# Identity Work: Stories told in learning to teach physical education

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**Identity work: Stories told in learning to teach Health and Physical Education**

**Abstract**

Pre-service teachers bring to their university studies particular world views and understandings of themselves and others around health and physical activity. Their biographies and experiences in school physical education, sport and other societal institutions inform these perspectives and understandings. These in turn work to mediate university learning, interactions with the physical education learning area and understandings of teaching and learning processes. The biographies of pre-service teachers can provide valuable insights into how and why particular constructions of self are possible within given historical times, locations and events.

In the context of teacher preparation in physical education this research attempts to investigate the construction of a teaching identity and pedagogical practices. Specifically it attempts to reveal how various cultures of physical activity, fitness and sport shape the subjective experiences of pre-service teachers as well as how different theoretical frameworks can be used to provide particular readings and deeper understandings of the stories told.

Pre-service teachers were asked to respond to a series of open-ended questions regarding their personal experiences of physical education, physical activity and university and the implications of these experiences for notions of themselves as an emerging teacher in the learning area. In the process of analysis attempt was made to identify the meanings students made in these contexts and their influence on the construction of a teaching identity. The findings give evidence of the complex and multiple ways that teaching identities are constructed as well as the processes whereby particular pedagogical practices are adopted.

**Key Words:** identity, physical education, Foucault, Bourdieu, Ricoeur

## Introduction

Fernandez-Balboa, (1998) argues that one's identity or sense of self is significant in terms of beliefs held and approaches to teaching and learning adopted. He argues that in teaching the personal and the pedagogical cannot be separated and what happens in one area deeply affects the other. Similarly Carter and Doyle (1996) recognise the deeply personal nature of learning to teach and the significance of one's biography and identity to the process.

As teacher educators in the area of physical education, our own identities are strongly aligned with socially critical and just approaches to teaching and learning. More specifically we are committed to exploring and promoting pedagogical practices that work to include, support learning and constitute positive physical identities regardless of gender, ability, ethnicity or socio-economic status. Through our work with pre-service teachers we have become aware that the taking up of socially critical pedagogical practice of physical education is neither neat nor guaranteed (Garrett, 2006; Garrett & Wrench, 2008; Hickey, 2001; Kelly, Hickey, & Tinning, 2000). This along with contestations about what counts as valued knowledge, practices and content of physical education studies has motivated us to explore the interrelationships between identity work and pedagogical practices of pre-service teachers learning to teach physical education. It is via the medium of narratives told, retold and relived that these interrelationships will be explored.

### *Identity and teaching*

Learning to teach is a social, emotional, intellectual and personal endeavour that begins well before arrival at university (Groundwater-Smith, Mitchell, & Mockler, 2007). In the area of physical education, past experiences of schooling, physical activity and sport underpin the knowledge taken up as well as understandings and assumptions made about selves as future teachers. These experiences and prior knowledge serve as a lens or filter through which pre-

service teachers negotiate and make sense of their university learning (Garrett & Wrench, 2007; Groundwater-Smith et al., 2007).

In this paper we use narratives told by pre-service teachers as an entry point to explore, analyse and make sense of identity work during the process of becoming teachers of physical education. In doing so we are working from an understanding that identity and subjectivity are interrelated but distinct concepts. More specifically we understand 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. Identity is used in reference to the performance aspects of subjectivity that qualify people relationally, including in terms of gender, ethnicity, class and occupations such as the physical education teacher (Venn, 2006).

This research is informed by calls for supportive, strategic teacher education programs where the beliefs and perspectives of pre-service teachers (Bauml, 2009) are taken into consideration in preparing them for the complexities of teachers work in post modern times. We are also guided by Sontoro and Allard (2005) who contend that teacher educators need to better understand the subject positions pre-service teachers variously constitute or ascribe. In attending to these arguments this study seeks to investigate how and why particular pedagogical practices are adopted by pre-service teachers of physical education.

**Lenses for Understanding**

As teacher educators we encounter diverse stories, recollections and reflections about teaching and learning around physical education and sport. For us these stories highlight the complexity inherent in learning to teach and in developing a sense of self as a teacher of physical education. They also raise questions about how and why the story tellers come to act

or speak as they do, as well as normalised tendencies, dispositions and coherency in identities within and across time and places.

Rather than locate definitive explanations to these questions we wish to deepen our understandings by taking three theoretical perspectives in analysing a number of stories told by pre-service teachers and gaining broader awareness of identity work and pedagogical practices. The theoretical perspectives include post structuralism as informed by the work of Foucault, Bourdieu's thinking tools of *habitus, capital* and *field* and narrative identity as identified through the work of Ricoeur. Each theoretical framework will allow particular readings of the narratives and hence different questions to be asked and meanings made (Honan, Knobel, Barker, & Davies, 2000).

The theoretical frameworks will be drawn on not in dialectical opposition but collectively in an attempt to enhance understandings about the constitution of subjectivities for new teachers of physical education and by association pedagogical practices. In the next section we present brief descriptions of each before applying these perspectives as a frame for analysis to two stories (narratives) from pre-service physical education teachers.

***Foucault***

Davies (2004) contends that poststructural theories provide opportunities to problematise established ways of thinking, as well as exposing and confronting normalised, 'truthful' and 'correct' forms of representation. In drawing on poststructural perspectives as informed by Foucault we attempt to identify and explore the multiplicity of discourses drawn on by our pre-service teachers in constituting subjectivities as teachers. In this sense we understand subjectivity as complex, changeable and constituted through discourses and relations of power (Davies, 2004; Kalmbach Philips, 2002).

Words used and cultural practices pursued allow us to identify the discourses being drawn on in ascribing and taking up particular subject positions within contexts or sites (Wright, 2004). Discourses shape and inform understandings about our ways of being and acting as well as the actions of others. Where hegemonic discourses around physical education may constitute particular teacher subjectivities, these are neither fixed nor stable. Through the processes of this research project, we investigate and identify the various discursive resources being drawn on and subject positions taken up by our pre-service teachers.

From a Foucauldian perspective we are also interested in relations of power. Power 'is exercised within discourses in the ways in which they constitute and govern subjects. Power also structures relations between different subjects within and across discourses' (Weedon, 1997, p. 110). While Camacho and Fernandez-Balboa (2006) remind us of the intimate relationship between the self and pedagogy it can be argued that relations of power mobilise particular norms and understandings about chosen pedagogies and teacher subjectivities. Analysis using Foucauldian perspectives allows us to interrogate the relationships of power experienced as these pre-service teachers adopt particular pedagogies in the process of constituting themselves as teachers of physical education.

We are however mindful of the concerns raised by feminist theorists such as Mc Nay (1999; 2000; 2003) around a sole reliance on poststructural analysis as limiting understandings of the creative and generative work engaged by individuals in the constitution of subjectivities. With this in mind a second reading or lens for analysis will involve the use of concepts and tools developed by Bourdieu.

***Bourdieu***

Bourdieu's work around *habitus*, *capital* and *field* provides us with a useful lens for understanding normalised practices, beliefs and embodied behaviours (Maton, 2008; McLeod

& Yates, 2006) associated with teachers of physical education. These key concepts or 'thinking tools'(Grenfell, 2008b) are interrelated and work to make up the structure and conditions of social contexts such as sport, physical education, educational institutions and families.

McLeod and Yates (2006) describe *habitus* as 'socialized subjectivity' which finds expression in the ways individuals become themselves, how they engage in practices and their enduring dispositions. *Habitus* is 'structured' by one's past and present circumstances but is also 'structuring' in that it works to shape present and future practices (McLeod & Yates, 2006). The concept of *habitus* provides a means for understanding the dispositions, orientations, values of pre-service teachers as they interact with the fields of schools, physical education and teacher education.

*Habitus* is not fixed or uniformly imposed but is formed in relation to *social fields. Fields* are the social spaces and structured contexts of institutions (Thomson, 2008). They include the rules and relationships that work to shape practices and what counts as valuable capital (McLeod & Yates, 2006). Interactions within a given field allow individuals to learn the taken for granted truths (*doxa*), or 'rules of a particular game'. A mismatch between an individual's *habitus* and a given *field* results in feelings of being a 'fish out of water' so much so that we tend to gravitate to fields that provide the best match with our dispositions (Maton, 2008). Bourdieu's thinking tools help us to identify the similarities and consistencies as well as contradictions around beliefs, and practices expressed within and between stories. These similarities and differences encourage exploration of the physical, cultural and symbolic capital of the participants within particular *fields* such as families, schools, sport and physical education.

Where criticism of Bourdieu's analysis has argued that it is overly deterministic we feel that potential exists to answer questions about how pre-service teachers actively constitute themselves as particular types of teachers who value and adopt specific pedagogical approaches. Where these practices and subjectivities are described across sites and times and located in narratives we turn next to Ricoeur's notions of narrative identity.

***Ricoeur***

Ricoeur's theorizing on selfhood and narrative identity provides another lens or framework for investigating the stories of selves, physical education, sport and learning to teach. Ricoeur (1988; 1991c) holds that narrative identity is not stable or seamless and that there is no given essential self. Rather selfhood is a complex phenomenon entailing two types of identity that cannot be conflated to an essential given self (Pellauer, 2007). More specifically Ricoeur uses the concepts of *ipse* (self-same/selfhood) and *idem* (same) in an attempt to develop understandings about how a non essential self-constancy can be maintained relationally with a changing and dynamic sense of self (McNay, 1999; Pellauer, 2007). On the one hand, the self is constituted and enabled by its cultural and physical circumstances and on the other hand it is dynamic always capable of change, agency and initiating something new (McNay, 1999; Pellauer, 2007; Ricoeur, 2005). Ricoeur, (1991a, 1991b) argues that there is a *pre-narrative* aspect to human life which enables us to speak of life as a story. We comprehend actions, gestures and symbolic mediations via structures that constitute a story and our experiences are mediated by the various stories we have heard (Ricoeur, 1991a). In this respect Ricoeur (1991b) suggests that it is not surprising that we learn to construct and tell stories about what happens to us. We become the narrators of our own stories but not necessarily the authors of our lives (Ricoeur, 1991b). It follows that the narratives of the pre-service teachers in this study provide potential to illuminate notions of intention, self

expression and reflexivity along with a coherent sense of self as teachers of physical education.

Ricoeur (1991a) equates our subjectivity with a narrative identity constituted in relation to the narratives available to us. We make sense of our lives through the stories we tell and do so against the backdrop of the various narratives circulating in our culture and societies (Ricoeur, 1991a, 1991b). Possibility therefore exists to explore intersections between personal narratives and institutional or grand narratives including those of physical education.

Narrative dimensions of identity have been criticised as being overly deterministic particularistic and privileging patriarchal understandings through grand or traditional accounts (McNay, 2000).We turn to Ricoeur's conceptualisation of narrative identity, not to determine essential constructions of physical education teachers, but because of the potential to explore agency and therefore generative accounts of becoming (Venn, 2006).

We acknowledge that each theoretical perspective has particular strengths and weaknesses but in this work they have been used, collectively, in an attempt to broaden understandings about the processes of becoming teachers of physical education.

**This Research**

In the context of teacher preparation in physical education this research investigates the constitution of emerging teaching subjectivities as pre-service teachers move through their university studies. Specifically, it attempts to reveal how various cultures of school, families, physical education, fitness and sport shape the subjective experiences of pre-service physical education teachers as well as how different theoretical frameworks can be used to provide particular readings and deeper understandings of the stories told.

The Bachelor of Education (3-9) program at an Australian university prepares students for teaching as generalist classroom teachers in primary schools and for teaching physical education in primary and lower secondary schools. This program is relatively young in that only two years of graduates have emerged from the university prior to this study.

The broader study from which this paper has emerged was conducted with ten teacher education students completing the physical education general study. Physical education courses are delivered across the four years of the undergraduate program and those courses that have a major practical and/or 'lab-school' (field) component have constituted specific sites for the research project. It is understood that these courses provide opportunities for theory to inform practice and practice to inform theory and as such provide important sites for identity work as teachers.

Whilst pre–service teachers of physical education have typically enjoyed un-problematic relationships with the institutions of sport and physical education those in this study have been exposed to socially critical issues through particular courses in the Bachelor of Education (3-9) program (Garrett & Wrench, 2008; Garrett, Wrench, & Piltz, 2007). Critical reflection and other strategies are employed with the aim of developing broader perspectives around physical activity. The intention being to encourage the development of physical education teachers who can identify, confront, and act against practices, beliefs and teaching that continue to alienate, marginalise and disadvantage students from less powerful social positions.

Macdonald *et al*. (2002) and Tinning (2004) warn that such is the hegemony of dominant discourses around physical education and traditional notions of teacher identity that pre-service teacher resistance can be expected. In the present situation an ethnographic study has shown potential to provide the spaces and time to foreground any such contestations and

contradictions. In this respect we are encouraged by the work of Deborah Britzman (2000)and Beverly Skeggs (1997) who through ethnography have used the narratives of experiences not to fix 'truthful', coherent accounts of subjects but to reveal the competing discourses, the varied stories told of experiences and to confront how or why particular stories are told.

***Participants***

The participants in this research undertaking formed the basis of one of the author's PhD studies and involved students undertaking a four year concurrent Bachelor of Education (3-9) program at an Australian university. Participation in the research project was completely voluntary with an invitation to participate extended to the entire cohort of students completing the first year of the physical education general study in the B. Ed (3-9) program. Key background information about the research, aims, and commitment was disseminated via information sessions and an information letter. Potential participants were also informed of their right to withdraw at any stage of the project. Permission slips were distributed and signed by all participants prior to the commencement of the research process.

Selection of the research participants was purposeful (Patton, 2002) in that they met the key requirement of enrolment in a full physical education general study within the B.Ed. (3-9) program. As a result, over the course of the four year degree program, the participants will have completed four to six physical education general study courses, a physical education curriculum course and physical education pathway course. As a reflection of the gender balance of enrolments in physical education courses a near even balance between the sexes was sought and achieved.

### *Collecting data and creating narratives*

Data for the broader study from which this paper has emerged was collected through semi structured interviews, focus groups, reflections and email communication conducted and received over a three year period. Themes for interview questions included personal experiences of physical activity, sport and physical education through schooling and university. Narratives were constructed from interview and focus group transcripts. In constructing these narratives attempt was made to allow the narrators' words speak for themselves in telling their life stories (Dowling Naess, 2001). Where the researchers made decisions about the material included, authenticity was sought through returning the narratives to the 'narrators' to read. Their comments, revisions and additional input were used in editing the narratives. It must however, be acknowledged that the final form of the narratives and excerpts presented in this paper were determined by the researchers and as such reflect our particular biases, subject positioning and perspectives of the participants' narratives.

### *Analysis- guiding questions*

The constructed narratives were read multiple times using the thinking and analytical tools available within the three theoretical frameworks. An initial reading focused on identifying subject positions, interpretative practices, and contextualisation in the stories told. Attention was paid to the linkages between events and biographical particulars, in the construction of 'reality' and revised subjectivities (Holstein and Gubrium 2000; Chase 2005).

A subsequent reading was made in attempt to identify prominent themes, commonalities and points of disjunction. In using guiding questions such as how and why do the narrators speak and act as they do, attempt was made to identify the discourses being drawn on, the subject positions available and taken up as teachers of physical education.

Another reading was made with a focus on commonality and incongruence in dispositions, values and beliefs as developed in particular social fields and spaces. In using Bourdieu's thinking tools of habitus, field and capital attempt was made to identify how subjectivities as particular types of physical education teachers who use specific pedagogical practices were actively taken up. The final reading was made in an attempt to identify commonalities, intention and coherence within and between narratives told in constructing selves as teachers of physical education. These multiple readings revealed the discursive resources, significant dispositions developed and the agency practised by the research participants in becoming particular types of physical education teachers. In the next section we present a snapshot of the readings made of the narratives of two participants. These are partial accounts that were chosen as reflective of key themes to emerge from the body of data.

## A Foucauldian Reading

### *Sport, science and able bodies*

Tinning (2004) foregrounds the relatively similar shared discursive histories of physical education teachers and the significance of these in the development of professional identities. Importantly and not surprisingly discourses of sport and in turn biomedicine were prominent across the narratives in this study. Discursive practices around sport as experienced in families, schools, physical education and sport influenced understandings of self, students in schools, and themselves as novice teachers. Common themes that circulated through the narratives included active childhoods with participation in a range of sports, success in physical education and Sports Days. In turn there was an adoption of taken for granted values and behaviours associated with sport. Notions of service or giving back were also evident as they volunteered as coaches in schools and junior sport, developed coaching expertise and additional qualifications. The dominance of a sport discourse was apparent in the persistence

practised by one of the participants in supporting her children's participation in a range of junior sports.

> I am coaching U /10 basketball and my older son is playing and is enjoying that. I am also coaching Little Aths now and both of them hate Little Aths. I am starting to feel like a really bad Mum because I feel like I am forcing my older son to do something that he absolutely hates. I really have got to persevere with him; otherwise he will never learn resilience. So even though I feel like a mean Mum I don't want to pull him out because athletics is giving him the fundamental movements and skills of everything. He is quite uncoordinated so he really does need to do stuff (Leanne, 2007).

In this excerpt Leanne constructs herself as an appropriately aware parent in enabling her children's participation in sport. In taking up the discourses of sport she foregrounds a perception that sport is essential in developing values and attributes such as resilience and movement competence which will be significant in future life. Such is the dominance of the discourse of sport, over other discourses that she perseveres in the face of her children's reluctance and the risk of being constructed as a 'bad' mother.

Through discourses of sport and by association biomedicine, ability was naturalised and bodies assigned mechanistic values that could be measured, improved and compared. There was an acceptance of the place of competition and concomitant hierarchies of ability as well as a belief that the values and practices of sport were transferrable to other aspects of life including teaching.

> Sport and physical education were highlights because I was 'naturally sporty'. I loved PE lessons and the various sports days. These were the things I was good at and gave me positive vibes. I currently train for athletics and my athletics coach is a wonderful role model for me. As a teacher I will use some of the traits my coach uses as I feel she would have been a wonderful teacher *(*Leanne, 2006).

Ultimately, as is evident in the following excerpt from D'Arcy's narrative, discourses of sport supported constructions of physical education teachers as having sporting backgrounds, expertise and the ability to teach a variety of sports.

> I think PE is one of those subjects where the person or the teacher has to have a lot of experience in a sport and sports in general. Then they can actually make it more relevant for the kids and understand where they are coming from. I think Uni offers you a lot of experiences but if you don't have that experience outside of Uni I think you are limited because you don't get everything about sports (D'Arcy, 2007).

Where discourses of sport inform a sense of self around physical activity they also inform understandings of available subject positions for teachers and by association pedagogical practices. Through discourses of sport, teachers are constructed as experts who aim to improve bodies and physical performances through 'performance pedagogies' (Cassidy, Jones, & Potrac, 2004; Johns & Johns, 2000; Tinning, 1991). 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 (Tinning, 1991).

***Healthism- fit, active and healthy***

Discourses of healthism operate to define particular health problems, associated awareness and actions (Cheek, 2008). We live in times where obesity, overweight and activity levels amongst children and adolescents are a prime focus, receptor and vehicle for healthism. So much so that health based physical education is constructed as pivotal in establishing and maintaining the health and wellbeing of students. Health is constructed as a natural by-product of regular physical exercise and related bodily practices and is indicated by body size, shape and weight (Wright & Burrows, 2004).

Discourses of healthism and by association biomedicine were drawn on by the participants in this study in describing themselves as physical education teachers. This was especially in relation to how teachers look, act and comport themselves. The bodies of physical education teachers were active and thus inscribed with attributes of fitness and health.

> When I tell someone that I am at university studying to be a PE teacher, they often comment that I look like one. I think I look like a PE teacher because I am physically healthy, fit, strong and active (Leanne, 2006).

Obesity and hence healthism discourses were ubiquitous and informed understandings of the role of physical education. Repeatedly participants told of 'hating the whole obesity thing'. As D'Arcy and Leanne comment, physical education has a role to play in getting kids active and in enjoying physical activity as a counter to the risks of obesity.

> I want to make a difference, I want to emphasise to students that being outdoor is better than being indoors. I hate the whole obesity thing, and kids stuck indoors. My aims are to continue to be active, get my qualifications, teach and have students constantly being active (D'Arcy, 2006).

> I think that all kids have a right to PE, to enjoy it, to be fit and healthy and it should be part of all school curriculums (Leanne, 2007)

In this respect, discourses of healthism work to support instrumental notions of physical education. Accordingly discourses of healthism like discourses of sport invoke a clear relationship between teacher subjectivities and *performance* pedagogies.

### *Technical rationality- effective and efficient teachers*

Another theme to emerge in the narratives centred on notions of efficient, effective and good teachers. Effective teaching was understood as being in control, planning for teaching and student learning as well as managing the learning environment for participation and maximising student participation.

> I think my teaching style is very practical. I like to have the students engaged and like to have everything set up in a certain way. So I like to have probably two stations set up, while we are doing one then we'll progress to the next one, and then when they are doing that station I'll get up the next one set up. I like to it to be exercises or games (D'Arcy, 2008).

So too as is evident in the next excerpt from Leanne, discourses of technical rationality informed constructions of 'good' teachers and their pedagogical practices. Given the focus on teacher effectiveness and efficiency in meeting desired objectives 'good' physical education teachers were constructed as using *performance pedagogies*.

> My mentor was unreal. She was fantastic, she was really good and I watched her and her classes were the way they should be. She did skills stuff and paired them up so they were always participating. She did good demonstrations and she played the games but they were all modified. She just did everything the way that I have been taught (Leanne, 2008).

### *Socially critical discourses- making a difference*

Through university studies connections with socially critical discourses were developed in core education courses and some physical education courses. Although the participants at times lacked a vocabulary to deeply explore critical perspectives they were able to draw attention to altered pedagogical perspectives and teaching for inclusion, safety and diversity.

> Language and Multiliteracies make you appreciate people's differences. It's just changed me as a whole person really, like how I look at people and how I treat people. It's just made me appreciate what people go through. Like disadvantaged people who don't have access to what others have but should. Schools should be places that change the negative aspects of children's lives. If I can impact a few of those kids, I will have done something good. I know I won't be able to make change for every kid (Leanne, 2006).

The following excerpt from D'Arcy's narrative indicates the significance of exposing pre-service teachers to social justice issues and critical discourses. Where pre-service teachers are supported these discourses can inform the subject positions available and taken up.

> Uni has also helped me to be more understanding. When I was young you just saw someone's appearance and that shaped my thinking of that person. I didn't actually understand all the issues behind it; I just thought because of their appearance that they were not PE oriented. I used to think that having a larger body size meant people were uncoordinated and couldn't be good at PE (D'Arcy, 2007).

## A Bourdieu Reading

### *'PE is just me'- field, habitus and capital*

Habitus focuses on our ways of acting, feeling, thinking and being (Maton, 2008). In this respect habitus captures how we embody our experiences, carry our biography and history into present circumstances and project this onto imagined futures.

> I grew up in a very 'practical family' where physical activity, and sport were the norm. Both my parents played sport at a high level and they have guided me through all the steps. They didn't drill it into me but they've made sure that I had what I needed to do to get to a high level in sport. My parents have been a big and a positive influence on my sporting career (D'Arcy, 2006).

D'Arcy's description of an active childhood encouraged and supported by physically active parents provided him with attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, and capabilities that underpinned his success in sport and physical education. Bourdieu argues that early socialisation in families is significant and although habitus is shaped by ongoing contexts our dispositions are not easily altered (Maton, 2008). In this respect D'Arcy's familial experiences around sport and physical activity laid a foundation from which he subsequently successfully engaged with and experienced physical education and sport. His dispositions and cultural capital also worked to shape his career choice as a physical education teacher.

In choosing teaching as a career he gravitated towards a field where there was a natural fit with his positive dispositions towards sport and physical activity. As Maton (2008) says: As 'fish in water, social agents are typically unaware of the supporting, life affirming water, the match between their habituses and the fields in which they flourish or feel at ease, and how they come to be in these contexts'(p59). Bourdieu describes fields as social spaces and as such they include families, school, sport, physical education and teacher education. He used the analogy of social life as the football game with boundaries, rules or limits to what can be done within the specific conditions of the field.

> I was not one of the popular girls so my sporting success was difficult. I remember when I came to high school I was the only one from my primary school and I ran an eight hundred meters against this girl who was very popular. I beat her and no one spoke to me after that because she was popular and she should have won. I was different to the others. I just wasn't a trendy person and as someone who did not fit in I had a limited number of good friends. I was good at sport but I didn't like it when the teachers had two kids up the front of the group picking teams because I was always picked last (Leanne, 2006).

The interrelationships between field, habitus, capital, cannot be separated and this excerpt from Leanne's narrative exemplifies the significance of habitus and the nature and volume of capital held within a particular field. Where her habitus may dispose her to sporting success and an affinity with sport, the volume of her social capital precludes her from utilising her sporting success to accumulate additional capital within the spaces of school. However the shaping that resulted from these experiences and the habitus developed early in life work to inform her actions once she finds a fit within teacher education courses underpinned by socially critical principles.

> As a parent I can relate to how difficult it is for some parents. My father died when I was 6 and from this time on it was difficult for my mother. We lived in many different places and

> my mother struggled. I think these experiences will help me understand and be aware of issues that can happen for some children (Leanne, 2008).

### *Institutions- field, habitus and capital*

Dispositions, values, perceptions and attitudes continued to be shaped and developed through university based learning. For D'Arcy a match exists between the physical education field at university and his habitus, as well as his accumulated capital. Physical education courses at university are spaces where he builds on his physical and cultural capital in relation to the field of teaching. Where D'Arcy's understandings of the physical education field reflect a dominant orthodoxy it is, according to Grenfell (2008a), in his *interest* to enhance his skills across a range of sports, gain technical proficiency so as to improve student performances.

> Uni is helping me to be able to develop unit plans, to understand the theory and the content. I've had some more experiences, done more sports and activities than I already knew. Some of my other courses have helped me with my grammar and spelling so I won't just be a typical PE teacher (D'Arcy, 2006).

D'Arcy has also been *strategic* in utilising his social capital (network) to work with his former physical education teacher and undertake a virtual apprenticeship in teaching. In doing so D'Arcy has gained additional pedagogical skills, knowledge and practical qualifications reflective of orthodox notions of physical education teacher expertise. In this way D'Arcy uses specific *strategies* to enhance his *interest* in relation to cultural capital valued in teaching physical education.

> One of my teachers from school has been a big influence and shaped what I have wanted to do and how I want to do things. I'm working with him now at the school and I have had various opportunities, for one, they have paid for me to do coaching courses, in various sports and I love it. I also do part of an 'Outdoor Ed' program with bush walking. (D'Arcy, 2007)

***Habitus/capital + field = practice***

Bourdieu (1991) argues that one's practices (read pedagogy) result from an unconscious relationship between habitus and field. More specifically the apparently natural choices of action can be explained through the specific interrelationship between habitus, capital and field (Maton, 2008).

> I get on well with students who are like minded, you know, passionate, committed, professional and compassionate in their attitudes and work. But it does concern me that many students feel physical education is an easy subject to teach and doesn't need the same level of commitment as all other subjects. It is not simply a matter of setting up a game and letting the kids go play. I think that 'professional' is a word that describes how I participate, apply myself, and my attitude (Leanne, 2008).

In the example provided from Leanne's narrative, the relationship between her habitus, the nature and volume of her capital within the field of a teacher education program becomes evident in her description of herself. She proclaims a professional attitude and a commitment to making a difference for all students but particularly disadvantaged students, through quality physical education. Where we have insights into the discourses being drawn on, habitus and capital held in giving form to pedagogical practices and how they are shaping individuals as teachers of physical education we turn to Ricoeur to explore the ways that across times and spaces the participant's narratives work to construct teacher identities.

## A Ricoeur Reading

***Idem/Ipse- 'a real teacher'***

Ricoeur (2005) contends that when we tell stories about ourselves we project our personal identity as a narrative identity. There is a temporal aspect to the stories told and the self within a narrative which is united through the plot to establish a type of coherence or durability over time (Ricoeur, 1991c). Narrative identity provides the structure for the

dialectical relationship between the immutable self (*idem)* and the same but changing self (*ipse)*.

> I have got confidence in being a teacher. Even when I was younger playing sport I was always analysing things, and thinking how you can modify it to be different, not for teaching purposes but just for training and further improvement. I have continued to do that and now with all that new knowledge I just want to pass it on. Yeah I see myself as a real teacher who breaks things down and just tries to really reinforce to kids that it is not that hard (D'Arcy 2008).

D'Arcy tells a compelling story that foregrounds the ways across time and spaces that he can construct himself coherently and recognisably as an appropriate teacher of physical education. He constructs himself as someone who has consistently been able and willing to analyse movement, initially for mastery and now in relation to current and future teaching intentions. Where there is consistency (idem) and sameness in attitude and ability across time in different circumstances, his narrative is simultaneously imbued with a dynamic element (ipse) reflected in the attainment of new knowledge and skills considered essential for the real teacher of physical education.

***Narrative identity***

A narrative tells of the connections that unify actions over a span of time as well as the connections that link viewpoints on and assessments of those actions. We make sense of our own identities through telling stories about our life. In telling stories our identity is not a fixed structure or substance but is mobile and dynamic.

> I have been doing some mentoring work at a high school with year 10 students who have shown an interest in going to university. From this work the school approached me about working as a tutor in literacy for Aboriginal students. I told them that I did not know a lot about literacy teaching but was willing to 'give it a go'. I did some research which helped me plan what I could do. The main thing is that I have tried to connect with the students. I

> found out that they liked physical activity so I took them out to shoot some basketball goals and then made links to the literacy work and language questions. This worked really well and since then I have done the same with rap music and football (Leanne, 2008).

In constructing her narrative Leanne, consistently and across time identifies her difference and isolation from the 'group', including the traditional physical education teacher collective. There is also a consistency and coherency around her desire to make a difference for disadvantaged students particularly through the medium of physical education. She constructs a narrative identity as someone who takes her university learning seriously and who is passionate about quality teaching. In this way her narrative constructs an identity that resonates with consistency around difference as well as informing a dynamic element as a resourceful, committed and quality teacher of physical education.

***Connections- grand narratives of Physical Education***

We tell our stories repeatedly and at times differently but always against the backdrop of the stories we have heard in the cultures we inhabit, including those around sport and physical education. We make sense of our own personal identities in much the same way and where story plots and various characters are familiar to us we use these as a frame of reference for the stories that we in turn tell about ourselves (Ricoeur, 1991a, 1991b).

> PE teachers are a different breed I reckon. Apart from my mentor none of the others were actually planning anything. They just rocked up and thought yeah, "I know how to teach footy" and then just do a few passing things, a few kicks to each other, and then played a game. In their own ways they have good relationships with the kids. My mentor struggled with this. She keeps doing her job well and her classes are the way they should be. One of the teachers told me that he had really learnt a lot from me and that I was going to be a good PE teacher. The thing that worries me though is that he told me that he used to be a lot more diligent and he admitted that now he is really slack (Leanne, 2008).

Our own identity as constituted in narratives intersects with the identities of others and becomes incorporated into a larger general narrative, as for example that of physical education teachers. In this way Leanne, in constructing for herself a different form of physical education teacher identity, uses stereotypical constructions of male physical education teachers, which can be found in the folk lore of schools, as a problematisation and contrast to her like minded female mentor.

> I think teaching PE would be the best job because there is a great balance. You can go outdoors, not be in a classroom and every day is different. I definitely don't want to be stuck in a classroom as a generalist teacher in a primary school. My professional attitude I think is good. The only thing I hate doing is all the lesson plans for Uni. All in all I think I will be qualified enough to take PE lessons and be there for the kids as well. I am though just a bit nervous about my expertise in some sports (D'Arcy, 2008)

D'Arcy in contrast constructs his identity in the stories using familiar plot lines and character traits straight from the grand narratives of physical education. More specifically these stories construct physical education teachers as active practitioners who prefer the great outdoors to the confines of the classroom, practical activity to writing and relish teaching a diversity of sports from their 'kit bag'.

**Conclusion – Multiple layers of understanding**

This paper explored the interrelationships between identity work and pedagogical practices of pre-service teachers. Specifically, the paper uses narratives told by two pre-service teachers to explore and make sense of identity work during the process of becoming teachers of physical education. There are multiple ways to read these stories which provide different perspectives and understandings. As such the work is informed by three theoretical perspectives including Foucault's concepts of discourse and subjectivity, Bourdieu's thinking tools of habitus, capital and field and narrative identity as informed by the work of Ricoeur.

Reading the narratives through the lenses of the three theoretical frameworks has allowed deepened understandings about the identify work pre-service teachers engage in.

Foucauldian perspectives allow us to identify and analyse the discursive resources around physical education and socially critical education that are drawn on by these pre-service teachers as they negotiate relationships of power and university studies. These discursive resources are revealed in how they speak about physical education, teachers, teaching and themselves. Where they might construct themselves as appropriately practical and youthful they simultaneously see themselves as *a new breed of teacher* aware of the need to connect and include. Importantly within a climate of technical rationalisation of teacher education and the hegemony of discourses of sport that support *performance* pedagogies, these novice teachers have been able to engage possibilities of altered physical education teacher subjectivities and pedagogies.

From a Bourdieuian perspective we can understand that these pre-service teachers are agentic and continue to make *strategic* decisions that support their *interest* in terms of pedagogy and identity work. In doing so they draw far wider than their university based studies. Bourdieu helps us to see how, why and where they are drawing from in the choices they make in terms of pedagogy and identifications as physical education teachers.

In working with Ricoeur we can understand and respect that these pre-service teachers are desirous of some form of coherency around self as physical activity participants and as teachers. Their narratives invoke a sense of unity in their life long journeys of learning to teach physical education. Where they may seek some form of coherency over time that connects them to the grand narratives of physical education this cannot be collapsed into an essential, normalised teacher identity. Their narratives invoke notions that this coherency is dynamic and will continue to develop. In this respect the narratives constructed, told and

retold reveal threads of consistency as well as change. They also suggest connections to certain aspects of a broader narrative that continues to be told about physical education teachers.

### *Where are our teachers going?*

In returning to our starting point provided by Fernandez-Balboa (1998) who argues that one's sense as a teacher is intimately related to one's pedagogical practices these multiple readings highlight for us the importance of pre-service narratives as teaching tools in teacher education. In working with pre-service teachers and their own narratives possibility exists to strengthen understandings about how they come to act as they do and explore further possibilities around teacher pedagogies (van Manen, 1994).

Their narratives whilst unique and individual cannot be read in isolation from the grand narratives of physical education, the subjectivities and pedagogies of their teachers, peers and mentors (MacIntyre, 1981; van Manen, 1994). Thus our work with our pre-service teachers extends to challenging assumptions about workplaces, lessons, faculties and schools. These young people are agentic and can be agents of change but it is vitally important that we, as teacher educators, work in ways to support these endeavours.

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