through applications and throw those from female applicants in the bin and start interviewing blokes…Basically the boss would just say ‘No, we can’t have women here’. In a PE sense, the simplistic version of events was so much about needing male role models or having men who had the strength to rescue someone from under a barbell in the weights room, or the ability to supervise in the change-rooms and so on…” (int. Mr Wood, 9/11/07).

In fact, in the account below, Mr Wood does not even appear to have a conscious awareness of what Mr Grey reports was an ‘active recruitment’ period at St John’s. He states:

“The last few years we’ve actually had more women in the positions of middle management than we have men, just why that is, I don’t really know, it’s
probably accidental...I don’t think there’s been any sort of positive discrimination to push women into these positions” (int. Mr Wood, 9/11/07).

Despite the legacy of his traditionally ‘gendered’ biography as a past student and teacher in all-boys’ school environments prior to accepting his position at St. John’s College, through his account below, Mr Wood appears on one hand to recognise the need for more equitable gender relations, yet on the other, subscribes to particularly dominant, masculine and authoritative approaches to achieve this. He explains:

“We used to have issues here when students from the nearby girls’ school came here for classes, every week there would be a drama with some lout yelling something offensive at the girls, or when the girls were walking up the stairs with open slats there would be bloody kids peeking from underneath, just that sort of crazy stuff...But we worked really hard at talking to kids at assemblies and making sure they understood this wasn’t appropriate...A couple of heads probably rolled, kids that just didn’t get it and continued to be sort of offensive towards the girls, but they were dealt with...” (int. Mr Wood, 9/11/07).

When appointed to the Principal role, Mr Grey recruited two DP’s to replace his existing position, one of which was a female appointment. As Mr Wood eludes to in the above comments, his perceptions of the ‘professional identity’ required for a DP in this boys’ school was very much entrenched with dominant and traditional ‘masculine’ approaches to discipline. He comments:

“The DP role here has been a real hard head-kicking type of role...if things weren’t working in your classroom you sent the kid to the deputy where he was torn to shreds and discipline was metered out...A number of staff, many who had been here a long time, would quite deliberately send kids from Year 7, 8 and 9 to me even though in the portfolio they should have been sent to Mrs White. We actually had to challenge the staff and some of them, they’d probably never say it to Kate, but they’d certainly say to me, this kids a bastard and he needs a good savaging” (int. Mr Wood, 9/11/07).

In contrast, Mrs White describes the overwhelming tension she experienced upon commencement as the first female DP in the school, particularly given that she
embodied a professional identity and gendered subjectivity that vastly contrasted her predecessor. She states:

“When I first came here I replaced Mr Grey who was a huge man with a huge voice and he’d been the sole deputy and he rampaged in this place for five years because he reckons when he came here it was a zoo. But he realised that this was not the approach for the long term which is part of the reason why I was appointed I guess...But it was difficult...I don’t know whether the staff or the students were worse...it was really horrible at the start and it was lonely and Mr Grey acknowledged later that he didn’t give me enough support. He was thinking he had made a mistake and so you know tending to see me as inadequate rather than the school’s totally unprepared...I mean the school was like H division [of a prison], it was just hideous and now the environment is much softer. If the environment is harsh and ugly, then that’s what we will get from the boys...there was a whole lot of ugly concrete downball courts, not a blade of grass, it was just a concrete square...when I met the people it didn’t get much better, you were judged pretty quickly as not the right type of female” (int. Mrs White, 13/11/07).

What is conveyed in the above testimony can be construed as the insidious workings of dominant discourses to privilege particular gendered identities at the expense of marginalised or subordinated others. Despite this initial resistance to the presence of a female DP, Mr Grey maintains that it was important that women were seen as part of the solution to addressing the dominant workings of hypermasculine discourses, not as the problem. He comments:

“It was important for boys and teachers to see the right females in leadership roles. There was a real negative perception at the start, I can remember male teachers coming to me when female teachers or year level coordinators have had issues with kids and they would say, “the female would just yap, yap, yap...kid’s come to school to get away from that...”. You are really not looking for mother figures here, you are just looking for authentic, genuine females and males who are professional and who have a common sense of where we are headed as an institution” (int. Mr Grey, 23/11/07).

When prompted more about what he perceived as the ‘right’ types of females in this school context, Mr Grey explained:
“I’m going to be a bit crude here, I don’t think you are looking for a female teacher with balls, that doesn’t work...you’re looking for an authentic female. When I’m interviewing someone I’m sort of thinking all the time, are the kids going to warm to this person? Are they going to be able to develop a relationship with them? The boys are not going to let you teach them anything until they think you’re okay...for these reasons it’s really important that you have the right sort of person...you need a female that is a female...I don’t want someone who can scream and thump a desk and jump up and down...I think traditionally in boys’ schools there were a group of women who were like that because they thought that was the only way to be successful, they were bloody tougher than the men…” (int. Mr Grey, 23/11/07).

In the above account, and in many of the comments offered above by other key informants, there is a definite rhetoric around the perceived value that feminine identities can offer in the quest to challenge the dominance of masculine hegemony in the context of an all-boys’ school. Interestingly, it is acknowledged by Mr Grey that feminine identities that embody ‘feminine’ attributes such as ‘warmth’ and by extension, ‘caring’ and the ability to foster workable relationships with students, underpin his recruitment strategies. Yet, at another level, he intimates that women teachers who embody ‘masculine’ attributes through authoritative approaches and who were considered to be ‘tougher than the men’ perceived these types of professional identities as valued and the mark of a successful teacher in this context. As Rich (2001) argues, in this sense “women are left with the difficult dilemma of balancing ‘feminine’ attributes on the one hand, which are seen as inappropriate for the profession, and ‘masculine’ ones seen as unacceptable in women” (p. 145). It appears that the discourses of the wider school context that act to privilege hegemonic or hypermasculine and heterosexual masculinities could certainly create degrees of tensions for individuals in these spaces that do not align with these dominant identity positions and some specific examples of this will be explored herein.
6.1.3 Acknowledging the trials and tribulations of ‘Front line’ gender work

Throughout the conversation with Mr Grey there were a number of points raised to suggest that, whilst the active recruitment of female teachers was a deliberate act to challenge what he terms the ‘very, very macho culture of the place’, he acknowledges that this type of ‘front line’ gender work was not always an easy task.

“I think female teachers are much better than males because they are more meticulous in terms of expectations. They’re less into big brush strokes and more into developing good curriculum and they have the capacity to form good, positive relationships and with that comes respect. A number of the girls initially employed probably found it really tough and after six months they were probably ready to say ‘I’m out of here’, but many have stayed and I would say have gone on to love teaching boys” (int. Mr Grey, 23/11/07).

Perhaps what struck me throughout these conversations was what appears to be an uncritical acceptance of the practice of employing female teachers to directly challenge the masculine culture of the school, and by extension, the boys’ behaviour. In questioning this, I began to suspect the workings of discourse in normalising this practice. For example, Mr Grey discusses the impact the ‘normalising’ of female teachers within this school has had.

“I think it was much harder 10 years ago...now our breakdown of staff is nearly fifty-fifty, well probably sixty-forty in favour of males in the teaching areas, but it’s just accepted now that there are going to be female year level coordinators, a female deputy, it’s just what happens here and the boys are better for it” (int. Mr Grey, 23/11/07).

Perhaps in a more explicit fashion, Mr Grey discusses the impact he believes this “front-line gender work” has had on the culture of the school.

Mr Grey: Look our results have flourished at the top end, we are getting more great outcomes in the areas of apprenticeships so it is really on the up...It’s risky to promote such significant change, but you have to take those risks.

AM: What types of risks are you referring to?
Mr Grey: Oh like having a female deputy for example, I was ready to slash my wrists after the first six months...I was asking, “What have I done, this isn’t taking us anywhere”, but then she was sort of articulate enough to say look this is what I feel is happening and we would have to try a different approach...now she’d be one of the most critical people in the place. I am sure she would still feel from time to time that certain staff don’t take her seriously enough but I just allow her to have a conversation with them and support her where I can and it generally changes (int. Mr Grey, 23/11/07).

When prompted about the types of structures that might be in place to support female staff, Mr Grey consented that some mentoring is required. He comments: “We’ve got a young graduate starting next year, she’s attractive and we’ll spend a lot of time with her before she hits the ground...even to the point of rehearsing. For example, I would ask, “What are you going to say if some kids say ‘Nice boobs Miss’”? It’s important that they have thought about how they will respond to that, to be forewarned is helpful I think”(int. Mr Grey, 23/11/07).

Signalled in the above account is a somewhat inevitable acceptance that there is potential for the harassment of female teachers to occur by their male students, and that rather than directly challenge the occurrence of such events, some ‘rehearsing’ about how female teachers may address such incidents appear to be of greater significance. Hannah explains how the sexualisation of young female teachers most certainly occurred at times: “There were definitely two female teachers when I first got here that received lots of attention from the boys...we had a whole school photo which may only happen every few years...and I remember that one of these teachers walked past to sit down out the front that the boys just went nuts, wolf whistling and screaming...I mean they were all standing there on mass and it was probably mob mentality at work, this teacher was really young and in the arts area so yeah, she really got a lot of attention”(int. Hannah, 24/07/07).
Interestingly, Hannah goes on to qualify that such events are most likely attributable to boys’ groupness or ‘mob mentality’ and that through education and the normalisation of females within this school context the prevalence of such events are somewhat minimised. She comments:

“I think now that there is an acceptance of females so they are more used to it and it’s not so much of an issue...I mean sexual harassment is addressed in education these days...I mean it used to be so blokey then but now the boys are probably a bit more compliant” (int. Hannah, 24/07/07).

In her examination of the sexual harassment of female teachers by their male students in six Tasmanian government high schools, Robinson (2000) describes how female teachers who were new to the school, were young or who worked in a casual capacity were more vulnerable to incidents of sexual harassment by male students. For example, she reports “many young women were positioned by male students and teachers within the discourse of women as sexual objects” (p. 85) and boys “frequently used sexual harassment to undermine the women’s power in classes” (p. 85). Alarmingly, she concludes that “in many cases, the [student] behaviour was perceived as ‘poor control’ or inexperience on the part of the teacher, who was viewed as the problem – rather than the boys’ behaviour” (p. 85). Further, she reports that “most of these women chose not to complain about the harassment for fear of being perceived to be ‘bad teachers’ by colleagues and senior staff” (p. 85).

In another example of how students drew on the anonymity of the group to challenge the authority of female teachers, Mr Wood outlines some of the issues Rachel faced on yard duty.

“Rachel does yard duty in the senior part of the school and the students didn’t know her and she didn’t know them, the core of these football jocks-types were all congregated in that area...She found it extraordinarily difficult in that, well she wasn’t frightened, she’s no blushing type, but when she asked the boys to pick up their rubbish they would just stand up to her and start abusing her. Now that one was about being female I think, she had difficulties with them for quite a period of time I think before she spoke to me about it...Well, I went and hauled the ringleaders in and said, “This is crap, we don’t treat people like that here. This is a teacher that I’ve put out there,
I’ve told her to ask you to pick up your rubbish, if you don’t bloody do it or if you’ve got a problem with that, then look out” (int. Mr Wood, 9/11/07).

In this example, we see Mr Wood draw on the resources and status afforded to him as a male DP to regulate the behaviour of the boys. Yet, there is relatively little consideration of how this practice may act to further undermine the efforts and authority of Rachel with these students. Interestingly, Rachel comments:

“Well they are like butter in his hands...as the DP it is much easier for him...I guess when he just asks once and they do what he asks, well it kind of make you feel a bit watered down, you feel a bit pathetic and disappointed that they don’t respect you in the same way...I mean even though it might look weak that you are getting the DP out here, I think it is still the best way to go…” (int. Rachel, 12/12/07).

In another situation, Mrs Andrews in her role as Year 12 Co-ordinator describes another incident in the yard that she believes ‘absolutely happened because of my gender’.

Mrs Andrews: There was this Italian boy who supports my theory about the classic mother that lets them do whatever they want. Well, he was a really big personality and really struggled with the rules that he didn’t agree with like lots of the ethnic boys – if they didn’t like stuff that I did they would absolutely challenge me outright. Anyway this incident occurred in the courtyard where he was on his mobile phone at the end of recess, I mean there was probably 200 kids in the courtyard at their lockers and I walked over to him and said “look, you know you’re not supposed to be on your mobile” and he put his hand up to my face and just kept on talking. So, of course my blood just boils and I made to grab the phone and said, “Well, who are you speaking to?” He said, “It’s my mum”. I said, “Well give me the phone and I will speak to your mum to explain that you can’t talk on the phone at school” and he did, but then he just lost it. He turned around and punched his locker and swore “you fucking come in here every day and break our balls...you can go get fucked”...I mean he was really quite violent and aggressive and of course you have 200 boys looking on and cheering. He was so out of control I just automatically said,
“Well now you are going to have to see the DP”, I mean it is really scary but I was more concerned about the message that he was sending to everyone else in the courtyard about how you could speak to a female teacher...basically I had to go to the staffroom and get another male teacher to come and remove him from the yard...this is with 200 kids going off, hanging by the rafters at this stage because they just love that someone has told a teacher to get f*cked in front of everyone...

AM: So was that a strategic decision to seek out a male teacher to support you?

Mrs Andrews: Absolutely...because I couldn’t have someone else go out there and fail, the next person who went out there had to send the message that I meant business enough to choose someone with a lot of power.... Rick went over to him and said, “You know you have to leave and go and see Mr Wood” and he just left the courtyard...I mean he knew he had stuffed up and that it was not worth crossing two teachers in the one day and that he hadn’t won the first time so he wouldn’t win the second time...he left and then his mother turned up.... (int. Mrs Andrews, 11/09/07).

What is illustrated above is the pervasiveness of gendered discourses and, in particular, masculine hegemony reinforced and privileged in male peer group settings (Hickey & Keddie, 2004). For Mrs Andrews, who was very conscious of having her authority undermined by this student’s defiance in public view, and under the surveillance of, a large group of students, we see her deference to dominant gendered positioning not because she necessarily agrees with it, but because she felt that this was the only strategy left open to her.

In acknowledgement of the ways in which key discourses acted to position these female teachers as marginal and perhaps less effective than their male counterparts, Mr Grey reflects on the many trials and tribulations he encountered with the appointment of a female DP. He shares:
“I mean the number of times I had Mrs White in tears in the first 12 months were numerous...It was generally about people just not taking her seriously as a Deputy...I’d been a pretty macho kind of DP to sort of call the kids to account, I’d raise my voice if I had to, that was how it was...Suddenly I had this person who wasn’t going to do all that stuff and so people were sort of thinking she’s ineffective and the kids aren’t going to respond to this...Her confidence was rock bottom and I’m sure she was saying how am I ever going to fit this mould, I just can’t...I realised that it was us that had to change, we had to structure things differently in a way that wasn’t the automatic expectation and develop things around people’s strengths” (int. Mr Grey, 23/11/07).

6.1.4 Dominant discourses and the positioning of gendered subjectivities within PE

In the above discussion the inherent tensions experienced by female teachers as a result of being positioned as ‘other’ within the key discourses privileged in this school context are foregrounded. Of particular interest to this study, is how these factors manifest in the context of PE, and as Mr Grey discusses, the dominance of masculine hegemony and heterosexuality within the PE setting are especially amplified. He states:

“I think when you think about the macho culture amongst the kids the most critical factor there is phys. ed and sport...I reckon when I first arrived we had a pretty macho, homophobic set of phys. ed teachers who let things operate in ways that weren’t healthy...In a boys’ school I’d go as far as to say maybe it’s the most critical factor that helps shape culture, it is in phys. ed classes that kids can be either built up or their self-esteem absolutely annihilated...If you just let things go, comments go, and you don’t take positions around homophobia that’s where a lot of damage can be done” (int. Mr Grey, 23/11/07).

Mr Grey’s comments demonstrate the ways in which teachers have the potential to mediate how boys’ experience PE through their responses to, or ignorance of, student behaviour. As Wright (2000b) discusses, “teacher talk works both to manage/discipline bodies and to inscribe the body with particular meanings, that is,
to (re)produce particular discourses which determine how bodies can be thought about and, consequently, how they can act in space and in relation to other bodies” (p. 153). In a specific example Rachel discusses how she feels compelled to address student behaviour when they call each other ‘faggots’.

“I mean you can let some things go, but say when they are calling each other names like gay and faggots then I feel I have to say something, you know; address it because I’m sure some students might be really offended, I mean it’s not really a welcoming environment if they are that way” (int. Rachel, 29/06/07).

Importantly, Mr Grey outlined that through the school’s involvement with a University project, many PE teachers were forced to consider their own identity positions in relation to discourses of sexuality.

“We did some work with one of the Uni’s on homophobia and part of it was to ask where do you stand yourself...in the first couple of sessions I’d say some of the male phys. ed staff found that difficult and very confronting. They had to acknowledge that they stood in a place that wasn’t very healthy, so not only was having female PE teachers there important, but it was also important to try and change some of the male’s views within that faculty” (int. Mr Grey, 23/11/07).

Further, he identifies the inclusion of females in the PE department as a key strategy in challenging some of the ‘unhealthy’ homophobic ideologies that permeated the school environment, and PE and sport in particular.

“Look, I was thinking, gee wouldn’t it be great if we could have some females in the PE faculty, and then the next step was, it would be great if we could have a female leading this faculty and now we’ve had a succession of females in that role...There are members of the PE faculty that I’ve had to talk to from time to time and say, “Look, that stuffs over – we are way past that”. I think the fact there’s two or three females now that are part of the mix has helped but there would still be times where I think the female teachers find it a bit like a boys’ club – but it’s less and less of an issue as cultural change happens” (int. Mr Grey, 23/11/07).
Once again, inherent in the above comments is recognition of the challenges female teachers may face, yet there is relatively little consideration of the types of support these teachers may require as they negotiate what Mr Grey terms as a “bit like a boys’ club”. In considering the intersection of dominant discourses relating to gendered identities and sexuality within PE, Hannah offers the following insights:

“I think if we employed a male PE teacher who was effeminate it would perhaps be more of a challenge, it would be more of an issue than a masculine female, because a feminine male would be perceived to pose a much greater threat…it is more of a homophobia issue than female homosexuality, it is a bit closer to home and especially in a Catholic Boys’ school with a history of sexual abuse, it would be far more of an issue I would think” (int. Hannah, 13/11/07).

Literature has pointed out that as Hannah suggests, male teachers who do not “perform in the pre-scripted masculine ways” (Mills, Haase, & Charlton, 2008, p. 77), that is, conform to culturally valorised versions of hegemonic masculinity are likely to not only be subordinated within masculine hierarchies but also to have their masculine identity policed by both students and amongst staff (Roulston & Mills, 2000). As Epstein and Johnson (1994) have argued:

In strongly homosocial situations, such as boys’ schools and school-based cultures of masculinity, homophobia is often a vehicle for policing heterosexual masculinities. Men habitually use terms of homophobic abuse against peers who deviate from hegemonic masculinities (p. 204).

A significant degree of literature has critiqued the dominance of masculinist discourses within PE and sport, especially for its potential to privilege and afford status to particular versions of masculinities at the expense of females and subordinated masculine identities (see for example Brown & Evans, 2004; Hickey, 2008; Hickey, Fitzclarence, & Matthews, 1998; Kirk, 2002; Light & Kirk, 2000; Paechter, 2003; Parker & Curtner-Smith, 2011; Wright, 1996b, 1997). Wright (200b) argues that in Australia, “the physical education curriculum is profoundly implicated in constructing gender differences and patriarchal/dominant versions of heterosexual femininity and masculinity” (p. 159). She suggests that the dominance of activities traditionally associated with men and boys, such as sports and team games, are integral factors in this social reproduction. Mrs White illustrates how
prominent PE and sport has been in the privileging of certain identities by commenting:

“To be accepted here ten years ago you had to be a footy jock, they were the leaders of the school...I mean sport is still pretty privileged here, but we try very hard to not make it the only thing” (int. Mrs White, 13/11/07).

According to Wright, PE, “in comparison with other curriculum areas of contemporary schooling, provides the optimum opportunity for a detailed attention to … the production of embodied subjectivities” (2000b, p. 158). It is interesting to note that as PE teachers, both Mr Western and Hannah comment on the importance sport and PE hold for boys in their school context, illustrating how ‘performance’ discourses (Tinning, 1997b) also act to shape gendered subjectivities.

“Here, the boys that are put on a pedestal are the sporty boys...at the other boys’ school I taught at you could be a sports jock but if you didn’t have a brain then you’re weren’t the most popular, but here if you are good at sport you can get as far as you like” (int. Mr Western, 7/12/07).

“It is probably the case with any student who doesn’t have sporting ability here that they become marginalised...in our school sporting ability earns them a high amount of status and acceptance so if you are not good at something, regardless of your personality, or even your sexuality, it is soon going to be obvious as to where you sit in relation to others...” (int. Hannah, 13/11/07).

This notion of self-surveillance and regulation as mechanisms to “see where you sit in relation to others” was also reiterated in comments from student participants. For example, Nigel comments:

“People will not want to know you if you’re not good at some things that make you cool, like it’s cool to be good at sport and well, it’s not cool to be like completely smart and not good at PE” (f.g. int. Nigel, 4/9/07)

In addition, the powerful discursive effects and the impact these have on shaping gendered subjectivities are perhaps most prominent in Sebastian’s account below:

“I think some students are afraid to say “I don’t like PE” because most of the other boys say “PE is the best”. You know other students might prefer art or
something like that but you wouldn’t say that out loud here...you would be called ‘gay’ and probably bashed...there really is only one type of boy that is valued here and that’s a sporty, jock type…” (int. Sebastian, 20/11/07).

6.1.5 Identifying other prevailing discourses

As discussed in Chapter 2, the ‘poor boys’ discourse has gained legitimacy within boys’ education debates in recent years and the comments from Mrs White suggest that perhaps whilst not reported with the same prevalence as hegemonic masculinity and heteronormativity discourses, improving the educational achievements of boys’ was still something that had gained currency at St John’s College also. She comments:

“Across the school we’ve placed great emphasis on becoming more of an academic school – improving academic outcomes of the boys because we felt they were underperforming and sort of, well deliberately, playing down the sporty reputation of the school. We’ve really developed the school, like when I first came here there was no chess...sport was everything, now there are all sorts of areas that boys can excel in – music, the arts, drama, chess, debating... I think a lot of focus has been placed on pedagogy and that’s been probably led by the English Department in particular and I think it’s starting to show. There has been a big improvement, much more consistency...and it has really helped in skilling up teachers...” (int. Mrs White, 13/11/07).

Interestingly, in the above account, Mrs White perceives that sporting discourses appear to have somewhat limited the academic achievement of boys within this school context in the past, and that one of the key strategies in the contemporary climate was to broaden and diversify opportunities for student achievement. She also suggests that a focus on pedagogy was important in this process. Similarly, Mr Grey comments:

“At the same time [as employing more female staff] we needed as a staff to focus more on how to actually teach boys, you know, what do boys want and what don’t they want and how do they learn...we fed off the work of Ian Lillico a fair bit, we made it part of our induction program for new staff and had lots of professional development on his work. I think we all became enriched from some of that work” (int. Mr Grey, 23/11/07).
In reviewing some of Lillico’s work (2001) it appears to be heavily practice-orientated in nature and often delivered through face-to-face ‘consultancy’ sessions. Weaver-Hightower argues a key intention of practice-orientated literature is that it “seeks to ameliorate the academic and social problems of boys at the classroom level” (2003a, p. 483). As argued previously, the practice-orientated literature “although mostly pedagogical and organizational in its suggestions” (Weaver-Hightower, 2003a, p. 483) relies heavily on a “tips for teachers” approach that purport simplistic strategies for complex problems (Weaver-Hightower, 2003a) and fail to take account of “which boys” are in most need to attention (see Chapter 2 for further critique).

After Penney and Waring (2000) I acknowledge that any examination of school contexts, and curriculum and pedagogy explicitly, can reveal the workings of multiple dominant discourses. In consideration of how subjectivities are constructed in school contexts, it is important to consider “the fact that gender can never be viewed in isolation from the many other dimensions of sociocultural and economic life that shape our identities” (Penney & Evans, 2002, p. 17). Discourses relating to ethnicity, culture, ability, social class, sexuality and gender are likely to impact on how subjectivities are constituted and shaped through PE experiences (Evans & Penney, 2002), yet the focus in this discussion has explicitly been limited to dominant discourses operating in this school context to explore the impact they have had on positioning hegemonic, masculine sporting identities as particularly privileged. Perhaps what this discussion has revealed through a focus on the appointments of more female teachers to this school context, understood by participants as a demonstrable commitment to ‘equal opportunity’, are the ways in which discourses can mask “the institutionalisation of social ‘otherness’ and inequality” and support “the ‘essentialisation’ of male and female identities” (Rich, 2001, p. 131).

This has raised questions about how then, a female teacher, who generally embodies a subjectivity that often sits as binary to those privileged by key discourse-power relations negotiates the tensions that arise when aspects of their day-to-day work, their pedagogies and professional identities conflict with dominant identity positions, which will be explored below.
6.2 Genealogical inspired interpretations of ‘good’ pedagogy for boys’ PE

As Harwood and Rasmussen state, genealogical research provides “an incisive strategy for getting at and disturbing the seemingly unalterable form of truth” (2003, p. 1 cited in Wright, 2006, p. 65) and as such, is particularly interested in interrogating the operation of power in knowledge construction. Much of the discussion above has centred on the wider school context to demonstrate how particular discourses have shaped the ways in which gendered subjectivities are ‘positioned’. In considering how knowledge of ‘good’ PE pedagogy for all-boys’ settings is constructed and taken up, it is important to acknowledge the significant impact that wider school discourses have in shaping power relations.

As Foucault (1980) argues, “knowledge and power are integrated with one another, and there is no point in dreaming of a time when knowledge will cease to depend on power…It is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge, it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power…” (p. 52). Similarly, following the advice of Brown and Rich (2002), these teachers are not merely the product of their teacher training and current school environment, rather they are “knowing subjects with lives and identities already strongly shaped by the time they enter the profession” (p. 80), and this has particular implications for the construction of ideas around ‘good’ pedagogy.

6.2.1 ‘It’s all about survival’: Adopting ‘masculine’ approaches to pedagogy

“There are three things that boys’ want to know – what are the rules? Who’s in charge? And will the rules be applied fairly? (int. Mr Grey, 23/11/07).

In much of the commentary about appropriate pedagogy for all-boy contexts there were many examples where approaches characterised by masculine attributes, such as maintaining control, management and order within clear boundaries were considered as taken-for-granted truths. It appeared that many of these assumptions were based upon firm beliefs that there is something inherently ‘different’ about
teaching boys’ and that, as a unitary group, they required specific management techniques as illustrated in the comments below.

“They have to have exactly the same expectations across the board and they have to be highly organised and very, very clear about the boundaries, otherwise chaos can erupt” (int. Mrs White, 13/11/07).

“Boys want to know right at the start who’s running the show and they don’t mind here, I don’t believe, if you’re male or female as long as they know that you’re in charge...if they get a sniff that you’re not, and that they could be, then male or female – you’re toast, they’ll make things very, very difficult for you” (int. Mr Wood, 9/11/07).

In a PE setting, both Mr Small and Mr Western explain that it is important to have clear guidelines and strategies for maintaining control.

“In terms of management you have to be right on your game...very strong in character...Unless you go over the guidelines and actually adhere to them things can very quickly spiral out of control...things may become dangerous and boys do engage in a lot of dangerous behaviour and unless that is actually controlled and managed, there are possibilities of injuries and bullying. Yeah, it really is all about control in practical settings” (int. Mr Small, 7/12/07).

“Well it needs to be structured, quite a rigid approach I guess...the boys’ like to know what’s going on and how it’s going to work and what rules they are playing by for that game...If you spend too much time on open discussions it tends to lose its way with some boys, whereas if you were to say, ‘Read this section and then answer this question before we go over it together’, then I think this is what boy’s like, they learn best by having those simple tasks outlined, it is also much easier to manage them like this” (int. Mr Western, 7/12/07).

It is perhaps interesting to note that many of the discussions around appropriate pedagogies for boys centred around strategies on how to structure the learning environment to ensure that control and management was maximised.

“You need to know how boys’ learn, how do you need to structure content so that they pick it up, I would say you need to chunk it, they are not great on
open-ended tasks. They need lots of structure and some real clarity about how the parts fit together...If you give them an open ended task they just flounder, they need frameworks and scaffolding and an idea of what the end product is supposed to look like...” (int. Mr Grey, 23/11/07).

“I had to be deliberately engaging...you had to almost entertain the boys, particularly in English, you had to get them in and keep them hooked with stuff, it meant being really clear about expectations and boundaries, they just needed absolute black and white stuff, they couldn’t work independently very well, so they needed a lot more guidance and structure...I mean they can work co-operatively, but only under those conditions...there are intrinsically motivated kids but the majority, say 98% don’t want to be there and aren’t very good at it so they just get a bit bored and then they muck up...you have to put a lot of energy into your preparation, far more than you do with girls...as soon as you make anything competitive boys naturally spark an interest, it becomes about winning or achievement and they love that...they are very kinaesthetic so to move about in English is a really positive thing, I mean traditionally English classrooms aren’t like that...you needed to do more than just ‘chalk and talk’” (int. Mrs Andrews, 11/09/07).

In conversations with Rachel and Hannah about how they initially negotiated their approaches to PE pedagogy, their early reflections very much speak to an emphasis on ‘surviving’ through the adoption of authoritarian pedagogical approaches.

“I can remember walking across the quad to face my first class, wondering how I’m going to do and what strategies I was going to put in place to survive and I guess I just tried to be very planned and organised, you know, not winging it too much and including lots of short, sharp activities that would keep them focussed and busy. Having heaps of these up my sleeve would mean that they didn’t get too bored or distracted which is when most of the behaviour issues could start...It really was about establishing yourself through going in there and perhaps laying down the law a little bit I suppose...I think it was really about setting expectations and following through so that you established control and I wasn’t obviously game enough to give the students the freedom and flexibility to explore their options, I had only 9 weeks of experience behind me...I imagine initially it would have been
about ok, let’s survive this and make sure that it is safe and that they are doing what I want them to do…that would have been my mind set…” (int. Hannah, 13/11/07).

“Well, I was pretty apprehensive at the start, I guess because I hadn’t taught all boys’ before, even though I had nearly six years of teaching experience, I’ve only been here for like six weeks…initially I thought I just have to be clear with my expectations and instructions need to be presented in a fairly structured way…I mean just in six weeks I’ve learned that you need to incorporate more variety in your lessons and you really need to finish off with a game…otherwise they would be climbing the walls…I really need to tighten up on my classroom management a bit more I think if I want to get through more content…” (int. Rachel, 29/06/07).

As Rich (2001) argues, “it has long been recognised that teachers, on first entering teaching, tend to adopt or enter ‘survival mode’” (p. 136). She claims that a discourse of instrumental rationality that foregrounds control, management and order is so dominant within PE teaching that “it is far less likely that teachers will emerge from this mode; indeed to the contrary, it may be consolidated and reified as not only the way to teach, but the only way to teach properly” (Rich, 2001, p. 136, original emphasis). In Rachel’s account above, it can be interpreted that her initial six weeks in this school environment has shaped her ‘professional identity’ in such a way that she contends ‘classroom management’ as key to allowing her to deliver the curriculum content, deducing her notion of pedagogy to didactics rather than actually considering the processes of learning. Similar findings have been reported by Rich where she claims, “it is not uncommon for … teachers … to focus on issues of class management, survival and control, rather than the learning interests of the child” (2001, p. 137).

In considering how these notions of pedagogy, especially the narrow conception of the term to masculine, authoritative teaching approaches, gain currency in this school context, Rachel explains that through comparing herself to her colleagues she began to get a sense of where she was at. She comments:

“Well in just talking with other colleagues you can sort of get an idea of where you are at, you know if you are behind the eight ball or if you are
doing what is necessary...At a recent staff meeting a few teachers talked about different ways that they manage their classes, like one talked about how they count down from 5 and if the boys aren’t quiet at zero then she starts timing how much time they waste, another one had a jar and every time the boys wasted a minute they put a block in it and that represented the time they had to make up at lunch...I guess I just struggle with consistency in comparison to them, I mean maybe I’m not cut out to teach all boys...my confidence seems really low at the moment, I just can’t get them to do what I want...I just don’t know if I can be the big, loud, authoritarian type that you need to be here” (int. Rachel, 11/09/07).

What is conveyed in Rachel’s account is a real questioning of her ‘professional identity’ in terms of the ‘masculine’ standards against which teacher competence appears to be judged. As Rich (2001) outlines, the discursive functioning of dominant, hegemonic masculine discourses act to position some pedagogical practices as ‘natural’ and ‘normal’ for this setting and as such, constitutes knowledge about the subject positions most appropriate in this setting. Further, Green (2008) argues, “it is important to recognize that what teachers do in practice is not necessarily the best ways of teaching – either in their own minds or in terms of the ideal-type models of ‘good practice’” (p. 215). These approaches that emerge and are shaped in context become so deeply embedded in teachers’ behaviours that they are viewed as inevitable, regardless of whether they are appropriate or considered examples of ‘good practice’, rather it is more likely they are considered to be the ‘best of offer’ (Evans & Davies, 1986).

6.2.2 ‘Outsiders within the classroom...’: Gender positioning and pedagogies

In further deliberations about how female teachers construct notions of ‘good’ pedagogical practice in all-boys’ settings, the work of Brown and Rich (2002) has proven insightful. The key premise of their work was to illustrate the ways in which gendered teacher identities were “positioned” and deployed as pedagogy, in response to the socio-cultural forces brought to bear on them” (p. 80). They argue that “gender needs to be viewed as an integral part of the teacher’s pedagogical
repertoire (Gore, 1990) … and that the positioned, gendered, self-identity becomes a significant pedagogical resource” (pp. 80-81).

For example, in their discussion of being positioned within dominant gendered conceptions, Brown and Rich (2002) emphasise that particular identity positions and pedagogical practices were reinforced within a traditional gender order. One of the key taken-for-granted truths about teaching boys at St John’s was the importance of fostering good relationships with students as illustrated by the comments below.

“I think students, especially boys, need to feel that they are understood and that they are liked and that their needs are going to be catered for...when you have a class with 29 kids running around the control and dynamics are often determined by the teacher and their relationships with the students help to determine that to an extent” (int. Hannah, 13/11/07).

“Essentially teaching boys is about relationships. Boys need to know that you’re serious and fair dinkum and that you’re going to follow through and they need to like you, well I use that term advisedly, they need to respect you and be prepared to let you run the class” (int. Mr Wood, 9/11/07).

Yet, as Mrs White points out, sometimes a female teacher’s ability to foster these relationships can be hindered by their gendered position, as some of the resources male teachers might employ to establish these relationships can appear unattainable for the female staff.

“Females can’t ever afford to be matey with the boys and it pisses me off when the male staff are often called by their nick names...we’ve asked the staff to support the females by having formality in the classroom. Outside in Saturday sport or whatever that’s fine you can be called Jonno or Jocko or whatever, but in the classroom, well the females can’t have that...There have been many occasions when I’ve said to the male staff it would be professional and very supportive of your colleagues if you were to insist on formality of names...some accepted this quite readily, but well others like the more old style and longer term members of staff say that this is the basis of their relationship with students. I would say, “well you know you’re being asked to change”, they didn’t want to and they probably haven’t” (int. Mrs White, 13/11/07).
Further, she comments:

“I think the challenges for female PE teachers are that they constantly have to prove themselves. This is particularly so in PE because the men are just accepted more readily... probably because they play sport and this gives them instant credibility with the boys, with the females there is a lack of knowledge or skill assumed and boys might think this will result in a lack of competitiveness in their classes so they have to prove themselves” (int. Mrs White, 13/11/07).

These sentiments offered by Mrs White were clearly reiterated in conversations with Rachel and Hannah, and in considering how they manifested in notions of pedagogy, Brown and Rich’s (2002) concept of taking and assigning gender positions is helpful. They do caution however, that in taking and assigning gender positions, teachers are also “endeavouring to balance many priorities of their duties, such as trying to include, motivate, keep control, structure and deliver content knowledge in their classes” (p. 89) and as such, challenges to the gendered status quo often remain unchallenged. For example, Hannah explains:

“Unlike male teachers who just walk in and they’ve got a presence and much more credibility than a female teacher initially... I mean when Tom Western who is six-foot-five and 100 kilograms is your partner for team teaching, it is a bit daunting when he walks into the gym and slam dunks some basketballs while you are trying to take the roll... I mean automatically the kids are excited that they might have him ... you have to work really hard to prove yourself and win them over and establish your reputation ... you have to be really organised and prepared by thinking through what is going to work and if you don’t know about footy then you have to read up to have the terminology and the rules and coaching points down pat ... I mean most of the sports that we do are male-orientated sports ... we don’t get to do dance, gymnastics and netball all the time ... the curriculum here is quite traditional and male-focussed” (int. Hannah, 24/07/07).

The above account illustrates what Brown and Rich (2002) refer to as the ‘double bind or entrapment’ (p. 91) that female teachers can find themselves in when teaching particularly masculine-dominated areas of the curriculum. As Hannah
explains, with a curriculum dominated by ‘traditional and male focussed’ activities it is likely that this is experienced quite often. In the following account, Rachel takes advice from her male colleague and attempts to position herself somewhat differently with the students through her involvement in an International rules football game.

“I was telling Rachel that for me, well I often just join in the games. I’m assuming that most of the female staff wouldn’t play but I was trying to explain that playing does give you a different relationship, well an opportunity to build a rapport. If you’re interacting with them this helps in building relationships and with that generally comes respect, once you’ve got that they will listen to you no matter what you say” (int. Mr Western, 7/12/07).

“Well I talk to Tom Western a fair bit and he suggested that I just get involved, so although I probably didn’t cater for me being involved in the game, I mean I should have got one of the students to just umpire the whole time. The main reason why I played was only because the numbers were uneven, but anyway I thought I would get involved, show them that I did have some skill in the game. Anyway, I probably didn’t think it through properly because if I had I should have said, “Well, what’s the go with me and tackling” because you know, me being the female teacher and them being the boys...but even though I think it is really positive that they see me participating I don’t want them to feel uncomfortable and I didn’t address that as well as what I could have” (int. Rachel, 11/09/07).

As an observer on the sideline, it was interesting to note some of the student’s responses to Rachel’s participation. For example, when one student attempted to tackle her, another student from the sideline shouted, “Get your diary out, you just touched a girl, you’re on detention” (f.n. AM, 31/08/07). As Brown and Rich (2002) explain, Rachel’s attempt to demonstrate herself as a competent performer “has consequences for the relational dynamics of this educational situation and is typical of both the active positioning and the double bind” (p. 91). They explain that where her involvement seeks to implicitly challenge the “masculine stereotypical orthodoxy of males play football better than females” (p. 91) she has, in fact, potentially subscribed to the “very same set of values and practices that would qualify as a

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4 International Rules refers to a code of football that is played in Australia and Ireland that combines the skills of Australian Rules Football (AFL) with Ireland’s national football code of Gaelic football.
‘good’ male performance” (p. 91) that can act to reinforce dominant gendered positions and associated values that she sought to alter. It could be construed that Rachel’s feminine physicality “is defined in relation to and comparison with male standards, while the boys compare themselves with a ‘woman’ rather than a ‘competent performer’” (Brown & Rich, 2002, p. 92, original emphasis).

Whilst the above account is not presented to suggest that Rachel should not consider participation in some of these masculine orientated activities, it is offered to highlight that “while these women can position themselves in ways which allow them to access the masculine cultural project, significantly they have limited means to challenge its secular legitimacy, and in doing so embrace new ways of ‘doing male things’” (Brown & Rich, 2002, p. 92). Perhaps what the above account illustrates most is that whilst Rachel’s intention to present an alternative ‘identity’ through pedagogical interactions was undertaken in an attempt to access relationships considered as less attainable by her gendered position, it does signal a degree of agency to “develop and internalize a greater range of practical, embodied and experiential gendered identity resources” (Brown & Rich, 2002, p. 97) that may be drawn upon to challenge potentially limiting practices in PE.

6.2.3 Alternative readings of ‘good’ pedagogical practices in boys’ PE

Despite the dominance of conventional dominant masculine positions and practices in PE, there was a perception amongst participants that female PE teachers had the potential to offer something different to this teaching context. Mr Wood explains:

“The females have probably got to actually be better practitioners than the blokes. If I think about someone like me, when push comes to shove I can fall back on “Right oh, you blokes, get in here now” which the girls can’t do, they probably have to be better operators in lots of respects I think...there would be some kids, probably not your most able or jock-like types who probably relate well to their male PE teachers, but the others, the softer kind of kids probably form really good relationships with female PE teachers” (int. Mr Wood, 9/11/07).
Inherent in Mr Wood’s comments above is an acknowledgement of different versions of masculinities that are not all supported by dominant approaches to PE pedagogy. Similarly, Mrs White and Hannah identify that it is possible female teachers potentially can identify with a wider range of students:

“Boys’ generally love sport, I mean not all of them of course, but I think the females are more attuned to a range of abilities, they don’t only identify with the sporty kids, but like those who don’t like sport they may have more of an inkling to think about what they can do to get them involved and more enthusiastic in class, I think they’re probably quite good at recognising the needs of a broader range of students, and blokes probably aren’t…” (int. Mrs White, 13/11/07).

CH: Do you think that the inclusion of female teachers are more likely to cater for those who are less inclined in male dominated sporting areas?

Hannah:

Yeah, I think that you can identify with them a bit more so a student who doesn’t want to be crush-tackled in PE, well I’m sort of generalising here but many of the male teachers are here because they identify with the blokey sports, whether or not a female can identify with a student that is going to be less comfortable in those types of activities depends on the individual but I would think so…I’m thinking about one student in particular who really benefits from having a female PE teacher, your more feminine students would see a very blokey PE teacher as quite removed from them and not someone who they would feel comfortable saying they are scared or threatened by rough tackling, but they may be more likely to say that to a female teacher (int. Hannah, 24/07/07).

What becomes apparent in the testimonies of Hannah and Rachel below is that despite the constraints they seek to operate within, they both consider approaches to pedagogy that could be considered as more inclusive. For example, Hannah comments:

“In terms of curriculum, I don’t know if it was because I was returning to the school after being away, or if it was because I was female, but you can see how male dominated the curriculum is and you can identify with boys that
don’t love footy, rugby or soccer...there are boys who would like to play non-traditional sports so I suppose I can bring a few ideas as Head of Department...I mean we have brought aerobics and athletics back into the curriculum...as a female you are probably a bit more sympathetic to certain types of kids...but it is hard too because some of the older phys. edders who have been here for a long time want to do what they have always done so they perhaps don’t identify or see opportunities for kids to participate in something where they are not going to be dominated by the jocks...when we do something different it creates an even playing field, when it is new they have to learn to work together and accept feedback so they benefit as well as a student who is perhaps not as fantastic at the male dominated sports...” (int. Hannah, 24/07/07).

In fact, both Mr Grey and Mr Wood attribute a wider range of curriculum offerings to these more inclusive approaches that a female Head of Department can offer.

“I’d say, after having a succession of two female Department Heads, that it’s a broader PE program and certainly has a breadth to it that kids weren’t exposed to 15 years ago. We spend a lot of money on buses and taking kids to outside venues to encourage broad exposure and the possibilities of different things...” (int. Mr Grey, 23/11/07).

“I think there’s been some big changes here in curriculum...I’m constantly seeing kids with fishing rods coming to school and think, hang on, what’s going on there...Some of the curriculum offerings are now very recreationally based...but traditional sports are still always big” (int. Mr Wood, 9/11/07).

In many of the video-stimulated sessions with Rachel, there were notable contradictions and tensions that arose as she described why she had adopted particular pedagogical approaches in her classes. In our first session that drew on video clips from an Australian Rules football class, Rachel describes how she went about setting this class up.

“Initially I thought it was important to use lots of little games, I mean I still think skill practice and technique instruction is really important but with these boys who probably have had more experience in football than me, it
was important for them to think about some of the strategies and tactics...I guess it was about just getting them into a game, do a couple of activities and then the game, the focus was on maximising participation so everyone was involved...there weren’t too many surprises, I mean some of my umpiring calls weren’t great but I think they enjoyed it overall…” (int. Rachel, 11/09/07).

Through this discussion I stopped the video at a point where Rachel had called the boys in to discuss the boundaries for the football game, giving them the option to elect to play over the full field or alternatively to play within a marked zoned area. Despite the overwhelming response by the boys to play a full field game as, “Miss, why would we want to just play in that area, that’s not what happens in the real game” (f.n. AM, 30/08/07), I was particularly interested in exploring with Rachel her reasons for adopting this ‘participatory’ approach. She comments:

“I think it is really important to give them an opportunity to make decisions about how the lesson is going to run, but then you don’t want to give them too much say because if you give an inch they might take a mile...I think it is within reason to offer them choices but then you don’t want them to take control and dominate because then they will just do whatever they want...I guess if you show that you can negotiate and reason with them they might be more likely to be on-side, you know they will hopefully be more involved if they get to contribute to what the group actually does...but in saying that, I don’t know, like I am not really sure if I am doing the right thing though, that is just how I feel at the moment…” (int. Rachel, 11/09/07).

Interestingly as we continue to watch the video clip we see one of the dominant characters within the group sling tackle another student to the ground and Rachel immediately blows her whistle to stop the game as she calls, “Too high…”. From the sidelines another student yells, “Miss, are you blind, he got him around the hips and he ducked...are you serious?” (f.n. AM, 30/08/07). From here, Rachel calls the students in and advises that they will go back to the game after they have completed the next drill activity. Apart from the obvious distrust and dissatisfaction from many students, one particular student barked, “This is crap...I mean these footys aren’t even pumped up” (f.n. AM, 30/08/07). While Rachel observed the dissension amongst members of the group, I asked her why she decided to abandon the game and return to a drill activity. She comments:
“Well someone was going to get hurt….I mean I am doing activities that I might be OK at in some regard but in others, I feel like maybe I do need to know more about the particular activity…I mean teaching in an all-boys’ school is a lot different from being in a co-ed school…I feel like my knowledge of these activities could be a bit better and I could be more confident in my umpiring. I don’t know sometimes I think I should take up umpiring in the local junior league so I get a bit better at it…by going back to a drill, you know not everyone is great at football and you have a mixed level of abilities so if they can give 100% in this activity then it will show they are willing to have a go and do it properly before we try the game again, I think that they need to show a bit of responsibility and initiative before we go back to the game…Boys expect a certain standard, I guess with these lessons you just want to be as prepared as what you can be and when it comes down to having footballs that are not pumped up enough this can cause them to question my ability to decide if the footballs are in a good enough condition or not…(int. Rachel, 11/09/07).

Despite her intentions to adopt a more participatory, and arguably ‘feminine’ approach to pedagogy, in the above example we see that when things do not necessarily go to plan, Rachel defers to a dominant, masculine approach to establish control and order within the class. The inherent identity positions become obvious through her qualifications that there are obviously ‘mixed level of abilities’ within the class and that the confines of a structured, drill-like activity will provide students with an opportunity to ‘show a bit of responsibility and initiative’ before going back to a game situation.

In another study, Rich (2001) outlines that for one of her female student teachers it “was clear to see that she wanted to be a reflective, caring and enthusiastic teacher, but whom nonetheless has this professional identity displaced…[and was] expected to reconfigure her approach towards something much ‘harder’ and in keeping with the institutional culture of the department” (p. 137). Rich argues that in this sense teachers, “are not only being encouraged to develop particular pedagogical/professional approaches to teaching, they are being asked to learn first…the implicit (gendered) criteria on which they are to be judged” (p. 138). In Rachel’s situation above, what becomes obvious is her deference towards a
“masculinised teaching identity, which draws on confrontational, authoritarian and didactic pedagogical approaches associated with hegemonic masculinities” (Rich, 2001, p. 138) when things to not necessarily go to plan. Her concern with safety, management and control appear to override her intent to offer alternative readings of pedagogy. As Rich explains, in her study, the participants were “denied the opportunity to display and develop other dimensions of their own teaching identities and forge alternative ways of fusing these with practical pedagogies” (2001, p. 138).

6.3 Reflective notes

This chapter has sought to explore the ways in which dominant discourse-power relations that permeate the culture of St John’s College have been influential in shaping and privileging particular gendered subjectivities. On the evidence presented here, it appears that the dominant discourses of hypermasculinity and heteronormativity are historically entrenched within this school culture and that their legacy continues to position hegemonic masculine and heterosexual masculinities as culturally valorised identities within the school. Data pointed to the use of homophobic language such as ‘faggot’ or ‘gay’, employed in derogatory ways, to ‘police’ and regulate the (re)construction of hegemonic masculine subjectivities amongst students and in particular, through the voices of many key informants, the prevalence of bullying was problematised.

It was interesting to note that some of the key strategies identified to address these ‘unhealthy’ manifestations of discourse-power relations were the Principal’s employment of student leaders to regulate the behaviour of bullies and the strategic appointment of female staff. Perhaps a key silence in the data points to a lack of acknowledgement that the types of students who were generally successful in obtaining leadership positions within the school, were in fact, those who by association may have been ‘positioned’ alongside, or actually embodied, the very hypermasculine identities the strategy was attempting to dilute. Mrs White explained, “To be accepted here ten years ago you had to be a footy jock, they were the leaders of the school”. This raises questions then about their capacity to actually impart the type of culture change that Mr Grey was intent on addressing, particularly if the effect of this ‘gendered positioning’ did in fact work to further legitimise
dominant versions of masculinities through the reinforcement of inequitable power relations.

Despite Mr Grey’s forthcoming accounts of the very deliberate recruitment of ‘feminine’ identities to not only positions of leadership such as the DP role, Year Level Coordinator and Head of Department (HPE) but also to curriculum areas considered particularly masculine in nature such as the PE department, other leaders within the school, such as Mr Wood, did not appear to be consciously aware of this strategic direction. Many key informants perceived that an increased prevalence of female staff within the school, combined with a concerted effort to raise the profile of curriculum areas historically constructed as ‘feminine’ in nature such as the arts and drama (Keddie & Mills, 2007), had been somewhat effective in altering the overly ‘macho’ culture that characterised the school in earlier times. Whilst I am sure that an increased number of female identities within the school context certainly acted to ‘normalise’ their presence, the extent to which they were actually able to effect any significant ‘culture’ change is questioned and problematised here. As Rich (2001) comments, “the business of projecting oneself into a cultural…or professional identity [is] fraught with difficulty for many female…teachers, where gendered expectations regulated self-identities to positions of subordination, marginalisation, acceptance or complicity in reference to a hegemonic norm” (p. 147). Further, Rich argues, “The Gender Order, which resides at the heart of these practices, is therefore drawn upon and reproduced to maintain boundaries of social difference and resultant social exclusion, rendering teaching practice far from ‘inclusive’” (p. 147). It is important to note that my discussion of ‘front-line’ gender work has not been undertaken in support of these practices, or as an uncritical acceptance of men and boy’s behaviour in this context, but rather to convey the cultural conditions in which the two female PE teachers’ work, as discussed by the participants themselves.

Data also demonstrated that, for the participants, this type of ‘front-line’ gender work was not without its challenges. It was my observation that many of these challenges emerged from being positioned as ‘other’ or outside the dominant gendered hegemony of both the wider school context and the PE department in particular. As Brown and Rich (2002) argue;
there are a series of connections that need to be made between the gendered self, pedagogy and the politics of change in gender relations...these connections would offer...teachers a broader range of ‘identity resources’ that would help them become more ‘active agents’ in confronting the dilemmas of gender positioning (p. 93).

The genealogical inspired approach to examining notions of ‘good’ pedagogical practice for boys’ PE revealed that, as a result of the dominant workings of discourse, traditional, masculine-orientated pedagogical approaches were considered the essence of the ‘right’ way to educate boys. In fact, data spoke to the unquestioned and uncritical acceptance of approaches that foregrounded management, control and order to the point that, from the voices of the two female physical educators, these principles were adopted as a ‘pedagogy of necessity’ (Tinning, 1988) in order to ‘survive’. Similar findings were reported by Brown and Evans (2004) where they claimed that the process of negotiating gendered pedagogy in the classroom, “leads to a synthesis of pedagogies which, under the everyday pressures of teaching, means resorting pragmatically to dominant masculine approaches in order to survive” (p. 63), rather than any consideration of the actual processes of learning.

Despite the rhetoric that female physical educators would offer something different in boys’ PE, there was very little articulation of alternative pedagogical approaches adopted with a sustained interest beyond some broadening of activities included within the curriculum. This is not to say that there were not examples where more ‘participatory’ approaches were trialled, but that, based on power relations they were often disregarded in favour of more ‘traditional’ approaches. On the basis of evidence presented here it would appear that, as Clarke (2002) argues, both the content and pedagogical practices of PE “are built (and reproduced) through narrow ideologies and stereotyped visions of heterosexual femininity and masculinity. Accordingly, pupils and teachers learn and recognise the required ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’ codes of acceptance within physical education and schooling more generally” (p. 42).
Chapter 7 – Power, pedagogy and professional identities: Shaping female PE teachers’ subjectivities

“Rarely are discursive developments discrete, unrelated or ideologically pure” (Evans & Penney, 2002, p. 6)

In the previous chapter evidence was presented to suggest that the employment of female staff in both leadership capacities and in particular curriculum areas where hegemonic masculinity and heteronormativity were particularly amplified, such as the PE department, was a strategic move on the part of the school administration to address some of the more sinister workings of discourse in the context of an all-boys’ school. As Evans and Penney (2002) suggest above, it is likely that in any discursive development, intent lingers. Yet, to date, little research exists to examine the impact that such strategies have had, especially in terms of how boys experience PE with a female teacher and how the professional identities and gendered subjectivities of these teachers are shaped in such contexts.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the ways in which power relations shape ‘gendered’ experiences in PE and to understanding the ways in which female teachers make sense of these experiences. Particularly, this discussion focuses on the strategies employed by two teachers as they negotiate their professional identity and pedagogical practice in highly masculinised spaces, one as a teacher of a Year 8 PE class and the other as a female Head of Department (HPE). As Green (2008) acknowledges, “not only will context tend to have profound significance for PE teachers’ practices, it will impact upon their ‘philosophies’ and lead to reinforcement, adaptation or change in their views and practices” (p. 214).

7.1 Power relations and pedagogy within the PE classroom

In his analysis of the workings of power within particular institutions, Foucault (1980) identified that:

“Power must be analysed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localized
here or there, never in anybody’s hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece or wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organisation. And not only do individuals circulate between its thread; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power” (p. 90)

In adopting a Foucauldian approach after others (Gore, 1998; Martino & Beckett, 2004; Webb, et al., 2004; Wright, 2000b, 2004), this discussion considers how power relations are taken up, exercised and experienced at the micro-political level of the PE classroom. To aid this discussion, Gore’s (1990) concept of ‘pedagogy as text’ (p. 103) proves helpful to link the work of “Lusted and Foucault … [to] argue that focusing on the process of teaching necessitates attention to the politics of those processes and to the broader political context in which they are situated … The way that pedagogy is received becomes a process of negotiation, a struggle over meaning” (p. 106). Further, Foucault (1980) contends:

In thinking of the mechanisms of power, I am thinking rather of its capillary form of existence, the point where power reaches into the very grain of individuals and touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives (p. 39).

### 7.1.1 Acknowledging multi-directional workings of power in all-boys’ PE

As others have pointed out, power “is not held or possessed by people, nor does it operate only from the top down but operates in top-down, bottom-up and lateral configurations” (Webb & Macdonald, 2007b, p. 281). Whilst it is important to acknowledge that the manifestations of power techniques can be viewed from multiple perspectives, there were notable examples of the ways in which ‘surveillance’ as a technique of power operated to shape Rachel’s approach to pedagogy. As a point of difference to Gore’s (1998) original work, this research seeks to provide the specific contexts in which these power relations played out through pedagogical interactions. The most common conception of surveillance operating in this context involved “those in authority surveilling subordinates”
(Webb, et al., 2004, p. 213). For example, Mr Wood indicates that surveillance does occur in the normal day-to-day functioning of the school:

“The girls who teach PE, I’m not sure they do it all that differently to anything the males do. I don’t spend a lot of time watching PE classes but I walk past them often enough and you know what’s happening out there. Occasionally I’ll be in the gym while the instructional phase of something is happening and I’d pick up if it sounded off the mark” (int. Mr Wood, 9/11/07).

Rachel indicates that this type of top-down surveillance can cause a degree of angst at times, given she is trying to project the image of a competent PE teacher:

“I remember in the International Rules football unit I was trying to do something pretty different ... I had kids involved in these mini-games with about six pitches set up and really, balls were just going everywhere ... I was just standing in the centre of it laughing thinking this is a disaster and I look over and there is Mr Wood - I kind of just panicked and blew the whistle and called everyone in and went back to doing a handballing drill in lines. I mean I didn’t want him to think I was useless” (int. Rachel, 23/11/07).

In her interactions with students within the class, Rachel often commented on examples of how she had to ‘watch particular kids’ to ensure they ‘were on task’. In another video-stimulated session following a cricket lesson, I asked Rachel to comment on her reflections of the warm up activity which involved a relay-task of putting out and collecting cricket balls from certain cones. She comments:

“Basically by standing at the end, I was able to watch to ensure all students were doing it properly, it also allowed me a spot from which to give feedback about their movement to the ball which is important in fielding...I stood at the end of this line [points to the first group] because they had the most trouble-makers in it, if they thought I was watching them specifically they are more likely to stay on task” (int. Rachel, 23/11/07).

In this account, Rachel indicates that she employed ‘surveillance’ as a technique of power for “purposes productive for pedagogy” (Gore, 1998, p. 236), especially in the sense that she perceived she positioned herself to be able to give adequate feedback, yet in her next breath, she also indicates the way it was used to discipline the behaviour of certain students.
In another example, Rachel describes how ‘bottom-up’ surveillance exercised by the students in her class impacted on her deliberations about which activities were deemed successful or not and consequently shaped the nature of subsequent activities.

“In a co-ed school you can focus more on skills and little games, here that just doesn’t work...We did Ultimate Frisbee as a minor game a few weeks ago and the boys absolutely hated it...in a co-ed school this worked really well but here, well because they didn’t have a ball in their hand or have tackling involved, they hated it...In Ultimate, if the Frisbee hits the ground it gets turned over and some of the boys were getting really angry, shouting things like, ‘this is shit, it’s just like netball’ and basically I had a massive revolt on my hands...I had to change to another activity straight away, so we went to ‘Stop ball’ where one team throws the ball and then the fielding team have to form a tunnel ball line and once it has passed through everyone’s legs they yell ‘stop’...another absolute bloody disaster. It seems a couple of kids, usually the jocks, decide they don’t like something and then they incite pandemonium so that I absolutely have to change what I am doing...There is a little bit of mentality with an all-boys’ school that they love their traditional sport and this is what they want to play and even though I think it is important for them to try other sports you have to really make an effort to promote them...I mean it would be far easier on me if we just played footy and soccer every lesson” (int. Rachel, 12/12/07).

As others point out, surveillance functions as a “technique of power because it perpetuates, creates or prescribes behaviour according to dominant discourses within society. Foucault noticed that subjects ... who felt they were being watched internalized the gazes and regulated their behaviours and identities toward a norm” (Webb & Macdonald, 2007b, p. 281). In the above case, Rachel illustrates the ‘internalisation’ of her student’s gaze, and subsequent resistance to particular pedagogical approaches, and as illustrated regulated her activity choices as a result. It is interesting to note that she considers the ‘norm’ to be closely aligned with traditionally masculine sporting activities such as football and soccer. Similarly, the discussion above to revert to the ‘norm’ of students practising skills in a line when
the DP was watching her class, can be considered another regulative effect of surveillance.

In addition to top-down and bottom-up instances of surveillance there was also evidence of surveillance functioning in a lateral direction, usually between colleagues within the PE department. With respect to teachers surveilling other teachers, Mr Western comments:

“There was this Year 8 class next to my Year 12 class which was taught by a female colleague and the boys were just going off their heads...My Year 12’s were looking at me as if to say what’s going on and what are you going to do about it...You know yourself if another teacher is to walk into your classroom and try to control the boys it is sort of demonstrating to the students that they have no control and is a bit undermining but I was caught in a bind because she really looked like she needed help...” (int. Mr Western, 7/12/07).

In another instance, Hannah describes how, for the female teachers within her department, the surveillance they experienced by male colleagues appeared to regulate what they would say about how they were coping in the all-boys’ PE environment. For example:

“We have another part-timer who has just started with us...on paper she had a background in state-league cricket and her forte seemed to be not traditionally female sports, but despite those kind of credentials on paper, physically she didn’t appear to have any high level sporting ability...She struggled to go on camps and keep up with the boys, so even though she did present as someone who was going to be good it didn’t really carry through...She was fairly quiet when she started and the males who are in the department are pretty boisterous, so not the easiest environment but there were a few, well males, who were quite critical and perhaps quick to judge. If someone doesn’t prove themselves to be competent and able to hold their own they give up on them pretty quickly...I gave her lots of help at the start but even with me she was still very guarded. I guess given she was on a contract she wanted to paint the picture that she was coping and that everything was going well...I mean the renewal of her contract kind of depended on her getting the message across that everything was going well and that the kids were really enjoying it...” (int. Hannah, 13/11/07).
In both of the examples presented to illustrate lateral functioning of surveillance, there are obviously multiple other readings that could be made of the data, particularly in light of the gendered ‘positioning’ of male authority in Mr Western’s account, or the socio-political influences of being on a contract position for the female part-time teacher above that could be equally responsible for the ‘normalisation’ or ‘regulation’ of certain approaches and identities. Whilst this is acknowledged, at a fundamental level, the data also speaks to not only instances of, but the regulatory nature of, lateral-functioning surveillance mechanisms in terms of the ways in which teachers’ position, and are positioned, by relations of power.

7.1.2 Student responses to pedagogy with a female PE teacher

In my work with the students, one of the first tasks they were asked to complete was a reflective task that asked them to describe the best PE lesson they had ever had. It asked them to reflect on what they did during the lesson, who was teaching it and what it was about the lesson that made it so memorable. Below are two contrasting accounts selected purposively to illustrate diversity in student perspectives in response to this task.

In this class we played a game of netball and I wasn’t chosen last which normally happens in most PE classes. I got to play the whole time at Wing Defence, for the whole game, and didn’t have to sit out. The teacher was a female and the lesson started with some warm up games which were fun and she was always happy, she didn’t yell at anyone, she made it fair so that the sporty guys couldn’t hurt us, but basically she just kept the game going so it never stopped…I really enjoyed this lesson because I was good at it and the teacher encouraged me when I did something wrong for the team, even some of the kids commented when I did something good…this was the best lesson ever!

(Year 8 student, document analysis, 29/06/07)

The best PE lesson I ever had was when we played Gaelic footy or International Rules. We played it this year and it is the closest thing to AFL we’ve played so far. Before the lesson we watched a Youtube clip to learn the basics, we didn’t have to do any drills or anything and then we played the game for nearly the whole double lesson...well after we played battle-ball for a warm up. This game was also really cool because you get to throw the ball at people and try and hit them to get them out, everyone is involved because there is nowhere to hide in that game...When we played International Rules people bumped each other which is basically tackling and we had the female PE teacher who is really friendly...I liked that we got into a game straight away and that Macca got K’Od [knocked out]...also, we won!

(Year 8 student, document analysis, 29/06/07)
Interestingly, in both of the above accounts the students selected lessons where they were taught by a female teacher, which may be no more than coincidence given the timing of data collection, however what is presented in the two accounts are somewhat extreme notions of what becomes valued in PE. Perhaps represented in these accounts is what Rich (2001) refers to as “power...taken as intimately linked to the gender micro-politics taking place” (p. 132). In the first account, it could be construed that this student occupies a somewhat marginalised position within the class and that ‘feminine’ content and ‘encouraging approaches’ contributed to his recollection of this as a memorable lesson. The silences that are perhaps worth considering, especially in light of the contrasting account offered, suggest that in many PE lessons where ‘masculine’ and hegemonic approaches are adopted (as in the International Rules football lesson described subsequently) that this could further contribute to this students’ marginalised subjectivity. As Evans and Penney (2002) observe, “the experiences that...boys receive in physical education are likely to reinforce stereotypical images, attitudes and behaviours relating, amongst other things, to how they should feel about their own and other’s bodies, who can legitimately participate in what physical activities, when and why” (p. 4).

In contrast, the second account demonstrates how even the warm up game, battle-ball, afforded this student an opportunity to engage in aggressive, combative, masculine interactions, which he has recounted as memorable. In considering these accounts of pedagogy as text, we see evidence of multiple masculinities in operation and the ways in which power relations operating at the level of the classroom shape subjectivities in particular ways. As Gore (1990) argues, “with its acknowledgement of multiplicity, our attention [is drawn] to these often neglected issues of power” (p. 108).

In trying to ascertain student’s general perceptions about how they may experience PE with a female teacher, many of the students indicated that gender was a ‘non-issue’. Rather, they suggested that it was more the ‘quality’ of the teacher that impacted on how they experienced particular lessons as expressed below.

“I don’t think gender is really an issue, a teacher’s personality and whether they know their stuff is far more important...as far as gender goes, I couldn’t care less...If you are really interested in a sport then it is not really up to your female PE teacher to teach you every aspect of the game, you could do
this in your own time by joining a club or something. I think it is good to have a variety of teachers gender wise...I think role models shouldn't be based on what they look like or if their male or female, it should be on what their beliefs and attributes are...So I think that if you had a really good PE teacher that was nice, knew what to do, was organised and responsible then it would be just as good as having a male teacher...” (f.g. int. Brian, 4/09/07).

“You don’t just stop mid-thought and go, “oh, we’ve got a female teacher and this is going to suck”, you just go along with it and in my experience the female PE teachers here have been pretty good, much the same as having a guy teacher” (int. Nigel, 23/11/07).

“Also like, it doesn’t matter which teacher you have in terms of gender because every teacher has got their own rules and you have to learn their way of doing things. If you have a male teacher who lets you tackle but a female teacher who doesn’t, well, it is their rules so you have to obey” (f.g. int. Sebastian, 04/09/07).

Interestingly, in the individual interview with Sebastian he elaborates:

“Well one of the good things about having a female PE teacher is that you play more team games rather than individual ones. I just find they’re better ‘cos I’m not the best at PE and I’m more of a group person, group games mean I don’t always stuff it up...and to be honest I like that we don’t do tackling with her because I’m sort of a more laidback person and the roughness of tackling, well it hurts...I don’t like the games that are rough because I might get hurt if someone tackles me...Miss Moore is probably more responsible than some of the male teachers, she helps you more and say like, if I’ve lost something, she would take more effort into trying to help me find it. Female PE teachers are probably more encouraging, like the male teacher probably would encourage you but the female teacher would make more of an effort to actually work with you by showing you what you have to do or where you are going wrong” (int. Sebastian, 20/11/07).

Through his comments, Sebastian perhaps illustrates two key points. Firstly, that the regulative power of the peer-group may have in fact been influential in Sebastian’s
decision to talk about individual ‘teacher’s rules’, particularly in relation to tackling, in the group setting to qualify his opinion that the gender of the teacher does not really matter. Yet in his individual interview he is far more forthcoming about what he sees as the real contributions a female teacher can make to his PE experience, especially in terms of not allowing tackling to occur in some games and he considers she would be more likely to adopt ‘encouraging’ approaches to feedback to help him improve his performance.

For Kyle, Matt, Dale, Brendan and Nigel, despite commenting that they didn’t perceive any real difference between having a male and female PE teacher, there were some evident contradictions in their discussion of the vignette employed for focus group discussions. For example:

**AM:** So for the two individuals in this story, what sort of advice would you give them given they haven’t had a female PE teacher before?

**Kyle:** Give them a chance

**Matt:** Yeah, they are not that bad

**Dale:** Don’t worry about it, it’s just a teacher and at the end of the day, you’ll get another one next year

**AM:** What sort of things do you think they may need to be prepared for? Based on your experiences, are there things that you think the boys would notice as significantly different from the semester they have had with their male PE teacher?

**Matt:** Well yeah, I mean she might not be able to help you much with your footy or cricket...you can always tell how much a teacher knows by how they set the class up. If they tell you to do drills or whatever, sometimes you get the feeling that they either know it or they don’t. if they don’t that is when I always ask questions (laughs)
Brendan: Yeah, but at the end of the day they have to follow a curriculum so you pretty much get the same thing that you would in a male PE teacher’s class…it might be just a bit more structured.

Nigel: Yeah but it depends on who’s in your class also...everyone has their own games that they like, some people prefer soccer because they play soccer outside of school and others prefer cricket or tennis...but I reckon she just does games that only certain people in the class may like...If you get a choice of what you want to do for the lesson, some loud people just shout out “cricket” even though everyone is probably shouting other things as well and so she would decide to play cricket. There are other people that aren’t good at cricket and don’t enjoy it and they just get completely smashed by people who do play it and so they don’t enjoy it much (f.g. int. 04/09/07).

In the above conversation that asked the boys to consider what advice they may give to two Year 8 students who were about to start a semester of PE with a female teacher it was interesting to note that the general perception was that the fictional characters should not be overly apprehensive and that they should ‘give her a chance’. What is conveyed through the accounts of Matt and Dale is that even though, in the confines of the group setting, they appear to support Kyle’s sentiments, the language they employ raises questions about whether they actually buy into this rhetoric or not for as Dale indicates, “it’s just a teacher at the end of the day, you’ll get another one next year”.

7.1.3 Examining student experiences through ‘Pedagogy as text’

In what Wright (2000b) describes as a somewhat controversial move, Gore’s work (1990, 1995, 1998) has provided an empirical approach to examine the practices of power in pedagogy through the development of eight coding categories of disciplinary power (see Chapter 5) that were drawn from her reading of Foucault’s Discipline and Punish (Wright, 2000b). In subsequent work, Wright sought to extend this methodology to “focus on linguistic realisations of the categories identified through close analysis in a spoken context” (2000b, p. 155) in her examination of a girls’ gymnastic lesson. Here, I seek to draw on elements of these
contributions to present two pedagogical accounts to illustrate practices of power in an all-boys’ PE context. Like Gore (1990), the two pedagogical accounts presented below have been selected to represent my concerns with issues of what is constructed as valued and legitimate knowledge in PE, and with issues of power relations as they act to shape student experiences. After Gore, I caution that these issues have been separated out for the purpose of analysis only and acknowledge their dialectical relationship forged in socio-political contexts. For as Fiske argues, “every text and every reading has a social and therefore political dimension, which is to be found partly in the structure of the text itself and partly in the relation of the reading subject to that text” (1987, p. 258 cited in Gore, 1990, p. 108).

### Golf at the Driving Range – “It definitely wasn’t a ‘hole in one’ lesson”

In a video-stimulated interview, Rachel comments on some footage that captured a Year 8 PE lesson at the golf driving range. She states, “I really question myself too much I think, do you know what happened in the golf lesson after you left, well it was terrible. Someone got hit and I really want to see on the video what I said about safety because I know I pushed this quite a bit...”. The lesson commenced upon arrival at the Golf Driving Range where students clambered over each other to get off the bus and grab one of the golf clubs from the neatly arranged pile. Amidst this commotion, Rachel collected the cones from her equipment bag and started placing them on ground in a semi-circle formation before using her whistle to gain student’s attention and call them into a group in what appeared to be the start of the formal instructional phase of the lesson.

Rachel indicated that students were to stand in pairs behind the cones, leaving at least two club’s length distance between the student at the cone and where the partner should stand. Rachel comments to me, “the plan was to have some sort of swinging practice initially without using golf balls, I think the number one focus for me was definitely safety. I was thinking about it the whole time, I’m not a golf expert and my major concern was keeping an eye out for problems. It wasn’t about how many slogs of the ball they could get, it really was a focus on their technique I suppose, not everyone is a golfer and I thought having the cones set out would be good because it was more organised and they can stand exactly where they are supposed to stand to practice”. During Rachel’s instructions on how to grip the club and adopt the correct stance, three students picked up their cones and starting shouting into them like a megaphone to the person next to them whilst four others who were waiting in line behind their partner decided to sit or sprawl about on the ground. Whilst watching the footage, Rachel comments, “These are all the things that I have to encounter and sometimes I think am I the only person who has to deal with this sort of behaviour? I guess I have just come in with expectations that I want them all to be standing and looking half interested, sometimes I feel like my expectations are too high and I am not dishing out enough consequences because it still happens every class...”. Rachel blows her whistle and tells all students with clubs to put them on the ground. She explains, “...they just can’t be trusted to hang onto their club, they have to be flicking grass or each other, I mean, for me, I know people are listening when I have their eye contact. Students say, “I can still listen Miss, I am sitting here and listening” but I don’t think so, I mean look at this boy, I had to tell him ten times to put the club on the ground...I felt like it wasn’t a good lesson, it definitely wasn’t a hole in one that was for sure!”.
In asking Rachel what she considered might have improved this lesson, she laughs and comments, “Have the golf pro take it...I think I had some good ideas with the formation of the cones to give them a particular spot to practice in, but maybe I needed some more demonstrations or perhaps could have had a student doing the demos, maybe I could have used the space a bit better, had them in lines instead of a semi-circle...when they are kicking things around and not standing still it annoys me, how else can you interpret that...they just aren’t interested or listening”. I asked Rachel to explain what type of information she was trying convey during this instructional phase and she indicates, “well they need some technical knowledge, I mean it is probably obvious to some of them but to many others who don’t know much about golf then I think they need to know...I think you need to teach assuming nothing because you need to cater for everyone but I am mindful that you need to challenge students who do have some knowledge, that’s the thing about teaching, you are constantly challenged to make sure you are catering for different learners”.

Following what she considered to be an unsuccessful instructional phase, Rachel indicates to the boys that they can move over to the driving range but they need to stay in their pairs and ensure they stand well back from the student practising. She reiterates that once they have hit their ball they are to swap over for their partner to have a go and under no circumstances are they to go onto the range to pick up their ball until they are given instructions to do so. Despite this, after one hit, one boy runs directly after his ball and Rachel blows her whistle and yells at this student to get back. She runs her fingers through her hair clearly exasperated and then just allows students to go back to their practising and their bantering between each other about the success, or otherwise, of their performance. Craig, a student who appeared to be struggling to make contact with the ball, commented in a follow up interview, “Really it was a crap lesson, I didn’t really learn anything new, I knew I couldn’t play golf beforehand and now I know for sure, it’s hard to concentrate when you have ten other boys chanting that you’re going to miss it”.

Recognising that some members of the group had become quite unruly and were basically using this practice time as an opportunity to pick on the failings of other students like Craig, Rachel stopped the class to reiterate some of the key technique points when driving the ball. She commented on stance variations for the type of shot and the position of the elbows throughout the swing, reinforcing the importance of a hip-to-shoulder rotation through the swing. Matt comments, “We know all this Miss, show us your swing...how far can you drive the ball?”

Watching this interaction on the video, Rachel comments, “I guess I could have just ignored that but I thought it was important that they at least saw me trying...my palms were really sweaty, I was thinking, great I am going to tee this off and I’ll probably miss it, but I thought, “no, I have to do this, they’re coaxing me into it”. By this time most of the boys had gathered behind Rachel and were clapping and shouting, “Come on Miss, hit a hole in one”. When I asked her how she felt at this stage, Rachel comments, “I didn’t feel intimidated, it didn’t worry me if I didn’t hit it but I thought look, this is a bit of fun and I’ve generally got a good rapport with them, I guess when they are talking like that it is a bit of a positive, I’m not sure what do you think? I don’t think my hit was that good though, I mean all those technique things I pointed out, did I even do them?”

In her reflections of reading scenarios as pedagogical texts, Gore argues that if we move beyond the preferred reading of the text it is possible to “point to a range of possible readings which can be characterized as extending from acceptance to opposition. One’s reading of the scenario will depend on one’s subjectivity/subjectivities” (1990, p. 109). For example, one reading of the above
scenario may illicit empathy for Rachel’s ideological emphasis on technical skill and practice opportunities for students in an environment where students did not seem particularly responsive. Yet alternatively, an oppositional approach may be more interested in “posing a critique to those approaches” (Gore, 1990, p. 110) with a view to examining how taken-for-granted truths about ‘good’ pedagogy can result in less than desirable student and teacher experiences. In this ‘pedagogy as text’ scenario, Rachel’s concern with constructing herself as an ‘expert’ with sound technical advice is foregrounded. As she laments, she did not consider it to be a particularly effective lesson and her key suggestion for improvement (whilst perhaps offered in jest) would be to have a professional golfer take it, signalling tension between her perceived capacity to deliver on her notion of a ‘professional’ here. Similar to Gore’s (1990) observations, this lesson did not encourage students to ask questions about the process of the lesson or what types of knowledge were privileged or which type of learners benefited from the way the lesson was structured, in fact, as Gore points out, “the de facto effect of these omissions is the privileging of technical knowledge” (1990, p. 111) and this has particular implications for how students experienced the lesson.

In this account there were a number of links that could be drawn between the verbal and non-verbal language of both teacher and students and some of the power techniques as described by Gore’s coding categories that have implications for the types of knowledge (and subjectivities) valued in this context. For example, the initial distribution of bodies in space as marked out by the cones behind which students were to stand, a practice not uncommon in PE lessons, can “contribute to the functioning of disciplinary power” (Gore, 1998, p. 240). Yet in this scenario, the actions of some students to use the cones as megaphones or to sprawl out on the grass most certainly conveyed a degree of resistance to Rachel’s instructional phase. As Rachel describes, these responses had a somewhat regulative effect on her practice in that she stops the class and asks all students to put their clubs on the ground as a somewhat totalising approach, an action that attempts to regain some of the disciplinary power that was negated by the student’s responses.

Through her reflections it becomes obvious that a degree of classification underpins some of Rachel’s practice in that she has designed her lesson around ‘assuming nothing’ about student’s skill level. She indicates that whilst she acknowledges a
need to cater for different learners, her focus inherently appears to be on those learners with relatively little experience and it is possible that some of the resistance she experienced in the lesson could have been exerted by students who were not challenged in this context. Despite her constant surveillance of student behaviour, and attempts to regulate this through the implementation of rules such as waiting for a central command before heading out onto the driving range to collect their golf balls, the above scenario depicts either a conscious or unconscious student response to this regulative attempt where he attempts to collect his ball with little to no regard for his own safety. Perhaps most compelling, was Rachel’s normalising of this in that, although she did reprimand this student, her clearly exasperated reaction that resulted in students just resuming their activity suggests her acceptance of this as a ‘normal’ practice in boys’ PE. As Gore (1998) comments, “educating is about the teaching of norms – norms of behaviour, of attitudes and of knowledge …. the productiveness of power would seem to be a fundamental precept of pedagogical endeavour” (p. 237).

For Craig, who has classified himself as not particularly competent in this activity, it appears the unintended outcome of Rachel’s pedagogical practice has been to further reinforce his perceptions. In fact, by the very nature of the way the lesson was structured, Craig describes the oppressive effects of surveillance wherein his ability to ‘practice’ and potentially improve his technique is significantly regulated by ‘ten other boys chanting that you’re going to miss it’. Although not explicit above, it is very likely that the impact of these operative power relations for Craig may lead to self-exclusion from not only this activity in the future, but other physical activities given he felt he didn’t really learn anything new, and perhaps more alarming, that this experience reinforced his self-classification.

Perhaps the most explicit example of the regulative effects of power relations was Rachel’s demonstration of a ‘drive’. Clearly in response to her student’s gaze (surveillance), Rachel felt that she needed to demonstrate a degree of technical ability herself to gain their respect. It is interesting to note, that she normalises this situation with comments such as ‘I didn’t feel intimidated’ and that ‘I guess when they are talking like that it is a bit of a positive’, although it should be acknowledged that she definitely questions herself as evidenced through the video-stimulated session with questions such as ‘what do you think?’ and ‘I mean all those technique
things I pointed out, did I even do them?’ In my oppositional reading of this scenario, I question how these experiences act to shape Rachel’s professional identity, and by extension, her pedagogical practices given the potential for this situation to pose a serious threat to her ideological image of the teacher as ‘technical expert’.

Diamond Cricket – Sebastian’s story

The lesson commenced with Rachel explaining that after students had completed their warm-up relay drills and practiced their bowling and batting skills in the nets they would spend the second half of the lesson playing ‘diamond cricket’. At the start of the lesson she suggested that this would most likely be a new game for most students, so she would require them to look at the whiteboard and listen to instructions about how the game was to work. There were quite a few groans from some students in the class, and comments such as “Can’t we just play the real game”; “Boring…”; “Can we sledge in this game?”; “Do we still use a real cricket ball”? Sebastian sat with his head in his hands and reluctantly looked up so that he could see what this game required of him. At the back of the group heading out to the oval, Sebastian carried the equipment bag for Miss Moore and grumbled under his breath “I don’t really like cricket”.

After overrunning the last cone when trying to pick up the tennis ball from the cone, Sebastian jogged slowly back to his team. He seemed aware that yet again, his relay team has finished last and that there were already students moaning “Can’t we just play the real game, this is crap”. Jimmy retorts in response to some of the student’s comments, “you are all just poofers and don’t like it ‘cause you lost”. Sensing it was time to move onto the next activity, Rachel asks all students to move over to the cricket nets. With students still in their four lines (teams from the warm up activity), Rachel stands in front of the group to give some instruction about the correct bowling technique. She asks, ‘How should you hold the cricket ball’? Brendan responds, “With your index finger and rude finger” and this results in lots of laughter from the group. Rachel proceeds to demonstrate the bowling action and Matt yells out, “Good follow-through Miss”. To assist students in considering where they should attempt to get the ball to bounce, Rachel distributes a hoop about two-thirds of the way down each pitch and encourages students to land the ball in the hoop during their practice. With one batter, a wicketkeeper, a bowler and a fielder in position on each ‘net’ Rachel indicates students should have six bowls and then swap positions. Dale is most agitated about the use of the hoops asking, “Miss what happens if the ball hits the hoop and bounces up in your nuts”? Rachel appears to overlook this question as she makes her way towards Sebastian’s group.

Sebastian bowls first in his group and after the fourth ball that does not hit the pitch, Paul yells at him, “Sebastian you’re shit, I swear, I need another bowler or I won’t get a bat at all”. As Rachel arrives, Paul comments, “Miss, we need to use real cricket balls, not these tennis balls, I haven’t even got a hit yet”. Rachel gives Sebastian a tip on how to use his non-bowling arm to take aim at where he needs to deliver the ball, and the following ball does land on the pitch. Paul, seeing his opportunity, takes a few steps down the pitch and smacks the ball back in Sebastian’s direction with exceptional force. Seeing it coming, Sebastian ducks and the ball flies past him. Craig, in the fielding position, shouts, “Jesus [sic] Sebastian, if you’re not going to stop it, let someone know, you can go and get it now”. Sebastian, taking his time, sets off to retrieve the ball whilst the remaining group members complain about the activity, and Sebastian, to Rachel.
In the above account there is much evidence of the workings of power to position some individuals as privileged and others as marginalised within the context of this lesson. For example, in each of the activities described above, Sebastian (amongst others) appears to be under constant surveillance from his peers. Their responses to his lack of physical ability in particular activities exposed some of the regulative, classifying and exclusionary effects of these power relations, in that not only does
Sebastian considers himself not good at PE, but that his lack of ability actually excludes him from fostering positive relationships with his peers. During conversations following this lesson, it is not surprising to learn that Sebastian does not particularly like PE. He explains:

“I like to be involved in everything, even though I may not be good at that particular sport, I still will be involved and try my best...I do acting, dancing and singing outside of school but that doesn’t really help here because it doesn’t really qualify as a sport...you know it is more cultural...I did try out for the school netball team but I didn’t get picked...I mean, I like playing the games in PE, not really the skills ‘cos they’re kind of boring, but I like warm-ups and team games more than individual games...I’m not the best at PE in my class and I just find that I can be better with people than by myself, I’m more of a group person, I prefer cricket than football, just the roughness of football, I just don’t think it is fun...diamond cricket was sort of boring” (int. Sebastian, 20/11/07).

Implicit in his account, Sebastian laments he is not a particularly skilled sportsman and it appears that he positions sport as the antithesis to cultural activities such as acting, dancing and singing (Mooney & Hickey, 2011). Interestingly, his interschool sport of choice was ‘netball’ which has been strongly linked with feminine identities (Russell, 2007). These activities, characterised by aesthetics, creativity and self-discipline are vastly different from the attributes of stoicism, athleticism, competitiveness and aggressiveness that permeate sports such as football (in its various codes) (Messner & Sabo, 1990). In the case of students like Sebastian, who appear to characterise what Connell (1995) terms ‘marginalised’ or ‘subordinated’ masculinities, pedagogical practices in PE that privilege ability levels can have some drastic outcomes with respect to student experiences.

When I asked Sebastian how he classified himself in terms of physical ability, he indicated that he was “down the lower end, not really that good at it”. In discussions about how he felt students in his class responded to him in PE, he comments:

“Oh well, they like encourage me to just try a bit harder and all that kind of thing...sometimes they’re like “Come on Sebastian” or “You’re not a girl” or “something like that”. Maybe those are the days where I’m just tired and
I can’t be bothered doing PE ‘cos I’ve had a late night or I’ve had a bad day…” (int. Sebastian, 20/11/07).

Perhaps more blatantly, Nigel and Matt provide additional insights into the ‘encouragement’ that Sebastian receives from his peers.

“Sebastian...yeah he says he enjoys sport but he is no good at it...no-one wants to be in his team basically because he’s so bad...like no matter what he plays he messes it all up so he would be at the bottom of the spectrum because although he may be able to pass it around to other people, well really he cannot even do that because he would be intercepted...He gets bagged every PE lesson...the lads really put him down publicly...everyone thinks he is just a nerd” (int. Nigel, 23/11/07).

“It’s more just joking around but if a good person is joking around with someone who is not as good, like Sebastian, it almost seems like they’re bullying to a point, and they’re probably not, but it comes across that way sort of...Cricket’s a good one though because of sledging...in cricket you sledge, it’s just what you do when you’re behind the stumps...I was giving it to him” (int. Matt, 20/11/07).

Inherent above, it appears that despite school rules and regulations that prohibit bullying and promote positive social interactions amongst students, the PE classroom can potentially become a breeding ground for the normalisation of such interactions. In a video-stimulated session with Rachel, this incident is replayed and when prompted to explain how she went about planning this lesson, Rachel indicates:

“Well, I wanted to get away from just a traditional normal game of cricket, I mean the kids that play on the weekend absolutely annihilate those that don’t. So I had two choices, we could all do something different, like diamond cricket, or I would have to run two games and divide kids by ability levels...but I mean there are a lot of safety issues with that. Firstly, we would have to use a tennis ball and they wouldn’t really get much of a chance to practice their skills if they only bat and bowl once...I mean at least with diamond cricket you get a good go at it” (int. Rachel, 23/11/07).
Considering the above comment, the prevalence of both performance and participation discourses appear to underpin much of Rachel’s pedagogical intention. She alludes to being aware that a ‘traditional’ or ‘normal’ game of cricket privileges those able (dominant masculine identities) and her choice of words such as “annihilate” conjures images of negative interactions. Perhaps what the above scenario illustrates most is, as Tinning (2010) suggests “an example of the perhaps unintended pedagogical work that results from a particular individual’s encounter with a particular pedagogical strategy” (p. 47). Despite Rachel’s intention to provide learning opportunities for each student through the inclusion of a modified game, the result has perhaps been less than inclusive, especially for students such as Sebastian. As Tinning states, “sometimes the strategies are not productive of the desired outcomes – the pedagogical work, the effect of the experience, may not be congruent with the intentions of the teacher” (2010, p. 47).

7.2 Understanding female teacher’s subjectivities in an all-boys’ PE context

“Good teachers are reflective, I don’t mind if you muck things up as long as you’re learning and your first year is a learning year...I say to them, “I expect you’re going to be having problems but the question is are you solving problems, are you thinking about how to do it better next time?”” (int. Mr Grey, 23/11/07).

The above discussion has highlighted some of the tensions that may exist for female physical educators as they go about shaping their professional identities and subjectivities in the context of an all-boys’ school. As Mr Grey suggests, for any teacher new to the profession (or to the context of an all-boys’ school) there are likely to be challenges that they will face. Inherent in his comments is an expectation that through reflective practice and garnering an awareness of which approaches appear to work and which did not, teachers will be able to improve their practice. Yet, as others have argued elsewhere, awareness alone does not necessarily guarantee a translation into practice and this is particularly evident in the case of issues identified and taken up in the critical tradition (Hickey, 2001; Kirk, 2010b; Tinning, 2002). O’Connor and Macdonald (2002) suggest that:

the dialectical interplay of context and societal influences on personal identities offer a way of understanding how teachers who work in multiple
settings with multiple responsibilities negotiate their identities to achieve complementarity in their work in spite of tensions across settings (pp. 41-42).

Of the existing work that has considered PE teachers’ identities and subjectivities in the workplace (see for example Brown & Evans, 2004; Macdonald & Kirk, 1996; O’Connor & Macdonald, 2002), many have drawn on Bourdieu’s conceptual tools to explain durable norms and practices (Brown, 2005; Gorely, et al., 2003; Light & Kirk, 2000). As others point out, debate regarding theories of identity formation has traditionally involved the ways in which the subject is formed (known in poststructuralist terms as ‘subjectification’) and the “extent to which individuals have agency to shape their identities” (Sirna, Tinning, & Rossi, 2008, p. 72). After these authors, I acknowledge that there are multiple approaches to the examination of individual identity formation, and that for any one individual, agency can exist, yet it is often “constrained within societal conditions” (Sirna, et al., 2008, p. 73).

As O’Connor and Macdonald suggest, the notion that identities are created and maintained in context requires “the reflexive monitoring of action which occurs in light of new information, experience and knowledge (2002, p. 42) and this signposts that some degree of negotiation, both internally and with others, has been undertaken. In light of this, and as a point of difference to existing work, I find Foucault’s thinking around technologies of the self (1987, 1988a, 1988b) a particularly helpful framework to consider the negotiation processes undertaken to reconcile tensions and challenges that arose for Hannah and Rachel as the two female physical educators involved in this research.

Foucault suggested the technologies of the self should elicit “an exercise of self upon self by which one tries to work out, to transform one’s self and to attain a certain mode of being” (1988a, p. 2). Whilst much of Foucault’s early work maintained a focus on the analysis of power in society, he argued that a primary underpinning of his work was to focus on how individuals negotiate changing power relations (Foucault, 1988b). According to Markula (2003), “Foucault concentrated on the relationship of the self to power and truth – how the human being turns him – or herself into a subject” (p. 94). Further she asserts, “Foucault maintains that in every relationship all parties have a certain amount of freedom to engage in an active care of the self” (Markula, 2003, p. 101). Markula adds, “Foucault was primarily
interested in how people learn to problematize their identities by becoming more self-reflexive. Only critical self-reflection can result in a change of one’s condition” (2003, p. 101). To do this, Foucault (1992) considered that this process is dependent on the “modes of subjection” (p. 28), or “styles of self-constitution” (Pringle & Hickey, 2010, p. 122) which he arranged into four modes – the ethical substance, mode of subjection, ethical work and telos which, although discussed in Chapter 5, will be briefly revisited here.

According to Pringle and Hickey (2010) the ethical substance is “concerned with determining an aspect of the self (e.g., an aspect of one’s identity, set of behaviours or emotions) that needs to be problematised” (p. 122). Phrased differently, Markula and Pringle (2006) suggest that the ethical substance is concerned with asking, “which part of oneself should be subject to a work on the self” (p. 141). The mode of subjection refers to how an “individual reflects on one’s relationship to the code of conduct associated with the ethical substance, with particular respect to why he/she respects or disregards this code” (Pringle & Hickey, 2010, p. 122). In this sense it is important to establish one’s relationship to the specific rules that guide their actions, for as others suggest, the mode of subjection refers to the reasons one has for engaging in ethical work (Markula & Pringle, 2006).

Ethical work describes the work that individual’s do on themselves, “not only in order to bring one’s conduct into compliance with a given rule, but to attempt to transform oneself…” (Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 141). Foucault (1983b) observed that “no technique, no professional skill can be acquired without exercise” (p. 246), suggesting an awareness that one cannot change oneself without deliberate strategies or self-work. Put succinctly, Pringle and Hickey (2010) argue that “through critically reflecting on the mode of subjection, the individual can then determine strategies for performing ethical work or practices of the self to create new ways of performing and being” (p. 122, original emphasis). Finally, Markula and Pringle explain that there needs to be an overall goal for this ethical work, termed by Foucault as telos. They explain telos as referring to the “kind of being to which we aspire when we behave in a moral way” (2006, p. 142). Through this Foucauldian lens, I consider how Hannah, as the female Head of Department (HPE) and Rachel, as a Year 8 PE teacher, negotiated tensions that arose when aspects of their professional identity did not necessarily align with the masculine gendered
hegemony of boys’ PE and sport and the wider school context. It is important to note that given the scope of this thesis, the representation of all examples of problematisation and self-work undertaken is not practical here, rather key moments have been selected as indicative of the ways in which Hannah and Rachel have engaged with *technologies of the self* to mediate and negotiate their way through the tensions they encountered.

### 7.2.1 Hannah: Shaping a professional identity within the HPE Department

In conversations with Hannah about how she went about establishing herself as the Head of Department (HPE) it was evident that she recognised that a degree of self-work was required to mediate this aspect of her professional self in the context of an all-boys’ PE department. Interestingly, however, her initial reflections appeared to focus more on the challenges associated with taking on a leadership role in a context that she had been absent from for a period of time, rather than an explicit concern with leading a predominantly ‘masculine’ curriculum area. She explains:

> “I had been away from the school for four years and then came back as the Head of HPE so I think my initial challenge was going to be that the school has probably changed in four years and from day one I was going to have to be up to speed with these changes if was going to be a successful leader…I mean the department had grown so big” (int. Hannah, 24/07/07).

In subsequent conversations it became evident that an element of *problematisation* was undertaken by Hannah as she contemplated what accepting a leadership role within this department might require. Inherent in her comments is an acknowledgement of the role that gender might play in this process and as Webb and Macdonald (2007b) comment, “one particular characteristic of leadership within physical education currently is that it is predominantly male” (p. 279). Given that her predecessor had also been female, Hannah signals both the positive implications of this but perhaps also the constraining aspects in terms of the expectations about how a female Head of Department needed to conduct herself to be considered ‘successful’ in this role.
“When I first arrived at the school I was the second female PE teacher, I think having had a previous physical educator here for 12 to 18 months before I arrived really made the way and broke down some of the barriers for me. She also went on to be the first female Head of Department and she kind of broke down some barriers there as well. She really did some of the difficult work and paved the way for me to step into the role, I kind of think if she hadn’t done that it would have made it a lot harder for me” (int. Hannah, 24/07/07).

“The previous female Head was fantastic in this role, her organisation, control and personality was perfect and when I came back to the school I was the only new PE teacher so the other 20 teachers were quite established. I remember thinking that this was going to be a bit tricky, not only had they all worked under Georgia who had a great sense of humour and loved all that blokey humour, she was as rude and as crude as they come at times, but fantastic all the same, the guys probably loved her for it! It was more that I was the only one new to the department and I was going to be leading it…I would like to think that perhaps there are some similarities between us so I was thinking that if they thought she did such a good job why wouldn’t I be the same…By the same token however, they still tested me out and still don’t necessarily make life easy for me” (int. Hannah, 13/11/07).

It is interesting to note that in considering the ethical substance, or the part of oneself that should be subject to work on the self, most evident in Hannah’s contemplation about what is required (albeit perceived) to be a ‘successful’ Head of Department was a focus on organisation, control and personality. As conveyed by Hannah above, these attributes were considered key strengths of her predecessor and perhaps signposts Hannah’s telos, or the kind of professional that she aspired to be in this leadership role. In considering how these ideas have been constructed, Mr Wood’s observations perhaps highlight the discursive-power relations that act to shape these perceptions. He comments:

“Georgia was incredibly competent and skilled socially, a very popular person on staff and hard-working and organised. She was really good at sort of massaging people so that things work, I couldn’t imagine that there would have been any beef at all. Really I don’t think anybody would have any
issues that are gender-based with those people in those positions, I don’t think it even caused a ripple...maybe some of the older ones probably looked sideways when women first went into that department, but I couldn’t see that once we had females teaching there, that putting one of them into leadership would make any difference to anyone” (int. Mr Wood, 9/11/07).

Inherent in some of Hannah’s comments were examples of her mode of subjection, or examples of self-reflection in relation to the codes of conduct she considers integral to this professional role. Interestingly, despite her earlier observations that initial challenges were more related to reacquainting herself with the school context after an absence, further probing revealed not only the workings of dominant gendered discourses to position her as ‘other’ in this space, but also the tensions she experienced as a result of these discourse-power relations. She describes:

“Well I remember when I first started a really big challenge was going to be trying to be a Head of Department to some of the older male teachers who have been here for a while ... Some of the older ones really try and test me out ... they will kind of set me up a bit and I think they want me to prove myself. In a Department of over 20 with only four females and most of them part-time, there are probably half that are very cruisy PE teachers and generally happy to be told what to do and to have things organised for them and are probably generally quite grateful for that. Then you have the other half that don’t necessarily like being told what to do and probably want to think that they know best and therefore will challenge and question and test me out...” (int. Hannah, 24/07/07).

Further, she comments:

“I think one of the oldest Department members is who I have the most problems with in terms of managing him... I think it is his personality, he has been here for 30 years and was a student here also so he has some pretty set ideas and that can be difficult. I don’t think it is gender specific, he would probably think girls are more organised and reliable and they can get things done ... but that doesn’t stop him being difficult and really challenging me at times” (int. Hannah, 24/07/07).
In particular, Hannah describes some of the ethical work she had to undertake in dealing with some of her older male colleagues. She explains:

“I had lots of work to do initially, well it is still something I have to work on now and be conscious of as there are a couple of older guys in the Department that I have to be really careful in how I deal with them. For example, there is one that is really quite aggressive so you have to make sure that any dealings with him are cool and calm, you know pick your timing, think about your words, but also to kind of show that well any shortcomings or issues are dealt with in a really careful way. I have to first of all let him know that he is liked and appreciated and understood and listened to and that he is considered a valued member of our Department as the longest standing member ... If there was something that needed to be changed or implemented it is important to deal with it in a sensitive kind of way...he wasn’t going to take direction from someone who he didn’t like or feel didn’t like him...” (int. Hannah, 13/11/07).

In commenting on her experiences when taking on the DP role, Mrs White also indicates some of the difficulties associated with dealing with particular members of staff. She comments:

“I think the staff were worse in terms of recognising me as an authority figure, particularly some of the more established staff members. They still looked for that traditional male support if they had a difficult student, you know to send him to the Deputy to ball him out and fix him up. I think our approach to discipline has changed a lot, we’ve moved much more towards restorative practices, that was one of my touches here. It really took me three or four years to win the confidence of the majority of the staff....you know, for them to think, she’s okay and does follow through and knows what she’s doing ... I just thought I’d made a huge mistake and so did Mr Grey, they just saw me as ineffective. I mean the Year 7 Coordinator was sort of like a sergeant major from the first world war, I said to the Principal, ‘Either he goes or I’m going because Year 7 should not be run like boot camp’. He was one of the people who told the Principal he’d made a mistake – there was a perception that I just couldn’t cut it with discipline because I wanted to talk
to the students, I got into a lot of trouble with people for having that approach for a while” (int. Mrs White, 13/11/07).

In their work that examined female leadership in PE, Webb and Macdonald (2007) outline exclusionary effects experienced by their participants as a result of the power techniques employed by other staff members. They explain that for their female participants new to the school and leadership positions, they relied on “resident male teachers to help them with understanding procedures” (p. 287). Of concern, they discuss that for one participant in particular she was “excluded from easy access to vital knowledge about the routines of the department that hindered her growth as a leader and added to her overall unhappy experience in the acting department head position” (p. 287). As examples of ethical work that Hannah employed in her role as Head of Department, the below account signals some of the deliberate strategies she implemented in this leadership role.

“Running department meetings is like running a lesson with the boys a little bit...when they are in mass they can be difficult...phys. edders by nature perhaps back themselves, they love to hear the sound of their own voice. In meetings I had to try and make it not all about having a whinge and putting some things in place to control them so that the time was used productively and this was a real challenge I think...After one really bad meeting I kind of reflected on it and realised that people were just wanting to use department time as a forum to be heard or have a whinge regardless of if the issue was important to them. So I decided that decisions over email were a much better way to go rather than bring it up in a meeting because people would only reply if they actually cared and this means we could use department time for professional development or reports or something useful. I just felt that the dominant males took over so whether that was a strategy employed because of my inability to coordinate the department or not, I’m not sure... (int. Hannah, 13/11/07).

Perhaps what becomes apparent in Hannah’s comments is a somewhat ‘normalising’ of the power that particular ‘dominant males’ hold within the PE department. Rather than directly challenging them, Hannah describes alternate and arguably less confronting strategies to allow her to perform aspects of her leadership role, such as a
move to make decisions via email correspondence rather than in department meeting forums.

When prompted a little further to recall some of the events of her first year of co-ordination, Hannah discussed some of the masculine practices that permeated the culture of a PE Department. As found in previous studies of HPE Departments, “joking, taunting and teasing were methods of interacting within the department office” (Rossi, et al., 2008, p. 1037).

“I asked one of the male PE staff to help organise our end of year staff trip, and because we have a little bit more time on our hands at that time of year, James sent through a few emails to the team about the upcoming trip. He emailed this picture of a drunk girl in a G-string on a table with a whole gang of boys around with some text that suggested the girl was me, something like ‘Here’s Hannah’…I mean that is fine, that is the culture and I’m not the slightest bit offended by that. When he didn’t get a response as I was off campus for the day, he probably thought ‘I haven’t got a reaction’ so he sent another one with a drunk girl passed out on the toilet floor, not that I would do that mind you…” (int. Hannah, 13/11/07).

In their study of pre-service teacher’s negotiation of the PE faculty whilst on practicum, students reported “being teased as well as witnessing “rude” and “vulgar” comments and ‘jokes’ aimed particularly at women … [by] male physical education teachers” (Rossi, et al., 2008, p. 1037, original emphasis). In their work, Rossi and colleagues explain that these practices were generally interpreted as harmless, “with no suggestion that any offense was intended or taken” (p. 1037) and although there were some instances when women HPE teachers attempted to diffuse or put a stop to these comments, often their attempts went unnoticed by their male colleagues.

In the above account, it appears that the ethical work that has shaped Hannah’s professional identity has focussed on normalising rather than challenging some of the “reproduced systemic inequalities in gender relations” (Rossi, et al., 2008, p. 1037).

“Even knowing that some people could look at that picture and say that it is degrading women, well it probably is, but it is just humour and fun and isn’t probably directed in that way…Whether sport has done that to you anyway, I
mean, when I was at Uni I was a footy trainer...to me if you have been in a senior club footy change-room doing rub-downs having men walking around half-naked or fully-naked you know...things might be a bit rude and crude when you get to work but...I think you just become desensitised...” (int. Hannah, 13/11/07).

Further, Hannah explains that for the female PE teachers within her department there appears to be an acceptance of a ‘boys’ club’ culture and that rather than problematise aspects of this, a degree of ‘giving over’ to this culture occurs. She comments:

“The girls in this department are pretty happy to go along with that...I mean I’m totally not phased about that sort of stuff. I definitely think that you need a good sense of humour and not a thin skin that takes things personally...A lot of people come here as graduates and it can be like an extension of the Uni culture – I think that PE degrees attract certain types of students and this is reinforced at Uni and then it just follows on in the school setting...so you kind of expect it a bit in a boys’ school I think. I don’t think I am sensitive at all but I don’t think I’m overly harsh or thick-skinned either” (int. Hannah, 13/11/07).

In contrast, previous research reports the potential exclusionary powers circulating around the boys’ club culture for not only those in the wider school context but also for those in PE departments (Webb & Macdonald, 2007a, 2007b). In attempting to ascertain the reasons that underpin this conciliatory approach to accept these cultural practices as given and taken-for-granted, Hannah’s comments regarding one of the newly appointed part-time female staff members provides an insight into her telos or notions of the kind of professional female PE teachers should aspire to be. Interestingly, these appear to be based upon the masculine standards permeating this curriculum area.

“I know that she is only a graduate even though she is nearly 30 years old but she does really struggle with classroom management and this lack of competence, well from a department perspective sometimes I think that it tars a female PE teacher’s good name. I mean we have 17 male teachers here and they are all good, well most of them, and obviously females can do the job just as well but it is a shame that as soon as you have a female PE
teacher that is not performing at a standard then it does become a bit about their gender, not just their personality. If you had a science teacher that wasn’t good it wouldn’t be a gender issue…I think that a judgement can be made in a department like PE where gender can be a bit more of a defining feature, I am conscious of upholding the female’s reputation and would hate the reputation of female PE teachers to be affected…” (int. Hannah, 13/11/07).

7.2.2 Rachel – Shaping a professional identity within the PE classroom

Although Rachel had taught previously in co-educational PE settings, she describes her initial experiences of boys’ PE as being, “just like a first year teacher all over again”. Rachel explains that there are some inherent challenges for a female PE teacher that relate to establishing yourself within a culture where traditional male team sports, and physical capital and presence, are valued by not only colleagues within the HPE faculty, but by students also.

“I definitely notice a difference between co-ed and all-boys’ settings. In co-ed they respond better to modified games, the challenge in the all-boy setting is that everyone knows how to play the game already, or so they tell you, it is all about winning and competition. In a co-ed PE class you’re not confronted with kids complaining about doing activities and skills before playing a game as much as you are here…It does make me feel that they think I don’t know enough about some of the games, I guess that they should give things a go a bit more and maybe that they are not showing as much respect as what they should…I mean some of the male PE teachers who just walk in and the kids give them automatic respect and attention, probably just because they play footy or cricket outside of here or they look sporty and can slam-dunk a basketball does that really mean they are a good teacher? The kids seem to think so…” (int. Rachel, 12/12/07).

Further, she comments:

“Well most of the male PE teachers, you know most of them have played cricket, so I think they have automatic respect from the kids…I think if I can just be good at the management stuff and know my content then it will be
Ok...I mean I try to introduce new games, but the kids just hate it, and I say “well we’re going to keep playing it until you do it properly”...Because if we just played the main game, like they do in other PE classes, then they won’t learn anything” (int. Rachel, 23/11/07).

In conversations with Rachel it became apparent that although she “loved the energy” of an all-boys’ PE classroom and the physical challenge of “keeping up with the boys”, there were aspects of her professional identity she was struggling with. Specifically she problematised aspects of her classroom management procedures when compared to her male colleagues.

“I guess it is just the female way, I am more about developing relationships...but because I am not as ‘authoritarian’ as some of the male PE teachers it is really impacting on my ability to develop effective classroom management and to be a good teacher here...I mean you obviously have to make your presence known as a teacher...it’s important to build a rapport, for females anyway, you have to be very planned and organised...” (int. Rachel, 29/06/07).

Through our conversations it became apparent that for Rachel, the aspect of her professional identity that she perceived required the most self-work (her ethical substance) was her classroom management procedures.

“I think consistency has probably been my problem, it’s not a massive problem but it is something that I notice. If I work on this then I can develop better management in the classroom, like the male PE teachers...this will make me a better teacher...I do compare myself to other teachers which is probably not a good thing because I am a bit different...I would probably look at how Tom can control his class really well, because he is male and look how tall he is...I talk to lots of the other female teachers as well and try and use their strategies...” (int. Rachel, 11/09/07).

Evident in Rachel’s account above are obvious sources of tension as she goes about her daily professional work. As Foucault (1983b) reminds us, ethical work, or self-work that seeks to mediate particular tensions, requires deliberate strategies and practice. For Rachel, there is evidence of self-work being performed and interestingly she appears to acknowledge that this self-work takes time. She claims:
“I’ve tried using a stopwatch, you know timing how much time students waste and then taking it off their lunchtime...little things I guess like if you are doing the same thing all the time you can get a bit stale I think so I also think it does take time to establish yourself in a school...you’ve got to have time to make the changes in your practice, and believe me, for a female I think there are lots of them I need to make...” (int. Rachel, 11/09/07).

In particular, she reflects upon some specific incidents from the golf lesson described earlier in this chapter to reiterate this point. She comments:

“The day that you videoed the golf lesson, that was just, well I felt like I was just telling them off the whole time, really nagging and it feels like you are really just not competent at your job. I guess on reflection, they were all about wanting to just have a hit but I was more about safety and well I probably should have just taken them straight onto the driving range and let them have a bit of a go with a ball and then try to discuss some technique things. In that lesson I was really authoritarian and well to be honest, you get a little bit worn down by having to tell them off constantly before they will listen. I think perhaps I could have been a bit more democratic in that lesson, you know in terms of letting them have a bit of input, if I had of given them a bit more freedom initially maybe they would have been a bit more co-operative” (int. Rachel, 12/12/07).

As further evidence of the ethical self-work undertaken, Rachel explains:

“I think if I was teaching that golf lesson again, it would probably be important to just talk to them at the start about what their experience with golf is, you know how much have they played previously. Then you could sort of start by having a bit of a hit and then focus more on technique and skills. I think changing your focus to suit the group, rather than just trying to make it a skill-based activity would have worked better...I should have taken that into consideration more...I mean I noticed the same thing when teaching cricket. In one lesson I was going through the basic fielding positions and they were sort of, “Miss, we know all this...that’s fine leg, third leg...”, I mean I knew the basic ones but I didn’t know every single one so I guess I was a bit surprised when they did. I could have thought about maybe asking them, “Can you tell me the Australian who plays in the fielding position of square..."
"leg?" or something like that. I mean it was really a waste of time, particularly when some of them yell out, “we play this every weekend Miss, we know these positions, we know where square leg is”... You just feel like an idiot...” (int. Rachel, 12/12/07).

Although Rachel’s *telos* in relation to being an effective PE teacher is quite clearly framed and shaped within masculine hegemonic discourses that underpin boys’ PE, what becomes apparent through further accounts is a somewhat rejection of this dominant practice. Through her critical reflection and ethical self-work, she appears to have negotiated tensions through an acceptance that ‘over time’ she will establish herself as an effective practitioner. She explains:

“I’ve spent lots of time reflecting on how best to be a PE teacher in this school...and whilst all that control stuff seems to work for some of the male PE teachers, and some of the other females too, it just isn’t me or how I want to be as a teacher...Too bad if the only way you are considered a good teacher here is by how much control you have over the class...I think it is more about developing good relationships with the students...by talking to other colleagues I can get a sort of idea of where I am at, you know if what I am doing is satisfactory or not, I mean we are supposed to be teaching them to become good men and to go off into the world and be educated socially, physically, mentally...I am quite critical of myself, you know if everyone doesn’t get a bat or if everyone doesn’t get to do something evenly and fairly then it isn’t a good lesson, so that’s my focus now...” (int. Rachel, 12/12/07).

### 7.3 Reflective notes

Following on from the previous data chapter, this discussion has continued to examine the links between power, pedagogy and professional identities in the context of an all-boys’ school. In particular, this chapter has sought to identify how multi-directional workings of power shape PE experiences for both teachers and students, and more specifically, the impact these have on the (re) construction of gendered subjectivities in this context. Further, this discussion has aimed to enhance understandings of how female PE teachers make sense of these experiences and to reveal the particular strategies they employ to negotiate and mediate aspects of their
professional identity in contexts where gender differences are amplified. Uniquely, much of the theorising around how professional identities and pedagogical practices are shaped in context draws on Foucault’s *technologies of the self* to analyse key moments, as shared by the participants, to identify the self-work that was undertaken to reconcile particular tensions that arose in their day-to-day interactions in an all-boys’ setting.

Initial discussions acknowledged the multi-directional workings of power as they are taken up, exercised and experienced at the micro-political level of the PE classroom. Through the application of Gore’s (1990) concept of ‘pedagogy as text’ to focus on the processes of teaching and the factors that permeate the broader political context in which they are situated, it was possible to examine the ways in which pedagogy is received and experienced by students, and as Gore intimates, this becomes a struggle or negotiation over meaning. Drawing specifically on Foucault’s theorising of surveillance as a technique of power (1977, 1991), it is possible to reveal “metanarratives created by the interplay of power/knowledge through discourses and social practices” (Azzarito, 2009, p. 20) that act to legitimate particular approaches to pedagogical practice and to glean some understanding of the ways in which various students experience and respond to these approaches. Whilst it is acknowledged that there are numerous *techniques of power* that operate at the PE classroom level (Gore, 1998; Wright, 2000b) and departmental level (Webb, 2001; Webb & Macdonald, 2007b), Webb and colleagues argue that “Foucault considered surveillance to be central to the practice of teaching” (Webb, et al., 2004, p. 210), hence its focus in this discussion.

Presented above are explicit examples of the multi-directional power relations that directly shape not only teachers approaches to pedagogy, but also, student experiences of such approaches. The data pointed to many examples of those in authority surveiling subordinates as in the case of Mr Wood (the DP) observing the practices of teachers, Hannah as Head of Department (HPE) surveiling teachers within her department and teachers surveilling students in classroom interactions. In each of the examples discussed, the overall impact of this surveillance appeared to be regulatory in nature. For example, Mr Wood’s presence appeared to directly influence Rachel’s practice, for as she states, “I didn’t want him to think I was useless”. As a previous PE teacher, Mr Wood commented that “Occasionally I am
in the gym ... and I’d pick up if it sounded off the mark” which suggests that this surveillance does not always occur as the result of a conscious, deliberate effort, but rather through incidental interactions. Interestingly, Mr Wood’s comments intimate that he is more attuned to noticing practices that differ from the ‘status quo’ (or are ‘off the mark’) suggesting entrenched beliefs about what is considered ‘appropriate’ pedagogy in these settings are rarely questioned. Rather, pedagogical approaches that appear ‘different’ become glaringly obvious and somewhat scrutinised.

Further, data demonstrated the regulative effects of ‘bottom up’ power relations where dominant student identities directly impacted on the types of pedagogical approaches Rachel adopted within her classroom. In Rachel’s account on her efforts to introduce ‘Ultimate Frisbee’ as a non-mainstream activity, particular students (the ‘jocks’) demonstrated extreme resistance to the point that Rachel abandoned the activity. Similar findings have been reported elsewhere (Parker, 1996; Swain, 2006), and as Parker (1996) observed of his participants, dominant masculinities, “implicitly or explicitly manipulate the ordering and routine of class activity” (p. 147). This discussion also focussed on examples of lateral power relations, such as between colleagues, to demonstrate the regulatory effects of these relationships. The data highlighted numerous examples of peer surveillance amongst students, and specific examples of this were taken up and discussed in relation to the ways this impacted on student experiences of PE.

The analysis of students accounts of their ‘best PE lesson ever’ highlighted extreme diversity (even across one cohort of students) about what different students ‘value’ in the context of PE. Perhaps the most pervasive theme represented was that PE can be a less-than-pleasant experience for some students, suggesting that current practices are in need of re-working if they are to be more inclusive and sensitive to the needs of multiple versions of masculinity. It was interesting to note that many of the students did not believe the gender of the teacher to significantly impact on their experience of PE, rather they indicated that it is the ‘quality’ of the teacher that matters. Yet, an explicit reference to what constitutes a ‘quality’ teacher signposts a key silence in these conversations. Further, whilst these students intimate that the gender of the teacher is a ‘non-issue’, observations of classroom interactions perhaps suggest otherwise. Analyses of these pedagogical interactions reveal some of the deeply ingrained ideas held by participants about ‘legitimate’ knowledge and
practice in PE. Perhaps, most alarmingly, the discussion of both the golf and cricket lessons illustrate how taken-for-granted assumptions and truths about ‘good’ pedagogy can result in less than desirable experiences for both students and their teacher.

Following on from the analysis of these pedagogical accounts was a consideration of how these interactions, together with a consideration of the ‘context’ in which they occurred, acted to shape the professional subjectivities and identities of the female PE teachers. Rachel’s experiences of boys’ PE prompted her to question her ability to project the ideological image of ‘PE teacher as technical expert’ which was particularly evident in discussions following the golf lesson described above. This was despite an apparent awareness that through privileging technical skill and performance, certain types of learners were somewhat advantaged whilst for other, less skilled participants, it could lead to quite demoralising experiences.

The employment of Foucault’s ‘technologies of the self’ provided an interesting lens through which to consider the negotiation processes undertaken by Hannah and Rachel as they (re)construct professional identities congruent with their beliefs about the type of ‘professional’ they aspire to be in their respective roles (or ‘telos’). Markula (2003) comments that Foucault was interested in how people learn to problematise their identities by becoming more self-reflexive, and this analysis has endeavoured to examine this for Rachel and Hannah in their respective positions as Head of Department and PE teacher. Whilst the data spoke of numerous examples of both Hannah and Rachel identifying aspects of their identity that they questioned in this context (their ‘ethical substance’), given the scope of this thesis only key moments were presented. It is interesting to note that in the examples discussed about managing (dominant) masculine identities within the HPE department, and ‘jock’ student identities in the PE classroom, ‘gender’ was an inherent feature of these problematisations, albeit at a somewhat subconscious level. It appeared that for both participants, their mode of subjection, or reasons for engaging in ethical work largely centred around their desire to be recognised as a ‘good’ teacher or Head of Department in this context. Although there was acknowledgement of some inequities and issues associated with current practices and conceptions of ‘good’ pedagogy, largely their motive for engaging in self-work appeared based on meeting
others’ expectations and aligning with dominant identity positions rather than seeking to challenge or deconstruct them.

Considerations of the ethical work undertaken by both Hannah and Rachel ranged from a conscious awareness of how day-to-day interactions with male colleagues were framed, to a somewhat reconciled acceptance of behaviours as ‘normalised’ in this particular context. For Rachel in particular, the data highlighted the specific, deliberate attempts she made to address aspects of her professional practice through her focus on improving classroom behaviour management. Yet, through self-reflexivity over time, Rachel further problematised this, which ultimately led to her questioning her suitability to be a female PE teacher in an all-boys’ school given her ‘telos’ appeared to be at odds with her current ‘identity’ in this context. As Rich (2001) concludes from her work with female PE teachers, “the forms of ‘professionalism’ being endorsed in these contexts, were directly linked to the types of pedagogues these women were expected to become” (p. 132). She argues that “the ideology of professionalism warrants attention as a source of support for unequal and unjust social relations” (p. 132).
Chapter 8 - Implications and conclusions

The way people are, is often the way they teach and, at another level, the way people develop their pedagogies can influence who they become...an understanding of pedagogical practice is impossible without an understanding of teachers’ lives (Armour & Fernandez-Balboa, 2001, p. 106)

This dissertation commenced with some provocative narratives that sought to highlight potential challenges and issues associated with working with adolescent boys in ‘physical’ contexts such as PE and sport, particularly for a female teacher. At the core of this research was the intent to learn more about how two female teachers in all-boys’ settings – one as the teacher of a Year 8 PE class and the other as a Head of Department (HPE), went about constructing their approaches to PE pedagogy. Following the advice of others, it became apparent that any consideration of how notions of ‘good’ pedagogy were established needed to acknowledge the role subjectivities and identities play in this process (Armour & Jones, 1998; Fernandez-Balboa, 1998; Tinning, 2004; Wrench & Garrett, 2012). In the quotation above, Armour and Fernandez-Balboa (2001) advocate that a symbiotic relationship can exist between identity and pedagogy and that any attempt to gain deeper understandings of one’s pedagogical practice requires an understanding of teachers themselves, including how they (re)construct aspects of their professional identity in context. As Penney and Evans (2002) argue:

The identities and positions that are occupied and can potentially be occupied by particular women and men always need to be understood and explored ‘in context’; specifically in the political, social, cultural, historical and institutional contexts in which they are set. Characteristics of these contexts create both opportunities and barriers for the expression of particular identities, masculinities and femininities and serve to position them as either legitimate and to be celebrated – or equally, as undesirable (p. 19).

In light of these comments, the context of an all-boys’ school inherently foregrounds ‘gender’ as a central theme around which the institution operates. A consideration of the wider socio-political landscape that influences much of what occurs in this
educational setting has revealed some taken-for-granted assumptions about the education of boys, particularly in an environment fuelled by social and moral panics about the supposed ‘underachievement’ of boys. Despite the abundance of research that claims to interrogate aspects of boys’ education, a large proportion of this work is underpinned by essentialist and unitary categorisations of ‘boys’, and as such, suggestions for how to address the supposed underachievement of boys in educational and social settings have been largely limited to structural reforms (Lingard, et al., 2009).

Featuring strongly in this debate have been calls for more ‘male role models’ and ‘boy-friendly approaches to pedagogy’ to counter claims that the ‘feminisation of education’ (amongst other factors) is largely responsible for the current state of boys’ achievement (see Chapter 2). Further, the pervasiveness of ‘masculinity politics’ has not only perpetuated these assumptions, but also attracted policy-makers’ attention, particularly in Australia through a parliamentary inquiry and resultant report ‘Boys: Getting it Right’ (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training, 2002). Over the past decade or so there have been significant works devoted to the critique of these claims and we have witnessed an increase in poststructuralist-inspired work that has sought to examine more closely the impact of gender relations in educational processes (see Chapter 2). These contributions have “richly described the multiplicity of [gender] forms and qualities of experiences encompassed by context specific gender relations” (Raphael Reed, 2006, p. 43) and as advocated, what is now needed are accounts of the production of “identities in and through education for teachers and pupils, in particular looking at the relationship between adult and child processes across the masculine/feminine divide and including the complexities of the unconscious” (Raphael Reed, 2006, p. 43). Considering this, relatively little work has examined the contributions of, and potential challenges for, female teachers and there is a notable absence of work that interrogates contexts in which gender differences are most obvious, such as the physical contexts of PE and sport amplified in all-boys’ schools.

Dagkas and Armour (2012) comment that there is obviously a close relationship between physical education and sport, but explain that “they are not synonymous” (p. 2). This close alignment can create tensions for PE teachers’ subjectivities given they “can be viewed as the embodiment of the sport/education/physical education
relationship…where, among other requirements, knowledge and experience of all three aspects…are essential components of the job” (Armour & Jones, 1998, p. 3). This is particularly relevant in the consideration of PE teacher identities in an all-boys’ setting given the prominence of sport and sporting achievement as significant ‘identity-markers’ amongst male students (Gard & Meyenn, 2000; Hickey, 2010; Kehler & Atkinson, 2010; Swain, 2006). Whilst some research examines the complexities associated with mediating different ‘identities’ as a PE teacher and sports coach (Armour & Jones, 1998; O’Connor & Macdonald, 2002), the nuances associated with negotiating a ‘gendered’ identity in context also can add much to our understandings of these processes. To that end, whilst the focus of this research is limited to that of PE in particular, in a broader, more holistic sense much of the discussion inevitably draws on discourses of both PE and sport to make sense of participant experiences. Ultimately, following the advice of Tsangaridou (2006a), “studies, with an emphasis on how teachers’ beliefs are manifested in their teaching practices [and identities] … in relation to the complexities and constraints of their context, is a necessary direction of future research” (p. 498) and a gap that this study sought to address.

To capture the ongoing, dynamic and contextual nature of identity and pedagogical work in all-boys’ PE settings, I was guided by a feminist poststructural theoretical perspective and various elements of Foucault’s work in an attempt to demonstrate and disturb taken-for-granted assumptions about ‘good’ PE pedagogy. Further, this lens facilitated a consideration of the self-work that the two participants engaged in to negotiate and reconcile aspects of their professional self. The employment of a longitudinal, case study methodology that drew on the principles of video-stimulated reflection provided a valuable lens through which to consider (in a deep and detailed manner) the ways in which participants came to think of themselves as a ‘female PE teacher’ in this context and to explore student responses to their pedagogies. Foucauldian theorising has been particularly insightful in drawing attention to the conditions under which the processes associated with ‘professional identity’ construction for two female PE teachers in an all-boys’ setting are undertaken. In particular, it enables attention to be drawn to the complexities, inconsistencies and paradoxes attached to these processes.
In this, the final chapter of my thesis, I present a reflective overview of the research questions that have guided this study and aim to draw together the study’s key contentions. In particular, the discussion of these questions provides a synopsis of the analyses and interpretations I have drawn from this work and provides self-reflexive insights about the pedagogical possibilities and implications for boys’ PE. The final part of the chapter suggests possibilities (and perhaps poses more questions than answers) for future practice and inquiry.

8.1 Emergence of key arguments

8.1.1 The influence of dominant discourses in an all-boys’ school

In responding to the first research question, analyses of the broader school culture and context of St John’s was richly informed by Foucault’s theorising of discourse (1972) to understand which resources were “available to individuals as they make sense of the world and themselves in the world” (Wright, 2004, p. 20). As others comment, “discourses provide the contexts and the storylines for interactions and the positioning of the participants by themselves and by others” (With-Nielsen & Pfister, 2011, p. 648). In my considerations of dominant discourses I had to recognise that there is some fluidity and blurring of competing discourses in any social setting, where power relations can both incite struggles for ascendancy and promote peaceful coexistence. As Foucault (1981) implores, “discourses must be treated as discontinuous practices, which cross each other, are sometimes juxtaposed with one another, but can just as well exclude or be unaware of each other” (p. 67). As such, the data revealed the historically pervasive nature of hypermasculine and heteronormative discourses in this school context that acted to legitimate and sustain particular versions of (dominant) masculine subjectivities, often at the expense of those positioned as ‘other’ in this setting.

Persistent in the conversations with many of the key informants was a belief that there had been a significant ‘culture shift’ in recent times and as a result, unjust and inequitable practices of ‘masculine domination’ at St John’s were no longer tolerated. In many of the participant’s comments there were references to the unhealthy and unproductive discourses that perpetuated hypermasculine identities as
legitimate, desirable and celebrated in this school context. Interestingly, there was a (perceived) notion that these practices were no longer as pervasive as they had once been. However, in much of the data presented it is reasonable to conclude that they still play an active role in the construction of particular subjectivities. As Mrs Andrews explains:

“I think I am lucky because when I got to St John’s there had been a real culture shift. It had been a really masculine, unhealthy place and they had been through a huge scandal which was a really tough time as a result of paedophilia allegations about Brothers that had worked in the school and had abused boys. Lots of the staff had been to the school as students, so there was a tradition that if you went to school there, you went off to uni and got your degree and then, with your other jock mates, turn up back at school teaching...Essentially they were still St John’s boys and now working with the teachers that taught them. So, you have this really entrenched culture about how things operated and the same jocks were celebrated and the same types of boys picked on...When I got there it had only just started to be a place that people wanted to be at – there wasn’t a lot of young females” (int. Mrs Andrews, 11/09/07).

Perhaps inherent in many of the participants’ comments was an awareness that particular versions of masculinity occupied hierarchical status within this school context, and that the ‘same types of boys’ were the victims of bullying and homophobic slurs, implying that, for subordinate or marginalised masculinities life within this school context could be less than enjoyable.

In a PE sense, perhaps what can be drawn from the data is what Brown and Evans (2004) refer to as ‘cultural conduits’, whereby male PE teachers returning to the school “articulate dimensions of the production and reproduction of gender relations in sport and physical education ... where gender beliefs and pedagogies are legitimated, passed on, and practiced” (p. 64). If, as the participants suggest, the dominant discourses of hypermasculinity and heteronormativity act to position some masculinities as valorised and hierarchically privileged in this context and others as subordinated or marginalised, then PE and sport become important sites where inequitable gender relations can be challenged, and according to the participants, females have a role to play in this.
It appears that in the case of St John’s College, the Principal was reasonably forward thinking in this sense, and as such was particularly active in the recruitment of female teachers, not only in the wider school culture and into positions of leadership, but also strategically into previously masculine-dominated areas of the curriculum such as PE. As such, it was a common belief amongst participants that the recruitment of female staff was instrumental in the (perceived) culture change. Mr Zanders comments:

“The macho culture that used to be rife here, well, it was really sad - fortunately those days are long gone. It’s a much more rounded culture at the moment and I think the schools a much better place for it. The introduction of a lot of female staff has been integral to that culture change for sure, the boys just see a whole different side of life with a greater number of female teachers here” (int. Mr Zanders, 18/09/07).

Further, Mr Wood (Deputy Principal) reflects on the impact the introduction of female staff to this school context has had:

“Is this place less kind of macho and misogynistic 20 years after getting female staff, yeah, it is, no doubt. But actually explaining how that sort of occurs, whether we’ve got kind of softly spoken girls in classes now, I don’t necessarily buy that you know...something’s happened but it would be multifaceted and really complex...Do they bring anything to the faculty that would not otherwise be there? They probably bring a normality that PE is in line with what’s happening in the rest of the school and world. That is, that there are women working in industry and on building sites...it’s just normalising the whole gender thing…” (int. Mr Wood, 9/11/07).

In fact, as discussed in Chapter 6, the use of female teachers in this context to ‘normalise’ their presence occurred with varying degrees of acknowledgement of the trials and tribulations these ‘front-line’ gender workers endured. There were explicit examples discussed that demonstrated the ways in which dominant discourses acted to position (actively and passively) female teachers as marginal and perhaps, less effective than their male counterparts. Rachel’s account of dealing with dominant masculine identities on yard duty and Mrs Andrew’s recollections of an incident with an ‘Italian’ boy over his use of a mobile phone specifically highlight perceptions that ‘discipline’ and ‘authority’ were legitimated practices for male staff, and that in
calling on their male colleagues both were aware that their gender rendered them marginalised in these encounters. Despite these challenges many female participants fostered a strong desire and degree of agency in their quest for more equitable gender relations as Mrs White highlights, “what made me stick at it was just a passionate belief that this school really needed females in leadership, it needed the influence and the perspective that they can bring” (int. Mrs White, 13/11/07).

Returning to the key research question posed, it was evident that in both the broader school setting and in PE classes, dominant discourses reinforced and reified the existing gender order of wider society. Despite initiatives that aimed to address this, such as the appointment of female staff, Mr Wood’s comment that “something’s happened but it would be multifaceted and really complex” indicates a sensitivity to not only culture change broadly, but to the complexities involved in challenging existing gender relations. Yet, his unproblematic ‘bundle’ of these issues into some intangible form, perhaps a common practice in this context, makes the process of deconstruction problematic. Further, the silences here potentially acknowledge that support is required for these front-line gender workers, yet, there is little discussion of the types of support and professional development needed to foster more equitable gender relations in this school context. Additionally, whilst there was some problematisation of practices that directly influence the shaping of gendered subjectivities, scope to implement practices that are more inclusive and tolerant of multiple masculinities (and femininities) was inherently constrained by the educational context (discourse and practice).

8.1.2 Female physical educators’ constructions of ‘good’ pedagogy for boys

The second question posed in this study considered the ways in which dominant discourse-power relations shape the pedagogical approaches that become valued and taken up in the context of St John’s College. Through interviews and data analyses I became attuned to the operation of various power relations as they acted to shape the construction of participant’s knowledge about appropriate pedagogies (albeit perceived) for all-boy contexts. In thinking about how these forms of knowledge were constituted there were two key factors that continually surfaced in the data. Firstly, that the dominant discourses permeating this school context were significant
in shaping notions that pedagogies that were ‘teacher-centred’ and ‘command-orientated’ (Green, 2008) were not only the most preferred methods, but that they were also the benchmark standards against which ‘good’ teaching was judged. Secondly, that personal biographies and histories that preceded experiences of St John’s were also significant in shaping ideas around ‘good’ pedagogy. As highlighted in other research, PE teacher’s experiences of PE and sport as students (or apprentices) is pivotal in the construction of knowledge about ‘appropriate’ pedagogy (Brown, 1999; Curtner-Smith, 1997; Green, 2000, 2008; Rich, 2004; Schempp & Graber, 1992; Tsangaridou, 2006b). Wrench and Garrett (2012) comment that for PE teachers, “past experiences of schooling, physical activity and sport underpin the knowledge taken up as well as understandings and assumptions made about [them]selves as future teachers” (p. 2). Further, they argue that these experiences produce knowledge that, in teaching, serve as a lens or filter through which teachers negotiate and make sense of their own and others’ learning.

In conversations with key informants there was a strong discourse around boys’ unique learning styles that perpetuated the idea that boys require a structured and well-managed learning environment. Mr Grey’s observations that “if you give boys an open-ended task they will just flounder” and Mrs Andrews belief that “as soon as you make anything competitive boys naturally spark an interest…they are very kinaesthetic” reflect particular taken-for-granted truths about appropriate ways to educate boys. Similar observations underpin key recommendations in the Boys: Getting it Right report and as argued in Chapter 2, it such concepts that perpetuate calls that males are best placed to deliver quality education for boys (Biddulph, 1997; Hoff Sommers, 2000). As Lingard, Martino and Mills (2009) observe, “many teachers in our research argued a similar case regarding the need for having structured and tightly managed slices of work in effective pedagogies for boys…physical activity for boys was important” (p. 106). One of their participants, Susan, who “spoke about the need to structure her pedagogy around the provision of competitive tasks for boys” (p. 107), regularly implemented competitive activities that were “designed to promote a supposedly natural predisposition that boys have to compete with one another” (p. 107). These authors conclude that “rather than challenging traditional notions of masculinity as a basis for encouraging boys to develop a broader repertoire of skills, such as those involving collaboration, Susan
merely reinforces gender stereotypic behaviour which is not necessarily in the best interest of her male students” (p. 107).

In a PE setting these ‘essentialist’ notions were manifested in participants’ perceptions that the most appropriate pedagogies orient around teacher control, management and order within clear boundaries. Although nearly two decades ago, Placek’s observations of what comprises success in teaching, that is, “Are the students participating (busy), enjoying themselves (happy), and doing what the teacher directs (good)?” (Placek, 1983, p. 54) still resonates in many PE classrooms. For both Rachel and Hannah, there was a conciliatory recognition that, especially in their initial teaching experiences, both adopted ‘masculine’ authoritative approaches to pedagogy in order to ‘survive’ the context of all-boys’ PE. Similarly, Keddie and Mills (2007) points to “many teachers’ compunction to ‘masculinise’ their management practices in order to be seen as authoritative and to be taken seriously, particularly by male students” (p. 47). Yet, these practices often conflict with the preferred identity positions of some female teachers. For Rachel in particular, the tensions inherent in working towards a ‘masculine’ approach to pedagogy and behaviour management that have been forged through comparisons she made of herself and her male colleagues were the source of considerable concern. Over the duration of the research, Rachel began to question the validity of these approaches as the most appropriate pedagogical tools for boys’ PE. Similarly, Mrs Andrews acknowledges in her role as Year 12 Co-ordinator:

“You have to use totally different strategies than the kind of traditional masculine discipline stuff that goes on in boys’ schools, which is about a loud voice and stature and a presence...you have to achieve your job but in a different way without relying on a big physical self..."....(int. Mrs Andrews, 11/09/07).

Another pervasive theme to emerge from the data was the impact that ‘gender’ had on the positioning of the female PE teachers, particularly in relation to their pedagogies. As others observe, gender is an integral part of a teacher’s pedagogical repertoire (Brown & Rich, 2002) and as such, was seen as a key resource drawn on by male PE teachers to foster positive relationships with students. As discussed in Chapter 6, gender positioning resulted in perceptions amongst the female participants that male PE teachers were afforded an ‘automatic credibility’ with students on the
basis of their physical presence and skill, and that by merely being ‘male’ they were able to foster relationships with students that were unattainable to female teachers. Whilst relationship building with students is never as straightforward as automatically being accepted because of your gender, and in fact, it is very likely that many of the male staff gained this credibility on the basis of their teaching ability and personality, there was still a perception that they had a greater ability to draw on resources and aspects of the ‘cultural project’ (Brown & Rich, 2002) than their female counterparts.

Interestingly, Rachel did endeavour to challenge this in one pedagogical encounter through her involvement in an International Rules (football) game with her students. In attempting to benefit from, and trade on, her physical ability on the advice of a male colleague, we see what Brown and Rich (2002) refer to as the ‘double bind’ of gender positioning. Whilst her intentions were laudable, it is interesting to note the tensions and contradictions in her reflections of this experience. On the one hand she claims, “The main reason why I played was only because the numbers were uneven”, yet she goes on to comment that she wanted to, “show them that I did have some skill in the game”. In returning to Brown and Rich’s notion of the ‘double bind’ we see that whilst Rachel can actively position herself in ways that allow her to potentially access the masculine cultural project through her physical ability, she has limited means to actually deconstruct or challenge it because of the ways the boys position her, and her femininity, in relation to sporting endeavours. As one student commented, “it just isn’t normal to see girls tackle blokes” (f.n. AM, 31/08/07). Perhaps what is highlighted through Rachel’s willingness to ‘re-shape’, or present an alternative identity through pedagogy, is the potential opportunity that can exist to disrupt limiting ‘gendered’ positioning and practices of her students.

Also discussed in Chapter 6 was a recurring perception amongst participants that female teachers had the potential to offer something ‘different’ to mainstream, dominant pedagogical approaches. It was a commonly reported belief that female PE teachers had a greater likelihood to appeal to marginalised or subordinated masculinities often disadvantaged through dominant, performance-orientated pedagogies. There was evidence to suggest that both Rachel and Hannah considered and even trialled more inclusive, and arguably ‘feminine’ approaches to pedagogy, yet given a lack of initial success these did not appear to be adopted in a sustained
manner. In her Head of Department role, Hannah described how she was responsible for the implementation of more recreational or ‘lifestyle’ focussed activities and as Mr Wood commented, “I’m constantly seeing kids with fishing rods coming to school”. For Hannah, although she continued to advocate for a broader range of activities within the curriculum, she signposted the tensions that were inherent in getting male colleagues (especially the older, more established members of staff) to support these decisions. As Wright (2002) argues, the dominance of “…human movement sciences, technocratic ways of working and thinking, the privileging of competitive games and sports all compound ways of thinking and being which have already been profoundly shaped by an immersion in a masculinist sports culture” (p. 201) and this makes it extremely difficult to effect culture change in many PE settings.

At the classroom level, Rachel described her attempts to adopt a more ‘participatory’ approach that drew on ‘negotiations’ with her students about how to best deliver an AFL lesson. Despite her best intentions she did not deem this to be a successful lesson and I considered her attempts as significantly constrained within particular power relations. The contradictions in her approach to ‘inclusive’ and ‘negotiated’ pedagogy were evident in her sentiments that “It’s important to let the boys have a say about how the class is run”, yet she also comments, “You don’t want to give them too much say because if you give an inch they might take a mile”. Inherent in these comments is an ongoing tension where Rachel is particularly wary of ‘giving over’ to a completely student-directed session for fear that, in relinquishing control, the class will become unsafe. Unfortunately in this lesson this became a self-fulfilling prophecy. This experience resulted in Rachel’s apprehension in trialling ‘new’ approaches and, in both this encounter and other situations, we see her defer to the perceived ‘safety net’ of traditional pedagogical approaches. Similarly, for the participants in Brown and Rich’s study;

…all of the participants reported being in, taking and assigning gendered positions according to the context in which they found themselves and fusing these positions with and within their teaching pedagogies. In spite of their intellectual intentions for equality, the participant’s experience forms a double bind or entrapment that forces them into positions complicit with dominant masculine norms (2002, p. 86).
In addressing this research question, the data pointed to many examples of teacher-directed, ‘masculine’ and authoritative approaches to pedagogy readily adopted by the female participants. The above discussion has demonstrated the ways in which power relations shape knowledge construction about ‘good’ pedagogical approaches and highlights the role that gender played for the female participants. In the pedagogical encounters discussed the deeply ingrained notions about ‘appropriate’ gender positioning appear to significantly impact participants’ conceptions of alternative professional identities and by extension, pedagogies, and although attempts were made to disrupt and challenge this, they were met with relatively little success in this context. Ultimately, as Hannah surmises,

“I think boys have quite high expectations of their PE teachers, it is a subject that most of them value and they expect the classes to be of a particular standard and quality...they are looking for an active class that is well run, students are on task, they are able to cater for students with high skill levels but cater for different abilities as well. Good classes include activities where students can develop their skills and they want games that function at a high level and teachers need knowledge and competence within particular sports that allows that to happen I suppose...a female phys. edder needs to be able to deliver on that...” (int. Hannah, 13/11/07).

8.1.3 Student experiences in PE with a female teacher – Power at the micro-political level of the classroom

In addressing the third research question Foucault’s theorising on techniques of power (1977, 1980, 1983a), and adaptations of this work in a PE sense (Gore, 1990, 1995, 1998; Wright, 2000b) provided a useful lens through which to interpret how students receive and interpret their PE experiences with a female teacher. In particular, the use of Gore’s (1995, 1998) ‘pedagogy as text’ approach was helpful in examining pedagogical encounters in that it allowed attention to be drawn to the ‘politics’ of these interactions.

Within the data set there were numerous examples that highlighted the multi-directional workings of power as they acted to shape pedagogical approaches and student experiences of it. In particular, the discussion demonstrated the regulatory effects of surveillance in numerous ways. Rachel, for example, highlighted the
impact being observed by the DP had on her pedagogical practice. Despite planning a lesson that sought to provide ‘alternatives’ to traditional approaches, upon realising Mr Woods presence on the oval periphery during an AFL lesson she immediately interrupted the lesson to defer to familiar, and arguably, more ‘accepted’ practices. As Webb and colleagues acknowledge, “Placek (1983) coined the term ‘busy, happy, good’ to refer to class contexts that give an impression of efficiency, regardless of whether they are actually efficient in the promotion of learning” (Webb, et al., 2004, p. 213). Further, they argue that this means “that teachers internalise desires for their students to look productive … because … value is placed on class activities that look efficient … and teachers often feel pressure about how their classes ‘look’” (p. 213).

In another example, Rachel’s reflections on a cricket lesson indicate her perceived productive use of surveillance in terms of positioning herself to be able to ‘watch’ and provide feedback on student technique. Yet, as she conveys, it was more likely that she positioned herself where she did to more closely monitor the behaviour of particularly troublesome students in the hope of regulating their behaviour. This practice causes me to question the ways in which bottom-up surveillance techniques performed by dominant students act to regulate the pedagogical practices of the teacher, and more significantly, how this impacts on the experiences of other students.

In conversations with Hannah there were regular references to the impacts both bottom-up and lateral working surveillance techniques had on not only her as Head of Department, but also for other teachers within the department. In her conversations about a new part-time female teacher it is particularly disturbing that Hannah perceived she was not that forthcoming or honest about how she was coping in her new role and it was my observation that this was significantly influenced by power relations. It is difficult to employ self-reflexivity to identify issues with current practices under the constant gaze of colleagues. Further, it is also difficult to conceive how this teacher may be encouraged to explore alternative pedagogies in this environment.

In considering student responses it became apparent that vast differences existed among students in terms of what they expected and wanted from their PE lessons. Many students discussed experiences that facilitated competitive, combative and team-orientated sports that they were already familiar with, such as various codes of
football, presumably for their capacity to legitimate displays of dominant physical performance. Yet, for others, such experiences were at best, tolerated, and at worst, dreaded. Similarly, in her research on single sex classes, Wright (1996a) observed the rough-and-tumble nature of boys-only PE classes were quite threatening to some participants. At a later time she reflects, “these classes became sites where hegemonic forms of masculinity were valued and those boys who did not fit, who were not skilled or who had little liking for contact sports could be marginalized or even bullied” (Wright, 1999, p. 183).

Another interesting feature of the boys’ conversations was that at one level, students reported the ‘gender’ of the teacher to be a moot point and somewhat irrelevant to their experiences and that rather, the ‘quality’ of the teacher was the most critical factor. Similar findings have been reported elsewhere (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training, 2002; Keddie, 2007; Keddie & Mills, 2007) For example, Lingard and colleagues argue that, in addition to the quality of a teacher’s pedagogies, good relationships are also more significant for learners than a teacher’s gender (Lingard, et al., 2009). Despite these findings, through a somewhat layered approach to data analysis it is possible to interpret that students do perceive some differences with a female PE teacher. For dominant boys within the group there was a perception that “she might not be able to help you much with your footy or cricket”, but for others like Sebastian, female teachers are perceived as offering more inclusive, encouraging and supportive classroom environments. Unfortunately, in the data presented on both the golf and cricket lessons the adoption of more inclusive practices were, at times, constrained and even prohibited by Rachel’s perceptions of student responses to her pedagogic approaches.

The illustration of various techniques of power in operation, although not in any way exhaustive, collectively reveal the ways in which power relations impact on what is constituted as legitimate knowledge in PE settings and importantly, how students (and teachers) construct these ideas. As Gore observed in her work, each technique of power can vary in their use and effect and she comments, “Sometimes, they functioned in the construction of knowledge; at other times, they functioned in the construction of relations among participants…; at yet other times, they functioned in the construction and maintenance of particular subjectivities (often defining oneself)”
(1998, p. 246). From the examples presented of pedagogical interactions in PE at St John’s College similar conclusions can be drawn.

8.1.4 What does it mean to be a ‘successful’ female physical educator in an all-boys’ school – Do you really need thick skin?

The final question posed in this study considered the ways in which female PE teachers mediated competing tensions of their gendered identity in this school context. As an initial reflection, in posing this question there was an inherent assumption that some degree of tension would exist for these teachers on the basis of their gender. Further, as research has demonstrated, for any teacher (and student-teacher) challenges always exist in negotiating the social, political, historical and institutional factors that characterise their workplaces (Armour, 1997; Armour & Fernandez-Balboa, 2001; Bloomfield, 2010; Brown & Evans, 2004; Macdonald & Kirk, 1996; Rossi, et al., 2008; Stroot & Ko, 2006). At the core of this research question was a desire to examine the processes undertaken and strategies employed by these female teachers as they constructed identities coherent with their perceptions about what constitutes a ‘successful’ professional in this masculine context.

In acknowledging that perceptions about what a ‘successful’ teacher looks like can vary significantly between individuals, I accept that identities are not fixed or stable, and as such individuals “have the potential to assume subject positions that are not predictable, consistent or concurrent with the expectations of the group to which they belong” (Macdonald, Pang, Knez, Nelson, & McCuaig, 2012, p. 11). As a point of difference to other research that has examined the construction of PE teacher identities, I drew on the conceptual tools of Foucault’s *technologies of the self* (1987, 1988a, 1988b) in a deliberate attempt to trouble taken-for-granted notions that reinscribe dominant and durable ‘gendered’ aspects of identities in PE teaching and to identify discourse-power relations that position particular identities as valued in all-boy PE settings. This approach in accepting identities as “shifting, unstable [and] contradictory” (Macdonald, et al., 2012, p. 11) also seeks to identify practices of resistance that can ultimately challenge existing gender binaries. In considering the processes and strategies that Hannah and Rachel employed as they negotiated their professional identities in this context it is important to acknowledge that the scope of
this thesis did not allow for a discussion of every instance in which they questioned and problematised aspects of their identity and as such, only key moments were discussed as representations of this self-work.

In considering the *ethical substance*, or aspect of the self they problematised, Hannah and Rachel both spoke of different components of their professional identity. Through data analysis it became apparent that there are multiple dimensions to one’s professional identity and that although they are somewhat interdependent, teachers often problematised only ‘part’ of their identity. As a result, any conversations with Hannah or Rachel that sought to deconstruct processes of subjectification were somewhat limited to the ‘part’ of their identity that they perceived constrained their ability to achieve a coherent, stable sense of self in this context. Not surprisingly, ‘gender’ often became a defining feature in these conversations, although not always immediately obvious. Initially Hannah problematised the very notion of taking on her leadership role in a department constituted mainly of male staff with varied degrees of teaching experience not necessarily because she was female but rather, because she questioned her ability to gain credibility amongst her peers as a teacher returning to the school (after four years away). That said, in subsequent conversations with Hannah there were aspects of self, as a ‘gendered’ being, that appeared to conflict with the ‘masculine codes’ that characterised not only her departmental responsibilities (i.e., curriculum) but also her role as a PE teacher. For Rachel, however, most of problematisations orientated around her role in the classroom as a female teacher of boys’ PE and much of her questioning of self frequently identified (perceived) constraints to pedagogy on the basis of her gender.

What is interesting in the analysis of Hannah’s problematisations was the observation that much of this self-questioning about aspects of her leadership style she subjected to self-work, appeared to be constituted through comparisons she made between herself and the previous Head of Department, who was also a female. It appeared that Hannah’s *telos*, or the kind of professional she aspired to become, was significantly based on her predecessor. Further probing revealed an acknowledgement that although her predecessor often embodied much of the “blokey, rude and crude” behaviour and banter characteristic of hypermasculine PE departments (Rossi, et al., 2008) she was considered as ‘successful’ by her colleagues, school administration and Hannah. The very fact that a ‘female’ had
occupied this role previously could be considered as both a source of comfort and tension for Hannah. Explicit in Hannah’s testimony was a gratitude for much of the seminal work undertaken by Georgia - firstly, in breaking down some of the gendered barriers that had previously characterised the department and secondly, in going some of the way towards ‘normalising’ females in this context as leaders. Yet, it could also be interpreted that opportunities for Hannah to shape her own unique subjectivity in this role were somewhat constrained by a telos that was heavily informed by someone else’s interpretation of what a female Head of Department should be like. Perhaps what is revealed is Hannah’s possible complicity to accept, and on occasion normalise, the practices of peers that perpetuate inequitable gender relations. However, I question whether in fact, her apparent ‘complicity’ masks some of the important self-work Hannah has undertaken to reconcile these tensions, which may include deliberate strategies to ignore these behaviours. If this is the case, then this raises significant questions about the types of practices that are potentially dismissed, ignored or reconciled in these spaces in the interest of achieving some coherent sense of self.

In discussing her simultaneous role as a PE teacher, Hannah simply states,

“I was a bit of a fraud as a female PE teacher and basically I didn’t really like it, I mean I did it and it was OK but I don’t think doing that for the rest of my life was going to make me happy. I’m really more interested in the theoretical side of the body, physical activity and health, so I teach mainly Health now” (int. Hannah, 13/11/07).

What these comments reveal is Hannah’s deliberate and strategic shift to curriculum areas that more closely align with a feminine gendered identity (like Health) rather than a willingness to persevere with self-work that may produce a more desirable professional identity as a female PE teacher. It is possible that ‘pedagogies of health’ appear more tenable and amenable to Hannah’s professional identity as a teacher within the HPE department, and that rather than directly challenge the ‘masculine’ codes underpinning PE pedagogies and identities in this setting, her negotiations led to her active role in seeking out other teaching opportunities.

In contrast, Rachel identifies many aspects of her professional identity or ethical substance, which she considers could be ‘improved’ with a degree of self-work, such
as more consistent approaches to behaviour management, increased lesson preparation and enhanced knowledge (both theoretical and practical) in particular content areas. It is interesting to note that in many of these self-reflexive conversations, Rachel considered that she needed to ‘improve’ rather than problematise aspects of the broader culture and practices that acted to ‘position’ her as ‘inferior’ and less effective than her male counterparts in this context. The implication of this tended to be that Rachel often compared her own practice and identity to that of a dominant (stereotypical) ‘masculine’ form and when she felt she could not achieve this, she constructed herself as inadequate. A possible interpretation here is that, given much of Rachel’s initial ‘identity work’ and early approaches to pedagogy were trialled and refined in co-educational settings, her conception of what constitutes a ‘successful’ PE teacher in an all-boys’ context may in fact be quite different to that of her colleagues. If this is the case, then it is perhaps unsurprising that she problematises much of her practice. Unlike Hannah, she does not appear to have had many opportunities to base her telos on the observed practices of other female teachers given the limited opportunity to actually watch them teach. As Mr Wood explains, “well there is team teaching in the PE Department so they can learn that way, but the female teachers are always timetabled on with a male teacher so that they can supervise the change-rooms”.

Whilst Rachel does indicate part of her ethical practice, or self-work, has been to draw on the insights of her male colleagues, she did not appear to feel more confident or experience the type of success she hoped for as a result of this work. Rachel’s critical reflection on the mode of subjection that promoted ‘masculine’ approaches to pedagogy appeared to result in ethical practices initially that sought to more closely align her own pedagogical practices with this dominant norm. Yet over the duration of the semester (and perhaps as a result of the ethical practices she engaged in) Rachel appeared to significantly reconsider her actual telos through an active resistance to some of these accepted practices. As she comments, “I just don’t know if I can be the big, loud, authoritarian type that you need to be here...Too bad if the only way you are considered a good teacher here is by how much control you have over the class...Rather than get all bothered about it, I think I just have to get a thicker skin, I mean most of the students don’t mean it personally...”.
8.2 Pedagogical possibilities and implications

In adopting a Foucauldian approach to this thesis I have sought, through a somewhat layered approach, to understand the factors that shape two female teachers approaches to PE pedagogy in an all-boy’s setting. Through this lens I have identified practices that reinscribe traditional, dominant (and stereotypical) representations of PE teacher identities and practice. Some obvious pedagogical limitations have also been revealed that included a reliance on ‘crisis’ narratives about the state of boys’ education together with a pervasive belief about the ‘correct’ way to teach PE, that appeared to sanction the adoption of ‘masculine’, authoritative, teacher-controlled pedagogies that have long characterised, and continue to characterise, the profession (Tinning, 2010). As Kirk (2002) argues, “The male version of physical education is not a totalising discourse. This means that while it has achieved dominance, there are spaces for teachers and students to practise alternative forms…that do not ascribe to the values and assumptions of stereotypically masculinised physical education” (p. 35), particularly given its marginalising effects for particular masculinities (Wright, 1999). If one goal of PE is to encourage and promote lifelong physical activity, then pedagogies of exclusion that “refer to specific pedagogical environments and discourses that can act as barriers to youth participation and engagement in sport and PE” (Dagkas & Armour, 2012, p. 3) need to be disrupted at sites where they occur.

Perhaps what this research has highlighted is an assumption that, as rational and reflexive beings, teachers who are aware of the factors that constrain their pedagogical practice (including their gender) would invariably be encouraged into an active address of these. Yet, as the data here has illustrated, this is a somewhat more problematic and complicated process, particularly for ‘gendered’ beings. Firstly, as others argue, “what constitutes good teaching for boys is a matter open to considerable debate” (Lingard, et al., 2009). Secondly, the ways in which teachers construct notions of ‘good’ pedagogical practice is heavily integrated with their histories, biographies and identities. Identity-work is a multifarious process and in this context of an all-boys’ school, gender is only one of multiple identity markers, albeit more prominent than in a co-educational institution. A more helpful way to conceive of teachers’ pedagogies may in fact be, not as a given or fixed prescription, but rather as an existence of ‘palimpsest’ (Vidal, 1995 cited in Smyth & Shacklock,
As Smyth and Shacklock explain, Vidal’s “etymological exploration led him to conclude that palimpsest meant: ‘Paper, parchment, etc., prepared for writing on and wiping out again, like a slate…a parchment which has been written on twice, the original having been rubbed out’ (p. 6)” (1998, p. 5). Interpreting this they comment, “this funny-sounding word of Greek origins refers to the process of rubbing something smooth and then reinscribing it. This seems to us to be an accurate (albeit linguistically obscure) description of what is happening to teachers’ work” (Smyth & Shacklock, 1998, p. 4). For Rachel in particular, there is evidence of this occurring as she attempted to implement pedagogies that she considered ‘successful’ in her previous school settings and when they were not met with similar outcomes, she engaged in practices of the self that facilitated a re-writing of what ‘good’ pedagogy in the all-boys’ setting may look like. Unfortunately, as revealed in this study, conceptions of ‘alternatives’ were not readily available or encouraged.

Perhaps then, in a truly Foucauldian way, attempts to seek a well-defined and prescriptive approach to PE pedagogy are unhelpful and even unattainable, particularly given their contextual dependence and ‘palimpsestic’ potential to be re-made as often as required. A more helpful pedagogical implication here would be the provision of opportunities, both through pre-service education and continuing professional development, that facilitate self-reflexive and critical considerations of the wider discourse-power relations that shape practice and professional identities.

As argued earlier, whilst awareness alone does not guarantee pedagogic translation, the challenge in this sense is to work towards opportunities that at least encourage achievement of ‘awareness’ as the first step. On the basis of data presented here, for many teachers (including the female teachers involved in this study) there is limited awareness of firstly, issues associated with current practices, and secondly, alternative readings of pedagogy.

To achieve this however, an address of additional challenges are required. As Wright (1999) observes of her work in ‘changing teachers’ gendered practices’ there is an imperative to work against “a widely held position that teachers want to know how rather than why” (p. 187) in professional development contexts. As the pervasiveness of neo-liberal agendas permeate education, and PE in particular (Macdonald, 2011), there has been a rise in the number of consultant-based professional development service providers that rely heavily on a ‘tips-for-teachers’
and resource-based experience for teachers, focused predominantly on content knowledge. As Armour and Yelling (2007) argue, professional development “is now viewed as something of a panacea…as the solution to a range of education’s ills” (p. 177), yet they indicate “it is becoming clear that traditional forms of CPD [continued professional development] provision, for example, off school site, one-day “courses”, are often ineffective in supporting teachers to learn in ways that can enhance practice” (p. 178). In another contribution they argue professional development should take into account teachers’ beliefs, aspirations for both themselves and their students, and it needs to consider the conditions of their workplaces (Armour & Yelling, 2004). They advocate that teacher development is not something that can be ‘delivered’ but rather, that it should be about working with, not doing to, teachers (Armour & Yelling, 2004). Quality professional development should “help experienced teachers suspend their prior judgements about what classroom and pupils in their subject should look like, focusing instead of what is actually happening” (Armour & Yelling, 2004, p. 106) and Armour and Yelling suggest that on-going, contextual-based informal learning in collaboration with their peers can be productive in achieving this. In light of this, a possible implication of this research may be the provision of professional development opportunities that draw greater attention to gender positioning within all-boys’ PE settings (for both male and female teachers) therefore facilitating a deeper exploration of pedagogies that seek to challenge and disrupt students’ notions of dominant (and stereotypical) gendered bodies. As Wright (2002) aptly summarises:

I would want to argue that the kind of resources that are needed are not a ‘kit’ of strategies which will have universal effectiveness. Indeed I would argue that no such strategies exist. Instead, an understanding of how the social practices associated with sport and physical education work to construct limiting notions of masculinity and femininity is required to assist teachers and students to interrogate their practices and to think about and practice physical education … differently (Wright, 2002, p. 202).

8.3 Signposting future research directions

At the start of this chapter the quote from Armour and Fernandez-Balboa proposed that an understanding of pedagogical practice is not possible without an
understanding of teachers’ lives. Inherent in this must be an understanding of the factors that shape professional identities, including gender (amongst others). As indicated above, the challenge that confronts the HPE sector is to develop initiatives and interventions (at both the pre-service and in-service levels) that promote a critical awareness of the ways in which dominant discourse-power relations currently constrain professional identity formation and the notions of ‘effective’ practice in PE.

Given the ongoing nature of this struggle it is appropriate to identify and analyse the forms of knowledge and practice that make the issues, their implications, and their solutions knowable and manageable, as I have sought to do in this study. The challenge, in research terms, is to continue the process of identifying and analysing the ways in which gendered identity is problematised in this context, and to make the tensions associated with placing female physical educators in all-boys’ schools knowable in these terms. Given the strong, albeit rhetorical, educational and social claims that underpin the recruitment of female PE teachers into all-boys’ contexts, there is much to gain from better understanding the identity positions available to them, through the relationships they form with the self and others. In the challenge to upset, or disrupt, the enduring discourses of masculine hegemony that pervade all-boys’ schools, there is much to gain from deeper understandings of the lived experienced of these front-line workers. This is not to suggest that I agree that female teachers employed within these contexts should assume primary responsibility for ‘gender’ work. Rather, the presentation of these results have sought to problematise this practice and consider possibilities such as whole-school approaches that challenge gender regimes in which heterosexual, homophobic (and perhaps misogynist) forms of masculinity are privileged. It is through this work that we can begin to identify and open-up the opportunities that exist to legitimate counter hegemonic voices, and the modes of support needed to foster them.

8.4 Final reflections

At the beginning of this thesis I offered an autoethnographic declaration to preface some of my problematising of gender in teachers’ work, and specifically for the role gender plays in the construction of notions of ‘good’ pedagogical practice in all-
boys’ PE settings. My lived experience of all-boys’ PE produced, over time (nearly a decade), questions about the implications particular pedagogical approaches had for not only students’ learning, but also for my own professional identity as a teacher, especially in a context where my gender had potential to position me as ‘other’. In the same way, this research journey has challenged me personally and professionally in my thinking, my passion and drive to realise a more inclusive and productive approach to PE pedagogy and boys’ education more generally. It has, perhaps ironically, caused me to ask more questions than reach knowable solutions. It has required me to look with fresh eyes at familiar (and sometimes comfortable) notions of PE practice and awakened a critical perspective that now ‘chaperones’ me in my role in pre-service teacher education.

Perhaps at some sub-conscious level, my initial motives for undertaking this research resonated in the belief that much of the boys’ education research that had been positioned and taken up as legitimate in all-boys’ settings has been unreflexively blinkered. Despite strong rhetoric about the distinctive contribution of females in the comprehensive education of boys, the actual participation of female teachers is barely acknowledged. Whilst this research has attempted to go some of the way to addressing this, there is much in this work that resonates with Weaver-Hightower’s (2003a) findings that “many studies conclude with the rather standard, though important, finding that the gender regimes of schools, particular their masculinities, make for a “chilly climate” or “reinforce the larger gender order” in society” (p. 488). Yet, through a close and detailed relationship of professional identities and pedagogies facilitated through the use of video reflections to understand the reasons that underpin particular practices in this work, I am heartened by the possibilities that self-reflexivity and critical analysis can have in encouraging teachers to think beyond traditional practices and to imagine pedagogical alternatives. Further, I am indebted to my supervisor for introducing me to Foucauldian thinking as a way of seeing, for as Foucault says of problematising:

*My point is that not everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do...*(1983a, pp. 231-232).

In considering Foucault’s point, at the time of thesis completion the Australian Federal Government announced a Royal Commission to investigate the alleged
decades of child abuse in churches, schools and foster homes. Given the previous experience of some all-boys’ schools with sexual assault allegations against past school personnel, such as in the case of St John’s described within the thesis, I wonder to what degree has the methodology and theoretical perspectives adopted precluded the asking of other questions of the data. In acknowledging Foucault’s point that “we always have something to do”, there is perhaps merit for future work to consider the ways in which discourses of Catholicism, and perhaps religion more broadly, intersect with the discourses of heteronormativity and heterosexuality as they relate to the shaping of ‘gendered’ subjectivities, professional identities and pedagogical practices in all-boys’ school contexts.
Appendices

Appendix 1: Plain Language Statement – Teacher participants

Appendix 2: Informed consent – Organisation/Institution

Appendix 3: Letter advising parents that I would be attending the school
Appendix 1: Plain Language Statement – Teacher participants

DEAKIN UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT – Teacher participants

Women teachers’ approaches to teaching physical education in boys’ schools

20th April, 2007

Hi Physical Educators,

As some of you may be aware through your involvement with my previous study in this area, I am currently completing a Doctor of Philosophy degree at Deakin University under the supervision of Dr Chris Hickey, an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education. Throughout our careers to date, we have all discussed the role of female physical educators in all boys’ schools. Such a context provides boys with the opportunities to develop and demonstrate the masculine attributes of physical strength, aggression, competitiveness and emotional stoicism. The purpose of this letter is to invite you to consider participating in my study that explores the positive and negative aspects of our job, the approaches we choose to adopt in our teaching and how the boys interpret and receive their experience in physical education with a female teacher.

The aims of this study are to:

- Explore the pedagogical approaches adopted by women teachers of physical education in boys’ schools.
- Explore the way students in these classes receive and interpret their experience in physical education with a female teacher.

It is hoped that the findings from this study will help us to understand to a greater degree the teaching approaches that are effective for female teachers of physical education in boys’ schools. I believe that an increased understanding of the difficulties encountered by female physical educators in all boys’ schools will lead to the development of more appropriate strategies for females teaching boys in masculine contexts such as physical education.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete the attached consent form. Your involvement in this study will be spread over a five month period (August 2007 – December 2007), and the research will be conducted in three phases. Your involvement at each stage is outlined below:

**Phase 1 – August 2007**

1. Participation in a 25-30 minute semi-structured interview that explores the following themes:
   - A profile of participants –
     - Your age?
     - How long have you been teaching?
     - How long have you been teaching in boys’ schools?
     - Your involvement in sport / physical education prior to teaching?
   - How did you come to be a teacher of physical education in an all boys’ school? What attracted you to it?
   - Describe what you like about teaching physical education in an all boys’ school.
   - Describe what you dislike about teaching physical education in an all boys’ school.
   - What are the positive aspects you experience in this context?
   - What are the difficulties you are faced with in this context?
   - Do you feel that boys behave differently towards female teachers? Explain.
   - What skills are required for effective teaching and learning in this context?
   - Are the skills required different for females? How did you obtain them? Would people commencing teaching in all boys’ schools possess these skills already?
The interview will be held in a place that you nominate, at a time of your choice outside of school time. The main purpose of the interview is to ask you to share your opinions, experiences and stories relating to teaching physical education and sport in masculine contexts.

2. Allow the researcher to attend one physical education class of your choice (Year 8, 9 or 10) to invite students from the class to participate in the study.

At this time the purpose of the research will be explained to the students and they will be invited to participate in a focus group and/or semi structured interview about their experiences in physical education with a female teacher. At this time it will be highlighted that there will be ten lessons in total throughout the semester where the teacher (you) will be videotaped to look at the teaching approaches used in your classes. It will be conveyed to students that whilst the focus of the tape is on the teacher and the approaches they are taking, some of the class participants may come into view. This videotape will be used in a discussion with you about the teaching styles adopted and it will not be used for any public display. Students will be given a package that contains a statement about the research and consent form for them, a statement about the research and consent form for their parent or guardian and a self-addressed return envelope for students and parents/guardians. This will allow them to return the completed consent forms to me directly if they elect to participate in this study. This process ensures that you will not be required to be involved in the recruitment process of the students.

Phase 2 – September 2007
1. Grant permission for the researcher to observe and videotape you teaching five physical education lessons to the class selected during Phase 1 of the study.

2. Participate in two semi-structured interview for approximately 45-60 minutes to explore the teaching approaches used during the taped lessons. The use of videotaped segments from your lesson (via the process of video stimulated recall) will be used to prompt discussions about which approaches you selected to use in certain circumstances and the reasons for these choices. As with the interview conducted during phase 1, the interviews will be held in a place that you nominate, at a time of your choice outside of school time.

Phase 3 – October 2007-December 2007
1. Grant permission for the researcher to observe and videotape you teaching five physical education lessons to the class selected during Phase 1 of the study.

2. Participate in two semi-structured interview for approximately 30-45 minutes to once again explore the teaching approaches used during the lessons. As with the procedure outlined during Phase 2, videotaped segments from your lesson will be used to prompt discussions about which approaches you selected to use in certain circumstances and the reasons for these choices. The purpose for repeating this process is to investigate if any changes to the approaches used at the start of the semester have occurred and the reasons for these changes if applicable. As with the interview conducted during phase 1, the interviews will be held in a place that you nominate, at the time of your choice outside of school time.

As this research will also involve interviewing students and colleagues, you should be aware that some personal information about you may be obtained in the course of these interviews with third parties. All interviews will be digitally recorded and then transcribed by myself. You will be given a pseudonym, or false name, so that your privacy and real identity is protected. All the digital files will be burnt to a CD and stored together with the typed interviews and written notes in a locked filing cabinet in my home office so that my supervisor and I are the only people able to access them. Furthermore the consent forms will be kept separate from other data in a locked filing cabinet in my office at the University of Ballarat where only my supervisor or myself will be able to access them. When the findings of this study are reported, the false names will be used for both participants and the school. Although as the researcher I will be taking the above measure to protect your identity and the identity of the school, it is possible that due to the small number of female physical educators in all boys’ schools and the position you hold, someone may recognise your views as they are written in the research report. Finally, this data and the research findings obtained from this study may be used in future publications. I draw this to your attention as part of the decision you make on whether or not you wish to participate.
If you agree to participate in this research, you can decide to withdraw from the study at any time. In the event that the content is causing embarrassment, undue worry or any other uncomfortable feelings you may leave the interview room at any time. In addition, participants will be able to view their transcription after the interview so they can delete or verify any information provided during the interview. Furthermore, I will contact your school’s counsellor prior to the interview to check that there will be a possibility for you to discuss any concerns you may have as a result of participating in this interview. Participants should be aware that if you choose to withdraw from the research no data gathered from you during the course of the research will be used.

If you have any queries about this study please do not hesitate to contact me on (03) 5327 9934 (BH) or by email at a.mooney@ballarat.edu.au.

Thank you.

Amanda Mooney

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Should you have any concerns about the conduct of this research project, please contact the Secretary, Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee, Research Services, Deakin University, 221 Burwood Highway, Burwood VIC 3125. Tel: (03) 9251 7123 (International +61 3 9251 7123) E-mail: research-ethics@deakin.edu.au
Please quote project no. EC 139-2007
Appendix 2: Informed consent – Institution/Organisation

DEAKIN UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
CONSENT FORM – For Institutions/Organisations
Women teachers’ approaches to teaching physical education in boys’ schools

I, ............................................................................., of ....................................... ................................... (Name of organisation) hereby give permission for staff from the above named organisation to be involved in a research study being undertaken by Miss Amanda Mooney.

and I understand that the purpose of the research is to:

- Explore the pedagogical approaches adopted by women teachers of physical education in boys’ schools.
- Explore the way students receive and interpret their experiences in physical education with a female teacher.

and that involvement for the institution means the following:

- The researcher will attend one physical education lesson with the nominated teacher to speak with the students about the research project and invite students to participate.
- The researcher will be present at your school for one day a week for the duration of semester 2. She will follow the guidelines outlined for the registration of a visitor to the school.
- One female physical education teacher to be observed teaching a Year 8, 9 or 10 physical education lesson on ten occasions in total throughout semester 2. These observations will be videotaped.
- One female physical education teacher to be interviewed about her experiences teaching physical education in your school on five occasions in total throughout semester 2 outside of normal school time.
- One focus group interview with 8-10 students from the observed classes will be conducted during one lunchtime for 20-25 minutes in an appropriate venue at the school.
- Six students will be interviewed from the observed classes on two occasions throughout semester 2 during lunchtime for 20-30 minutes each.
- Some staff members will be interviewed for a duration of 20 minutes at a time and location convenient to the participant.

I acknowledge
1. That the aims, methods, and anticipated benefits, and possible risks/hazards of the research study, have been explained to me.
2. That I voluntarily and freely give my consent for the institution/organisation to participate in the above research study.
3. That I am free to withdraw my consent at any time during the study, in which event participation in the research study will immediately cease and any information obtained through this institution/organisation will not be used if I so request.
4. I understand that aggregated results will be used for research purposes and may be reported in scientific and academic journals.

I agree that
1. The institution/organisation MAY / MAY NOT be named in research publications or other publicity without prior agreement.
2. I / We DO / DO NOT require an opportunity to check the factual accuracy of the research findings related to the institution/organisation.
3. I / We EXPECT / DO NOT EXPECT to receive a copy of the research findings or publications.

Signature:                                                                             Date:
Appendix 3: Letter advising parents that I would be attending school

DEAKIN UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT – Parents of students in [Insert Female PE Teacher’s name] Physical Education class

Women teachers’ approaches to teaching physical education in boys’ schools

20th April, 2007

Dear Parents / Guardians,

My name is Amanda Mooney and I am a researcher completing my Doctor of Philosophy degree with Deakin University under the supervision of Associate Professor Chris Hickey in the Faculty of Education. Prior to my employment as a University lecturer, I was a physical education teacher for nine years. The purpose of this letter is to explain a little bit about a research project that I will be conducting in [female teacher’s name]’s physical education class for semester 2, 2007.

The purpose of this particular research is to investigate the teaching approaches taken by female physical education teachers in boys’ schools. This project aims to explore:

- How female physical education teachers go about their job teaching in a boys’ school?
- Which teaching approaches for physical education they choose to employ and the reasons why they make these choices?
- How students feel about their experiences in physical education with a female teacher?

Whilst the nature of this research predominantly focuses on the teacher and the teaching approaches she adopts in an all boys’ physical education lesson, it will be important to have some student input into this process to fully understand how these teaching approaches are received.

In the coming few weeks I will be visiting your son’s class to meet with your son and other boys in his physical education class to talk about the research and invite your son to participate. This research will be conducted during semester 2, 2007 and it is anticipated that five classes in total throughout the semester will be observed. As part of this observation process, a videotape will be used to focus on the teacher’s approaches taken throughout the lesson. It is important to note that this videotape is purely research focussed and will only be viewed by the teacher and the researcher as a tool to prompt discussions about which teaching approaches were employed and the reasons behind why these teaching approaches were selected. This videotape will not be used for public purposes and it will be destroyed after the interview with the teacher. I appreciate that there will potentially be occasions where students will come into view throughout this session as they engage with the teacher, therefore if your son decides not to be involved; any data collected during the taped lessons will not be able to be withdrawn. I draw your attention to the fact that permission has been granted by your School Principal and the Executive Officer of the Edmund Rice Education Commission for this research to proceed.

If you have any concerns or queries relating to this research project, please feel free to contact me on (03) 53279934 (BH) or via email at g.mooney@ballarat.edu.au to discuss any concerns.

Yours sincerely,

Amanda Mooney

Should you have any concerns about the conduct of this research project, please contact the Secretary, Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee, Research Services, Deakin University, 221 Burwood Highway, Burwood VIC 3125. Tel: (03) 9251 7123 (International +61 3 9251 7123) E-mail: research-ethics@deakin.edu.au Please quote project no. EC 139-2007
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