

ARTICLE REVIEWED

Captured on Film: A Critical Examination of Representations of Physical Education at the Movies.

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THE PROBLEM:

Young people in today's society are mass consumers of corporatized media, which influences how they learn and the way that teachers teach in the school setting. This article examines movie content related to PE to determine how it is portrayed.



Research Summary:

This study explored how physical education was depicted and represented in the movies over the past 100 years. Through critically examining and analyzing movie content in the United States, the authors explored the place of teachers in society and compared the movie portrayals of PE to best practices and appropriate content.

Conclusion:

In almost every movie, the physical education teacher wore a whistle and carried a clipboard, these are considered short-hand props to indicate the role of a character. These props could be considered representational of societal views and of how teachers are portrayed. Furthermore, the movies indicated two major themes specifically related to how physical education teachers are represented: bullying in physical education (mainly the teacher as the bully, or physical education was the site of bullying) and constructions of masculinity (lack of female presence in the role of a physical educator, gender hierarchy, a focus on the aesthetics of a masculine body, and aggressiveness toward those without the stereotypical masculine aesthetic). Physical activity was also used as punishment in films. In conclusion, the movies did not represent best practices in content and pedagogy that some teachers adopt by following the SHAPE America National Standards in schools today.

Key Take-Away:

Individuals, including parents, colleagues and students, may need to be informed about what the physical education program entails and how it is different from the stereotypical and socially constructed images seen in films. Consider sharing the National Standards and Grade-Level Outcomes or inviting members into your class for taster days to showcase your physical education program. Consider generating a newsletter with key foci for the upcoming week to send out to parents/guardians. Lastly, avoid a curriculum focused on noncontextual activities, elitism, individualism and competitive activities/sports (see Fernandez-Balboa, 1993). Aim for a culturally diverse curriculum that is inclusive of all students (see Cliff, 2012; Cliff, Wright, & Clarke, 2009).



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- Cliff, K. P. (2012). A sociocultural perspective as a curriculum change in health and physical education. *Sport, Education and Society*, 17(3), 293-311.
- Cliff, K. P., Wright, J., & Clarke, D. (2009). What does a 'sociocultural perspective' mean in health and physical education? In M. Dinan-Thompson (Ed.), *Health and physical education: issues for curriculum in Australia and New Zealand* (pp. 165-182). Melbourne: Oxford University Press.
- Fernandez-Balboa, J.-M. (1993). Sociocultural characteristics of the hidden curriculum in physical education. *Quest*, 45(2), 230-254.