

Framing Gender and Games Teaching: A Theoretical Lens with Practical Suggestions for Equitable Outcomes

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Outline of presentation

- ▶ 1) Why a gender equity lens is important to incorporate into PE TGfU: TGfU incorporates methods that contain democratic and inclusive principles and praxis; however, that does not necessarily mean that gender inequities or any other types of inequities will inevitably be eradicated in classroom settings. Equity must be intentional b/c we are rarely aware of our biases and stereotypes without consciously examining them.
- ▶ 2) Feminist frameworks as guides for understanding gender bias and engaging teachers and students in self-reflexivity.
 - ▶ Sex/gender systems
 - ▶ Body regimes
 - ▶ Intersectionality
- ▶ 3) The promise of TGfU pedagogy for intersectional gender equity

Rationale for a Gender-equity lens—persistent bias

Acker (1990) has observed that claims for gender neutrality in organizational behavior often mask dominant masculine-ascribed traits such as stoicism and/or aggression, and the power to make decisions. This leads to gender-blind sexism even while gender neutrality is touted.

- ▶ Example: In my observations of PE classrooms in Japanese elementary, middle and high schools in 2020, I noted a pattern of men and women PE teachers systematically asking male students to demonstrate specific skills of the day's class. This behavior should not be regarded as merely individual choice but part of historic macro social structural processes that reflect gender stereotypes and discrimination, both legal (de jure) and customary (de facto).
- ▶ Even when equity is built into law as it is in US Title IX or into the de facto assumptions persist such as men **minimizing the existence of sexism while naturalizing behaviors through biological determinism and essentialism** (social roles flow from biology, such as domestic work as women's work). Too often this leads to assertions of girls' and women's incompetency in masculine-ascribed behaviors. It is ironic that the assumption of a level playing-field (minimizing sexism) co-exists with biological essentialist assumptions.

The 2007 Brighton Declaration

- ▶ To be a true champion of equity for women and girls in sport and physical activity, is to endorse the Brighton plus Helsinki Declaration on Women and Sport.
- ▶ Developed and established by the International Working Group (IWG) on Women and Sport in 1994, the Brighton Declaration is an international treaty that has become a road map to support the ongoing development of a more fair and equitable system of sport and physical activity, fully inclusive of women and girls.
- ▶ Its intention was to complement all sporting, local, national and international charters, laws, codes, rules and regulations relating to equity in sport and physical activity, whilst also setting an even higher benchmark related to the full inclusion of women and girls in all aspects society. Those that endorse the Declaration commit to upholding the 10 principles that enable women and girls to freely and safely participate, compete and build careers in sport and physical activity.
- ▶ In 2014, on the 20th anniversary of its original establishment, the Brighton Declaration was updated by the IWG to become the Brighton plus Helsinki Declaration, to better reflect a changed landscape, including major developments in international policy, while still holding true to the founding principles ([Brighton Declaration | IWGIWG \(iwgwomenandsport.org\)](https://www.iwgiwg.org/))

Persistent Bias continued

- ▶ However, in spite of Title IX and the Brighton Declaration, “research shows that the growth of the number of women in sports refers to sports *that are typically masculine or neutral*. The differentiation between ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ sports is still rooted in the socialisation process of sports. The data suggests that women feel this difference less than men, in light of their growing interest in ‘masculine sports’”.
- ▶ Men still categorise sports in masculine, feminine, and neutral. The association between sports and masculinity is still strong due to media, underlining the stereotype of social unsuitability of women for several sports, in their ability to learn, or perform then.
- ▶ Men lose social status moving into “women’s” sports while women gain status moving into “men’s” sports

“There’s no pedagogy or practical didactic that can be considered neutral” (Biemmi & Leonelli, 2017)

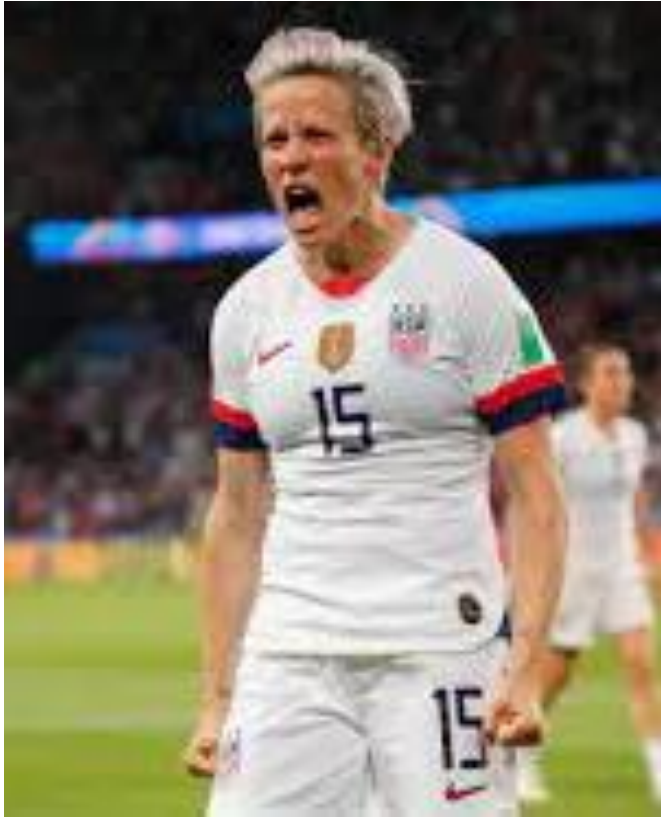
- ▶ Notions of the “appropriate gender of sport” reinforces cultural beliefs as truth, forcing gender identity into a dualism and limiting the choice of physical activities to those considered correct.
- ▶ Enright & O’Sullivan (2010) linked the relational environment of the PE class to gender dynamics, examining girls’ wellbeing during class. Girls are mostly dominated by male presence and find it hard to be involved in the face of male exuberance and competitiveness.
- ▶ The problems are also boys teasing or harassing girls (Slater & Tiggemann, 2011), girls having less play time (Van Acker, Carreiro da Costa , & De Bourdeaud, 2010) boys have higher tendency to seek competition (Murphy et al., 2014) and public recognition (Constantinou, Manson, & Silverman, 2009).
- ▶ A main obstacles in girls’ participation and involvement in physical activities is male criticism towards girls’ low performance or mistakes during class.
- ▶ This behaviour can be linked to the social expectations boys are faced with, including competition, achievement, orientation and self-reliance (Slater & Tiggemann, 2011).

Beyond the Binary: Gender spectrum and transgender identities

- ▶ Society's growing understanding of gender as a spectrum means that gender equity also includes boys and non-binary genders. Boys are increasingly facing pressures to attain stereotyped masculine bodies, leading to increases in food-related mental health illnesses that have long plagued girls: bulimia nervosa, anorexia, bulimarexia. There is a need for masculine gender resocialization into an equity lens, in addition to increased opportunities for girls.
- ▶ Trans athlete Chris Moser: "Sport is a vehicle for social change" His global website: Transathlete--a resource for students, athletes, coaches, and administrators to find information about trans inclusion in athletics at various levels of play.
- ▶ <https://www.transathlete.com/>



The risk of ignoring gender equity: perpetuating discrimination



Multiple ways gender inequity exists globally in sports that impact students:

- ▶ Neglecting to supply female student-athletes with the proper equipment and facilities;
- ▶ Ingrained, institutionalized sexism starts with youth sports: how we define what qualifies as a sport: e.g. excluding cheer athletes as athletes, support for female athletes.
- ▶ World Cup champion Megan Rapinoe testified to Congress, “One cannot simply outperform inequality or be excellent enough to escape discrimination of any kind. Women and girls in sports should not be an afterthought.
(<https://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/article/2021/on-different-playing-fields-the-case-for-gender-equity-in-sports/>)
- ▶ A gender equity lens must be introduced when children are young to counter multiple agents of socialization that instill stereotypes: advertising, family norms of gendered behavior, peers, textbooks; lack of or underfunded legal mechanisms to support equity.

Explanatory Models: The Sex-Gender Systems

- ▶ **Gender:** The social and cultural meanings, roles, behaviors, activities, attributes considered appropriate at a given time and place for boys and girls, men and non-binary individuals (“transgender,” “two-spirit” etc. Societies globally identify from two to five genders).
- ▶ **Sex:** Human beings are not a perfectly dimorphic species. Absolute dimorphism disintegrates even at the level of basic biology. Chromosomes, hormones, the internal sex structures, the gonads and the external genitalia all vary more than most people realize. Those born outside of the Platonic dimorphic mold are called intersexuals.” (Ann-Fausto Sterling, [The Five Sexes, Revisited \(kobe-u.ac.jp\)](http://kobe-u.ac.jp)). **The decision to organize society based upon sex categories – are cultural constructions** ([How gendered language leads scientists astray - The Washington Post](#))
- ▶ **Sex-gender system:** The network of power relations with ideological and material dimensions pertaining to access to power, status, material and non-material resources in a state/society. Ideological dimensions that construct the meanings and roles establish the boundaries of masculinity and femininity, which, when transgressed result mostly in sanctions and sometimes rewards. *De facto norms persist even with de jure interventions.*

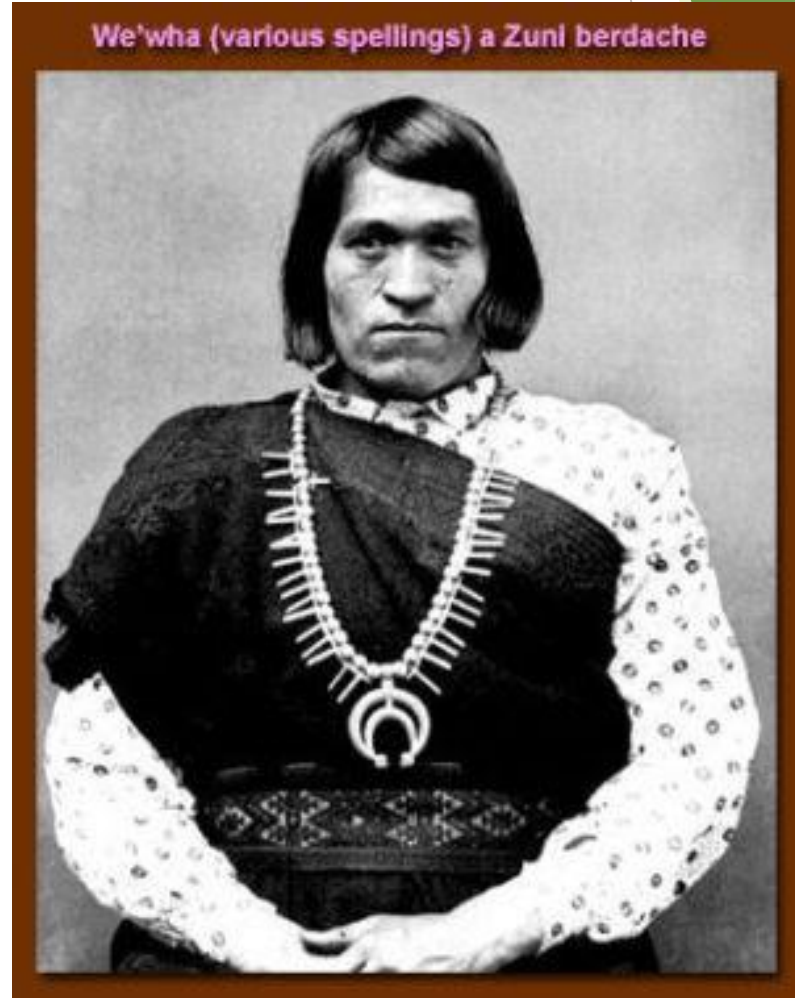
Body Regimes: gender ideologies are manifested in the body

- ▶ Manzenrieter defines body regimes as: “mind sets of orientation which are incorporated into the body, consciously as well as unconsciously, by the members of a social community. As they speak through the body to the individual and to the collective, body regimes provide standards of bodily appearance and behavior, categories of distinction and difference, but also of sameness and similarity. (Manzenreiter, 209 p. 2)
- ▶ Such regimes are: “embodied knowledge about society and one’s place within society ... constructed through and manifested in the shapes of bodies, gestures and everyday usages of the body ranging from sitting, and eating to ways of walking, running and using the body in sport. (Manzenrieter, 2009, p. 2)
- ▶ **Body regimes are gendered.** Jeanes, Knights, and Martin explain in their *Handbook of Gender, Work and Organization*, that men and women face distinct sets of norms shaping body regimes beginning in childhood. Moreover, women’s bodies are more generally “visible (dis)qualifiers to their participation in political leadership and various sports based on hierarchical patriarchal values” (2012, p.123). *Choreographing our own bodies*” (2012, p. 213) starts with awareness.

Sexual dimorphic body regimes
*reversed underscore cultural
constructivism of gender*



GeoNeptune: Passamasquadi two-spirit and
We-Wha: Zuni 19th century two-spirit: *Defying
gender dimorphism*



The promise of TGfU pedagogy— beginning steps

2) How can we weave intersectionality and equity into our pedagogy?

- Emphasize practices that set students up for success
- Tackle biases before they arise through practices and exercises that encourage inclusion, reflection, dialogue
- Model respect and intervention when students generalize or make insensitive comments (Michelle Meek, BSU colleague, personal communication)

1) Teacher and Student Self-reflection: how do our own intersectional identities help us to understand oppressions and privileges in ways that can shape our pedagogy?

Recognize and work to address our own biases in our beliefs and communication styles that reproduce gender biases.

Dismantling gender stereotypes through TGfU

- ▶ Innovative activities: popular, traditional or emerging games (e.g. ultimate frisbee) where individuals are not engaging activities that are gender related.
- ▶ The use of TGfU has been investigated for its didactic- pedagogic and gender equity potential. Bandura in his self-efficacy theory argued that TGfU allow students to live positive experiences creating a sense of self-efficacy (perception of being able to do and act) and involvement (Bandura, 1982). This is due to their flexible structure and the possibility of being modified. These strategies support performance and the cognitive aspect (**decision, comprehension, tactic, evaluation, emotional control**) and the learning process. They favour **inclusion, satisfaction and personal security (self concept & self improvement)** of participants, in turn lowering girls' sense of inadequacy compared to boys (Pritchard et al. 2014; Van Acker et al, 2010; Alcalá & Garijo , 2017) .
- ▶ BUT...

To achieve equity, TGfU must be *intentionally equitable...*

- ▶ When girls are offered the opportunity to dialog, they commit to transforming practices and their involvement;
- ▶ Students should feel they are builders, together with the teachers, of knowledge and in creating new practices (Taylor & Parsons, 2011; Sánchez-Hernández et al, 2018). In this continuous reciprocity, the teacher needs to listen to students to understand which representations differ from their own.
- ▶ “Students and players in TGfU create a space where they discuss, problem solve, and support each other while teachers and coaches” help to create safe spaces, are singled out less and mistakes are not clearly visible to peers:
- ▶ Solving problems in groups must offer “everyone an opportunity to speak, listen, and feel a sense of belonging. When planned and delivered carefully by teachers and coaches, the space can promote social justice” to deliberately promote inclusion and equity and educate students/players for social justice (Haneishi, 2021).

False Neutrality

- ▶ When curriculum pretends to a false neutrality, it offers nothing of substance to counter bias of all kinds—gender bias, biological essentialist assumptions and even explicitly bigoted mindsets that are picked up elsewhere.
- ▶ Example: include categories for boys, girls and gender diverse individuals when considering “mixed gender formats”. A recent (June 2021, Journal of Pediatrics) observes that 9.2% of high schoolers identify as gender diverse. With respect to the Childhood disability rate, 4.3% of children in the US are considered to have a disability. We must mainstream both in our pedagogies.
- ▶ *The most important insight is that equity pedagogy must be intentional.*

- ▶ *Thank you!*