

Global trends in school (H)PE: Expectations and realities

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University of Auckland

What I want to do today...

- Discuss the social context in which school PE now finds itself.
- Discuss the trend for school PE to be expected to act as a key site for ameliorating the obesity ‘crisis’.
- Offer some thoughts as to the limits and possibilities of this trend by considering the obesity ‘crisis’ from a *memetic* perspective.
- Explain why I think academic PE is becoming less relevant to school PE

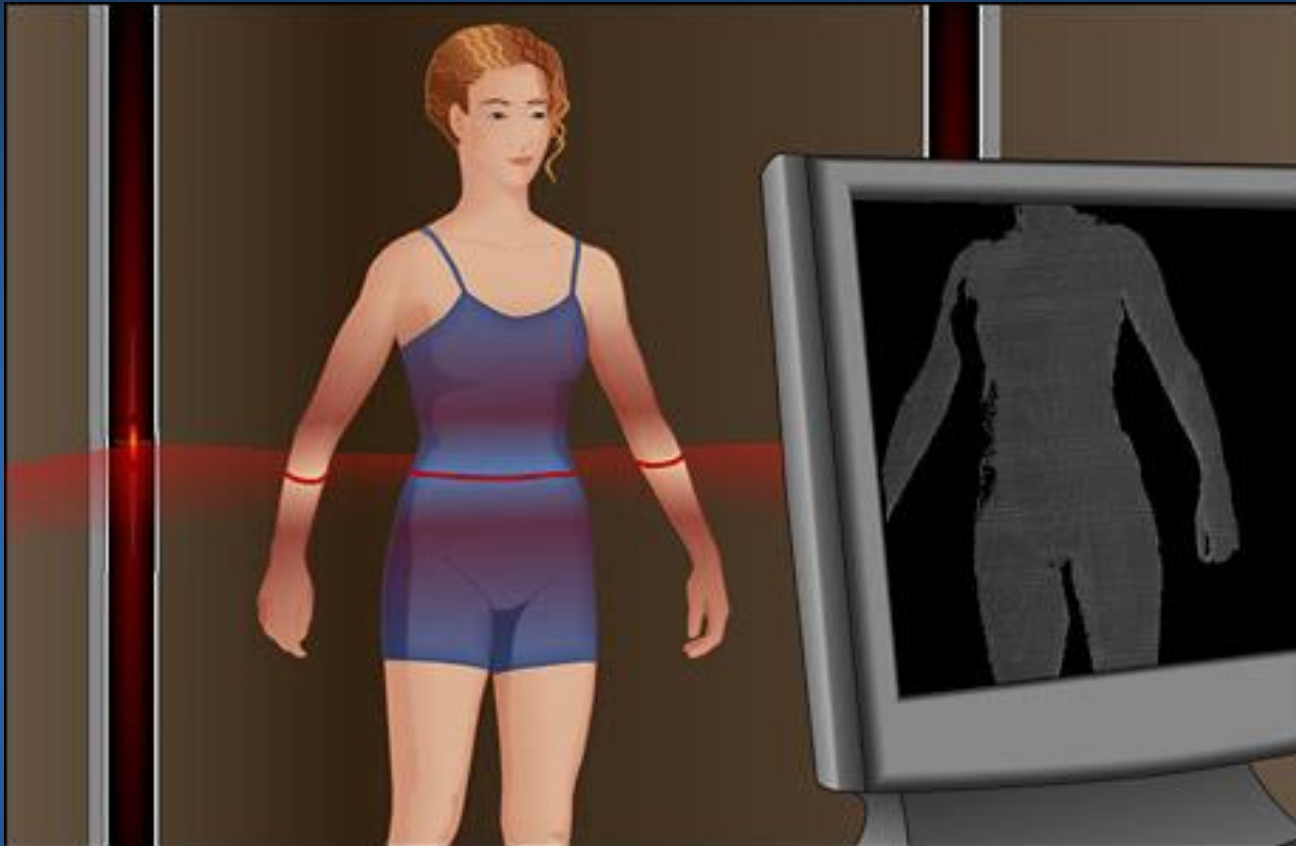


of **PE**

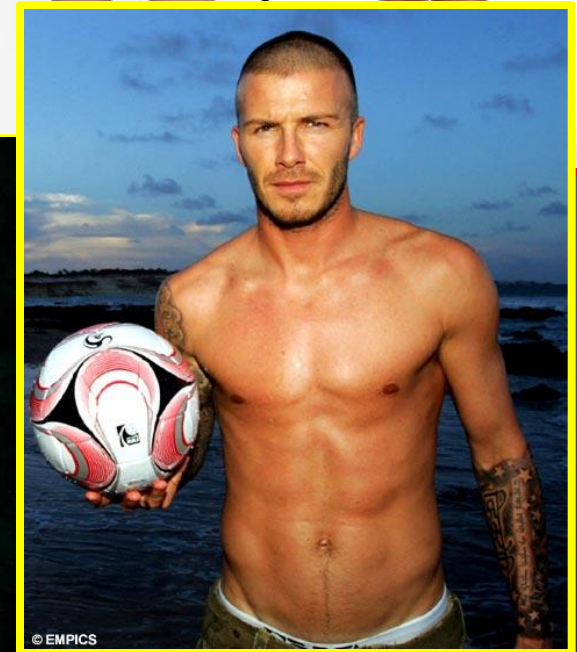
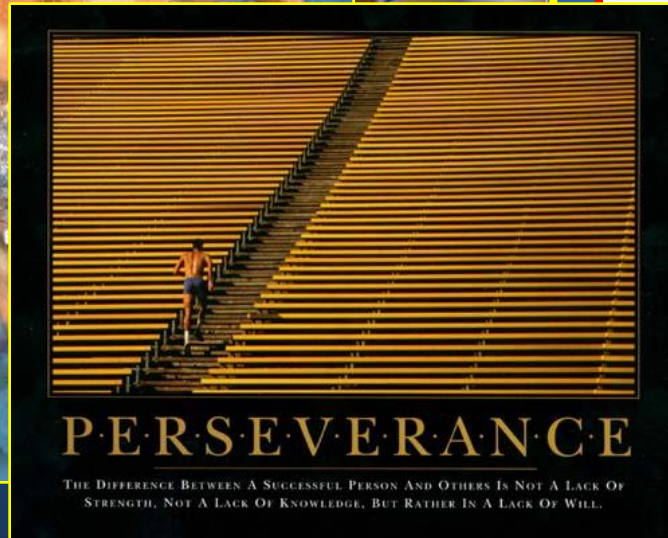
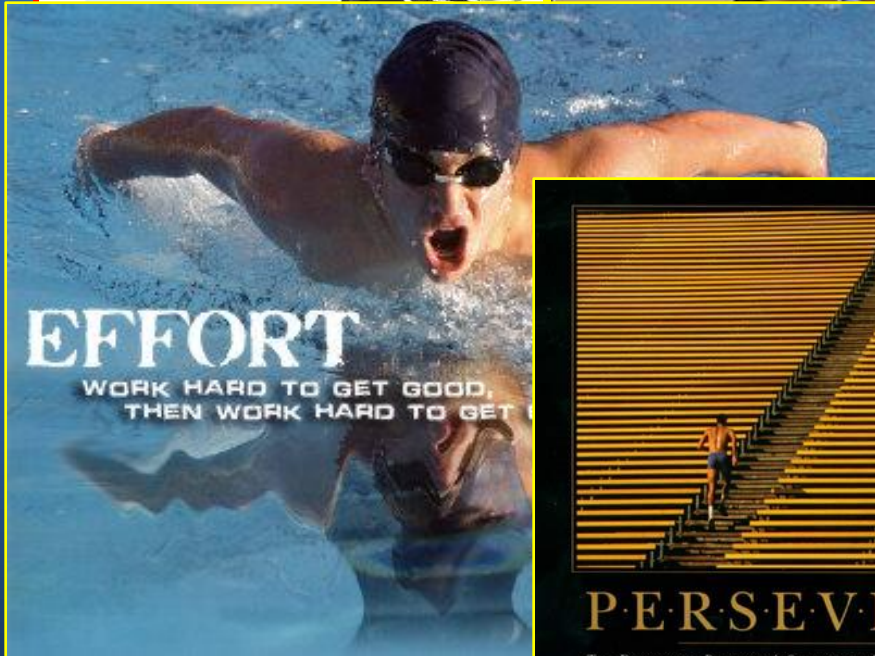
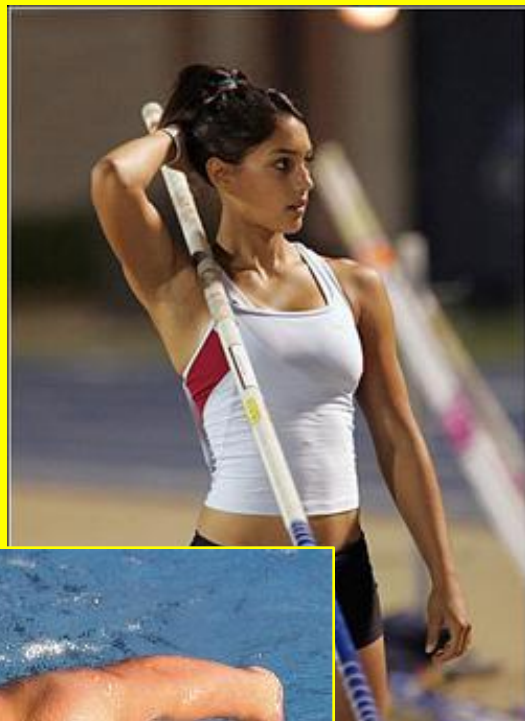
Circa 2015



Epsom High

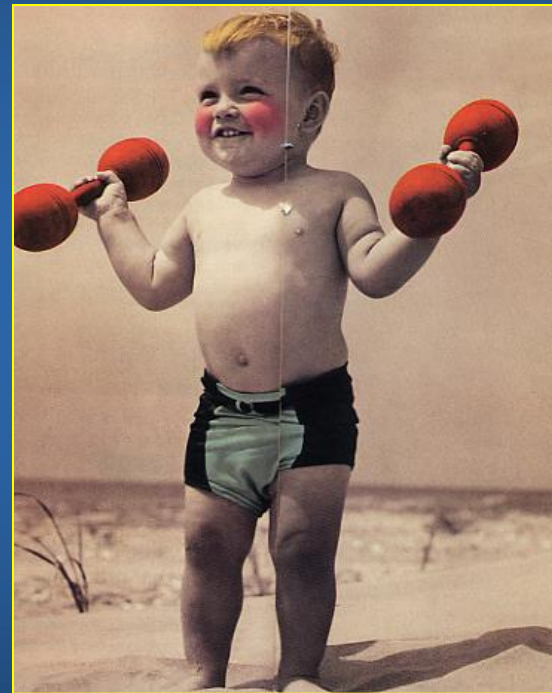
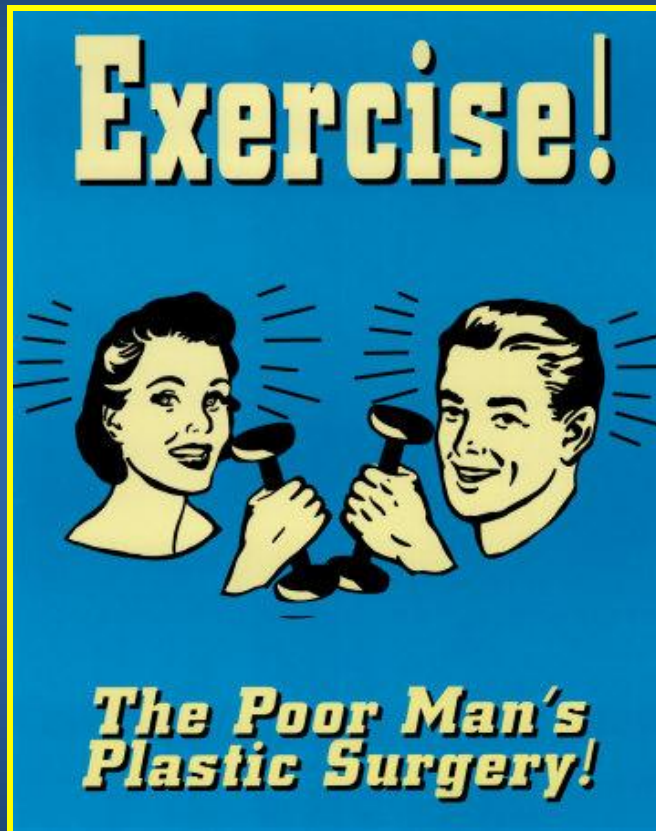


DO AMAZING THINGS!





Building Better Bodies Program











School Exercise Bill of 2014

Is this what we really want our subject to become?

- What of the educational purposes of PE as advocated by Helle Rønholt and others?
- We can only understand the forces against the educational agenda when we understand the power of neo-liberal politics.

The context of neoliberal ideology

Discourses of competition, the free market, small(er) government, human capital, individual responsibility and accountability

There is now “now an internationally rampant vision of schooling, teaching and learning based solely on systemic efficiency and the measurable technical production of human capital” (Luke, 2002:1).



Education & health must contribute to human capital

The idea of physical education



“Physical education was as important as, if not more so, than mental training...” (McNeely & Wolverton, 2009, p. 8).

Canada

UK

Norway

Ukraine

Denmark

Korea

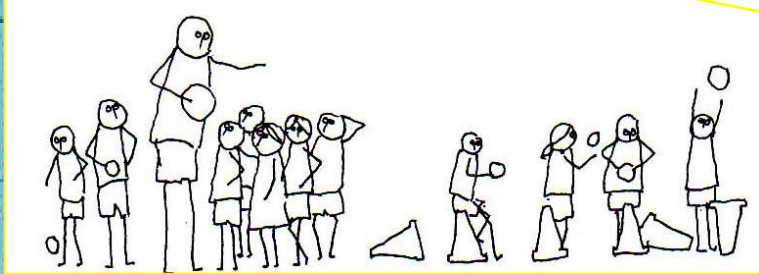
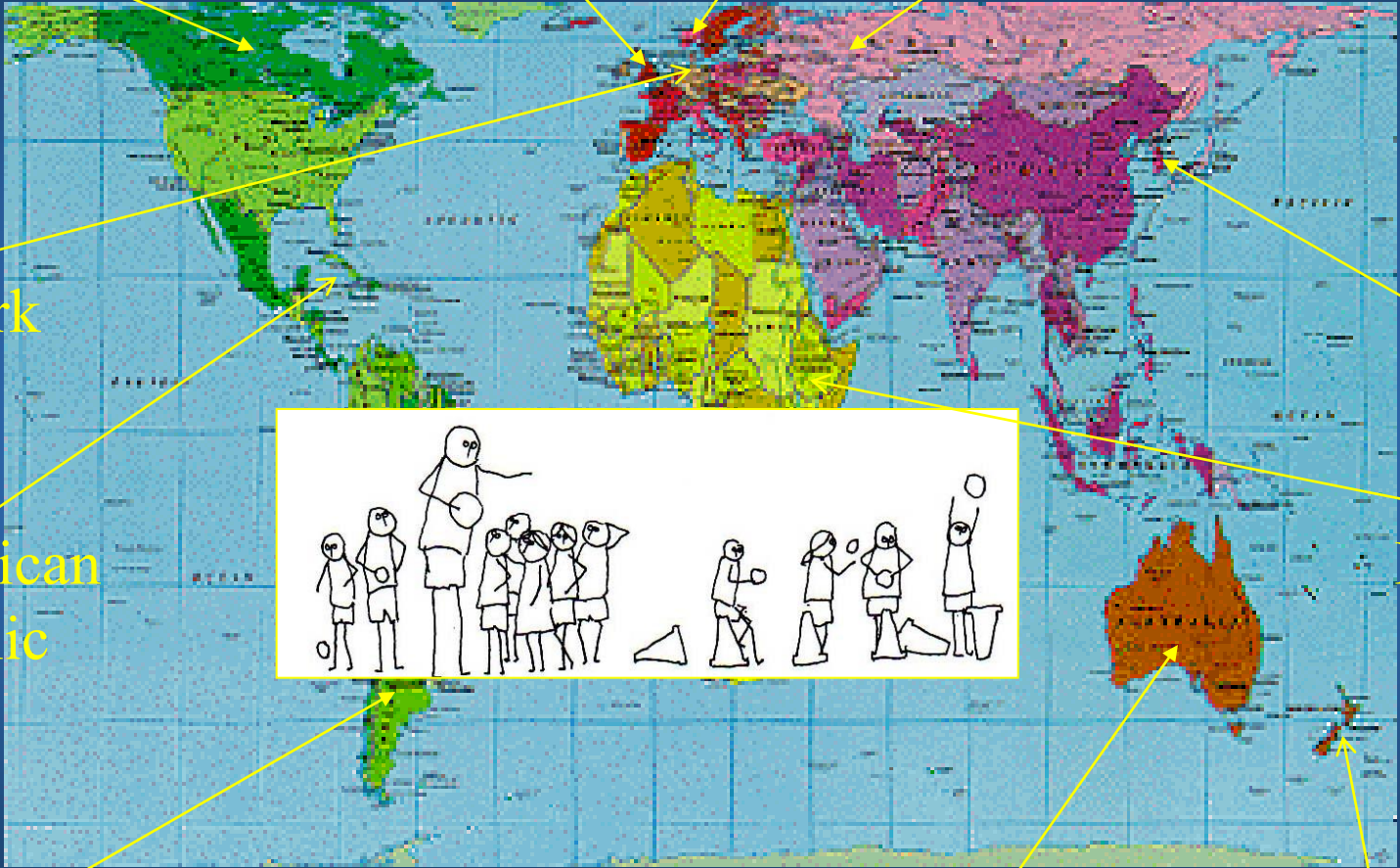
Dominican Republic

Kenya

Argentina

Australia

New Zealand

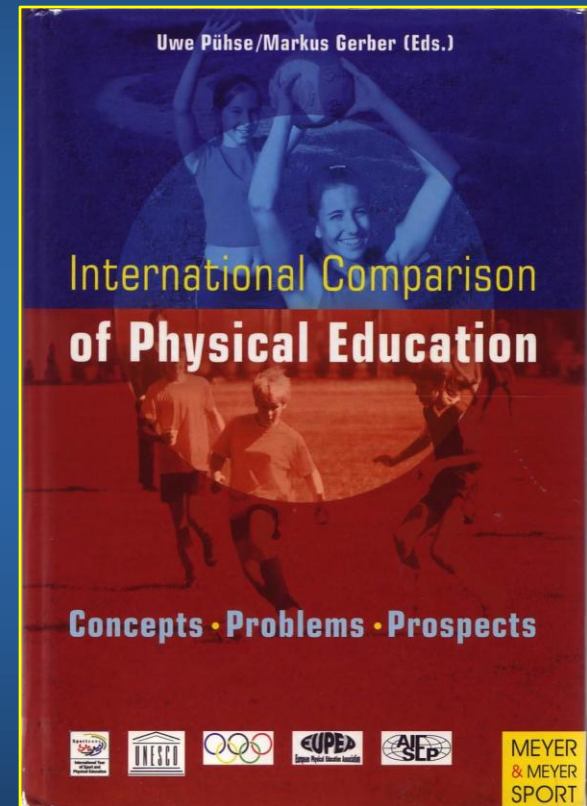


PE faces an uncertain future

Adol Ogi (then Special advisor to the United Nations Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace)

Gudrun Doll-Tepper (then President of the International Council for Sport Science and Physical Education [ICSSPE])

Claimed there are serious concerns about the situation of physical education across the world.







Circulating discourses that shaped
the idea of physical education



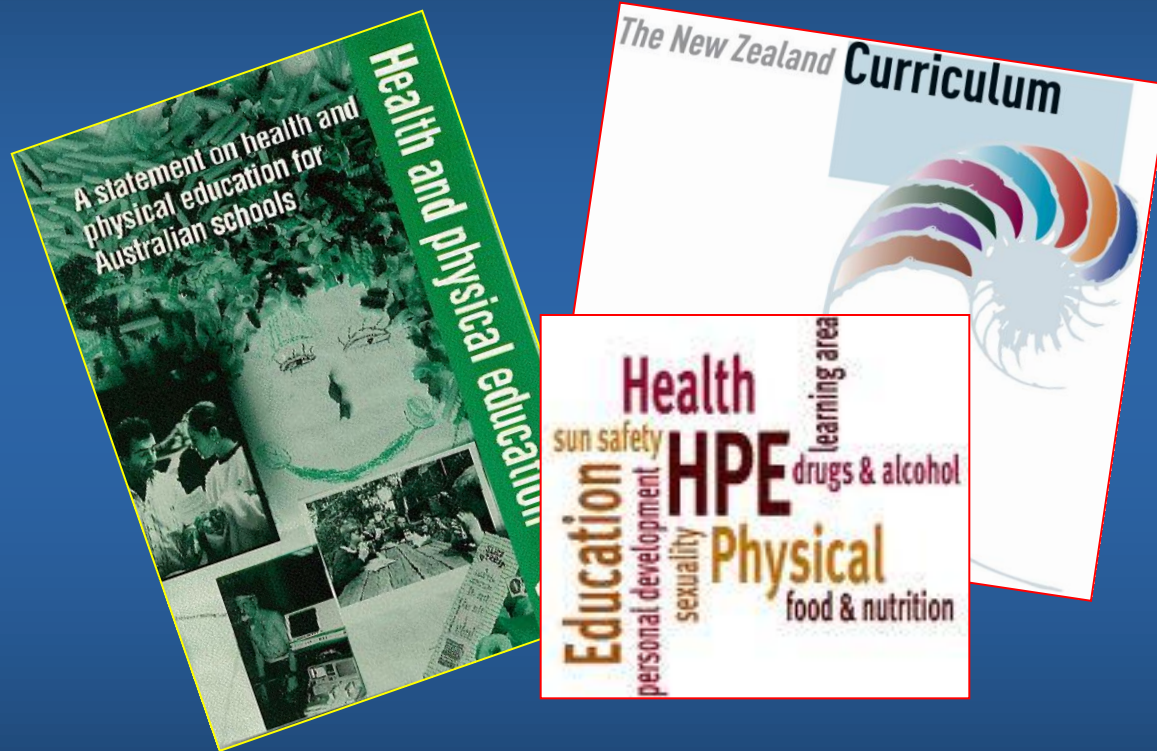
What is the dominant idea of PE that is now spreading globally? And Why?

(H)PE in most countries is meant to help young people make the 'right' lifestyle choices regarding their own health



Rational decision making

In Australia & New Zealand PE is part of a learning area called Health & Physical Education (HPE)

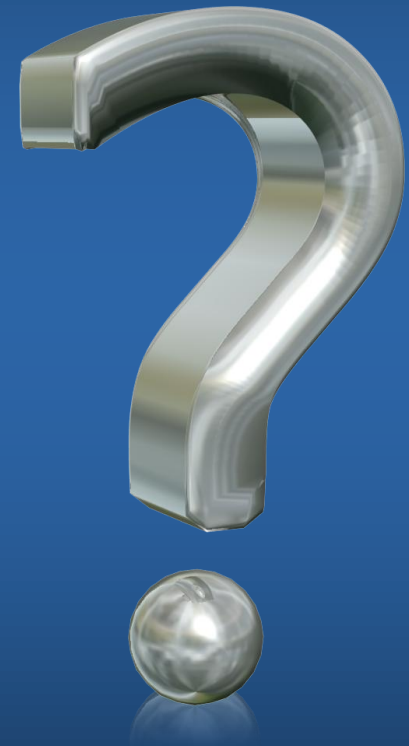


The new HPE offers a social view of health and is conceived as a socially-critical curriculum

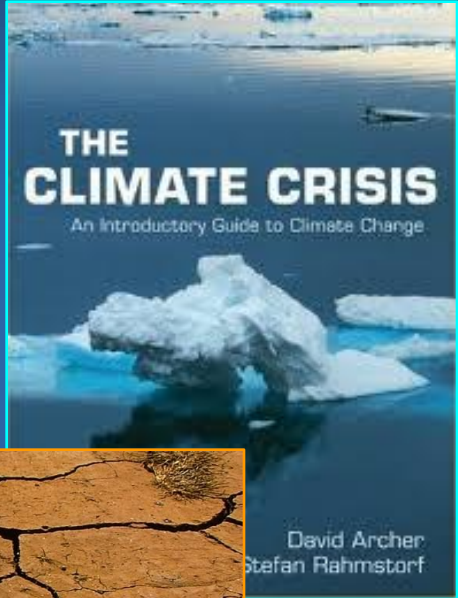
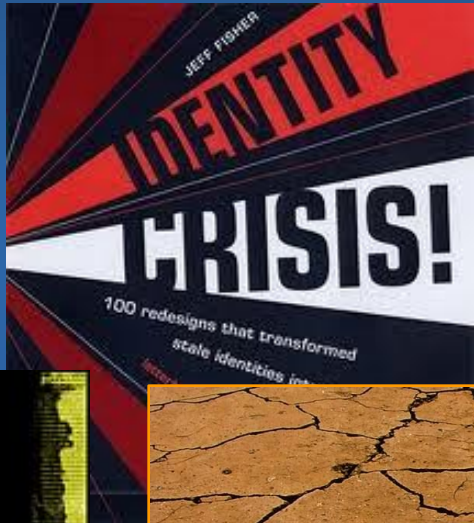
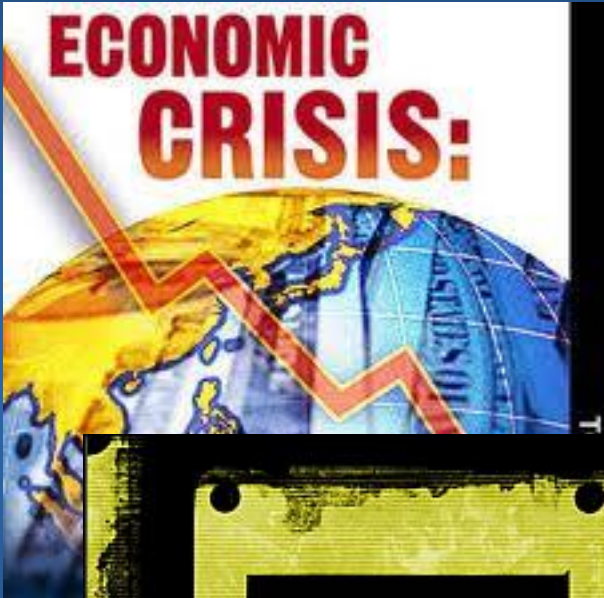
Why has obesity become a dominant health focus of PE?

and

Why Now?



Michigan's Obesity Crisis



Empirically many Western and Asian kids are gaining weight. The morbidity consequences of obesity are well known.

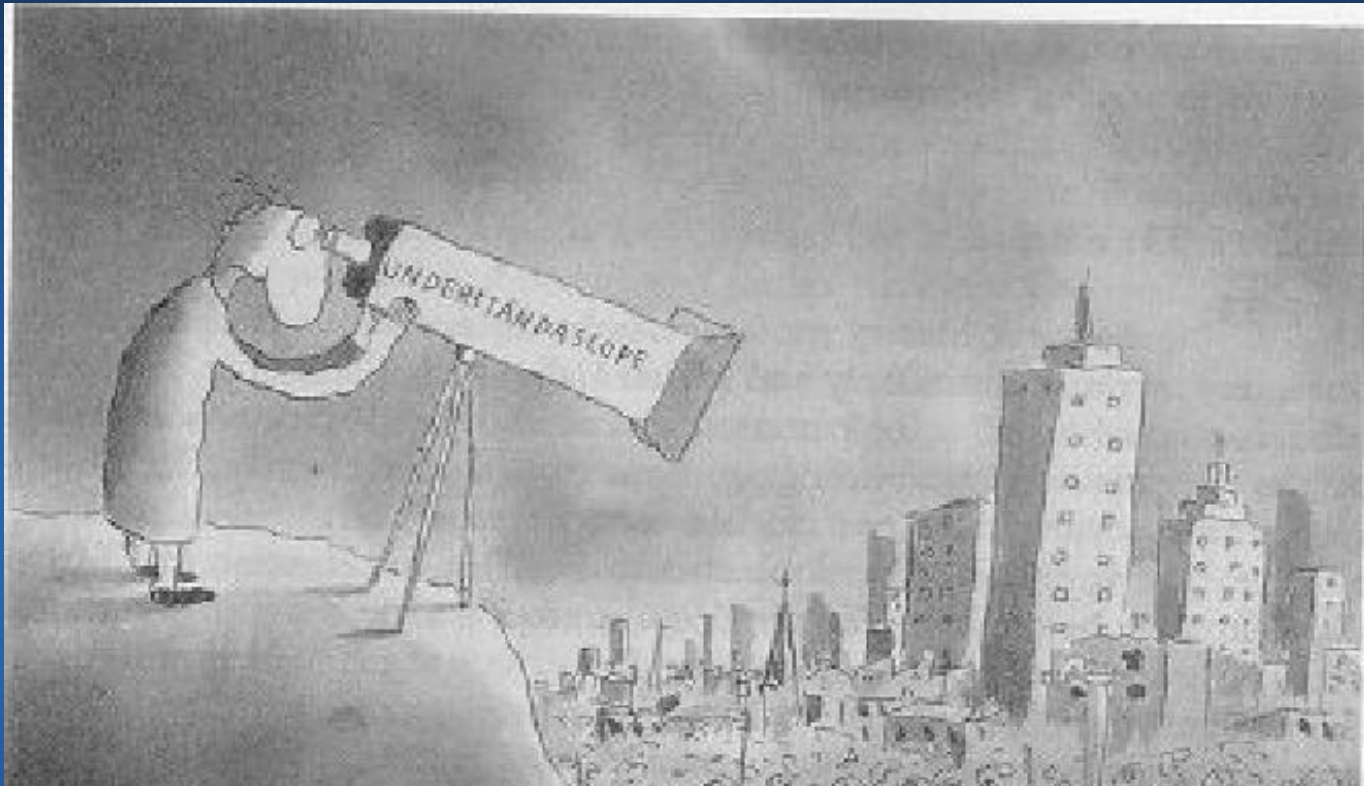


In the judgement of many there is an obesity epidemic or obesity crisis

School HPE is seen as a key site for ameliorating the so-called obesity 'crisis'



Taking a memetic stance



“The memetic stance involves describing, explaining and understanding social behaviour from this meme’s-eye perspective” (Marsden, 1998, p.74).

Pedagogies of Globalization



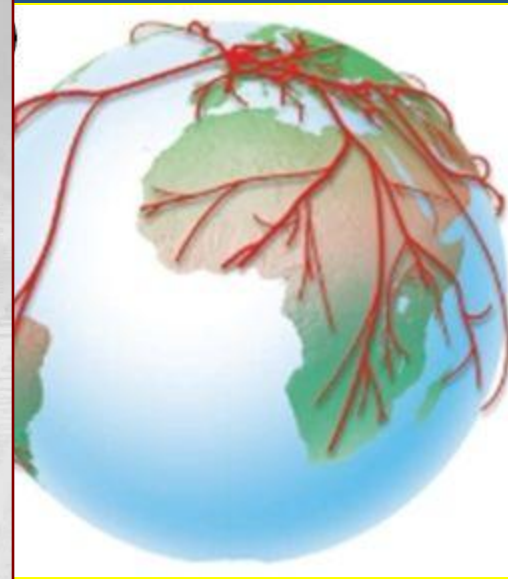
The Rise of the
Educational
Security State



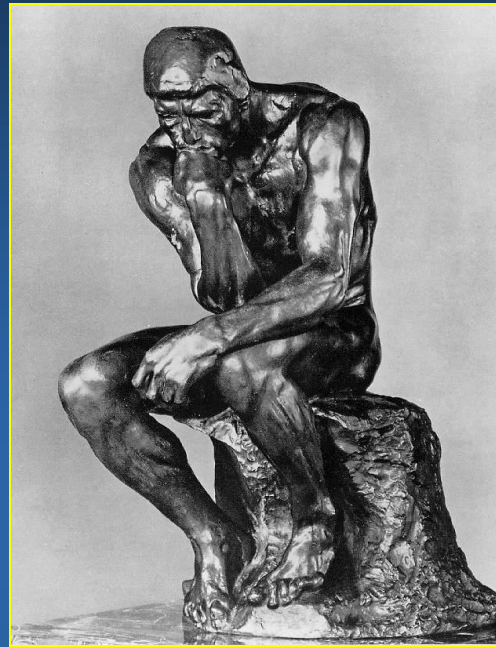
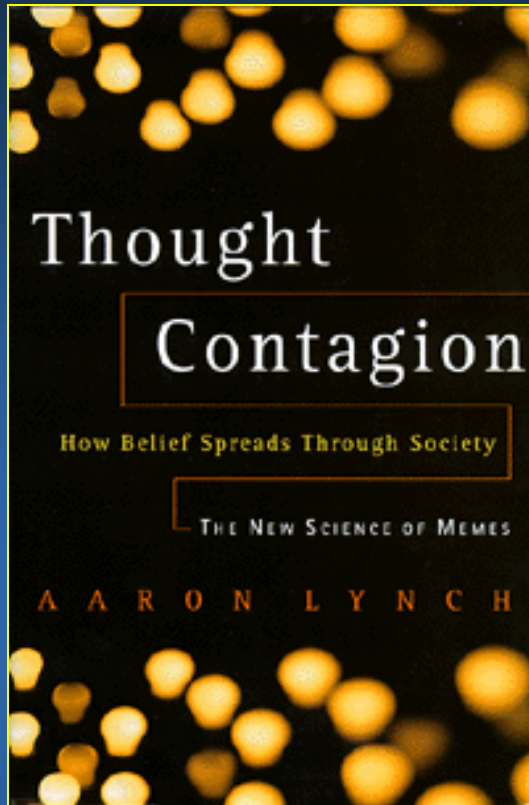
Joel Spring

infibeam

Global flow of ideas

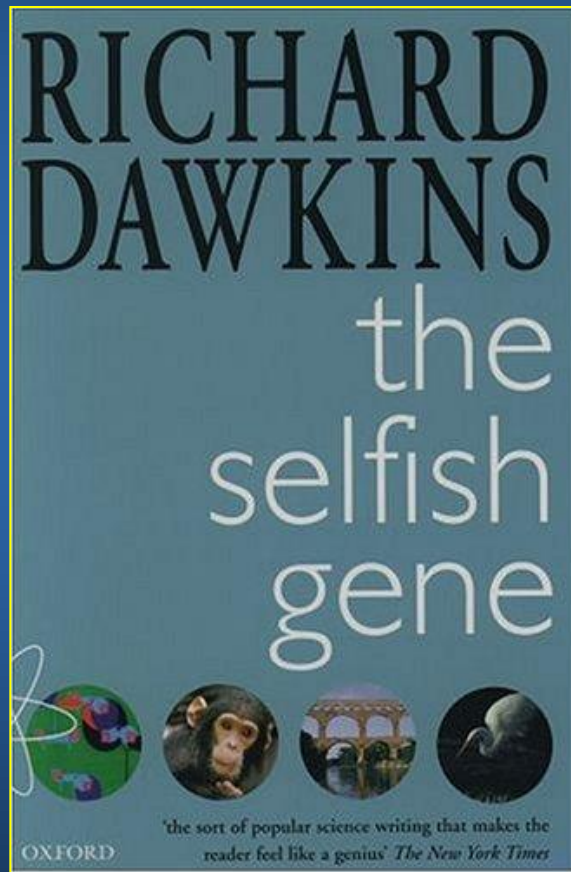


We can think of physical education as
part of the global flow of ideas.



'Epidemiology of ideas'
'The self-propagating idea'
A self-propagating idea is a *thought contagion*

The concept of a *meme*



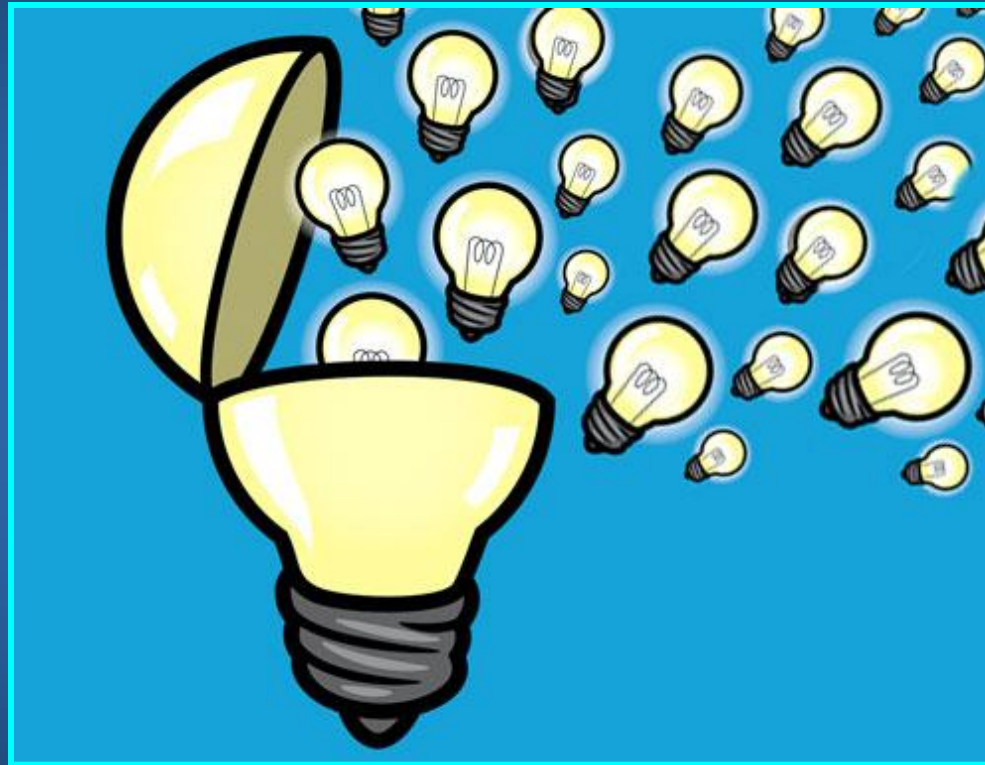


A meme is:

A cultural element or behavioural trait whose transmission and consequent persistence in a population, although occurring by non-genetic means (esp. imitation), is considered as analogous to the inheritance of a gene.

(Oxford English Dictionary)

Mememes are ideas that replicate





The idea of riding a bike is a meme

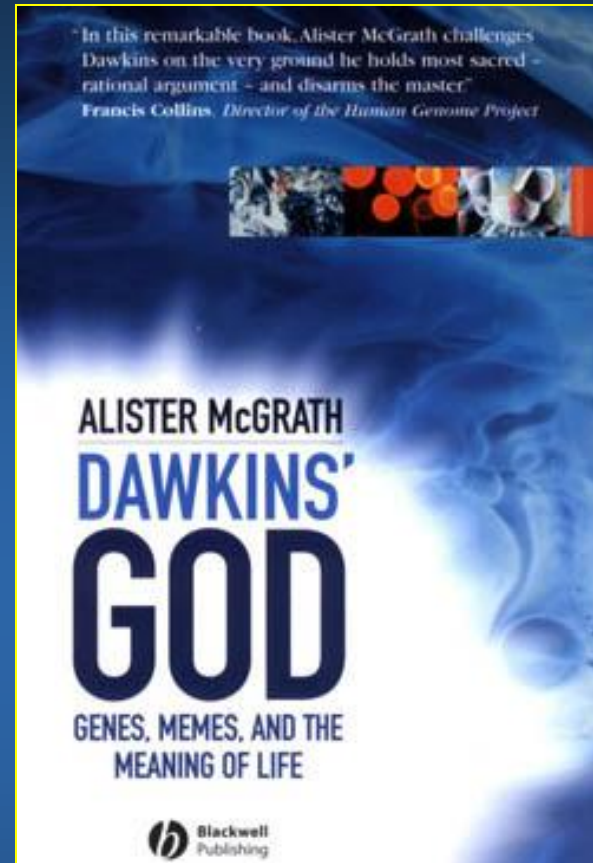
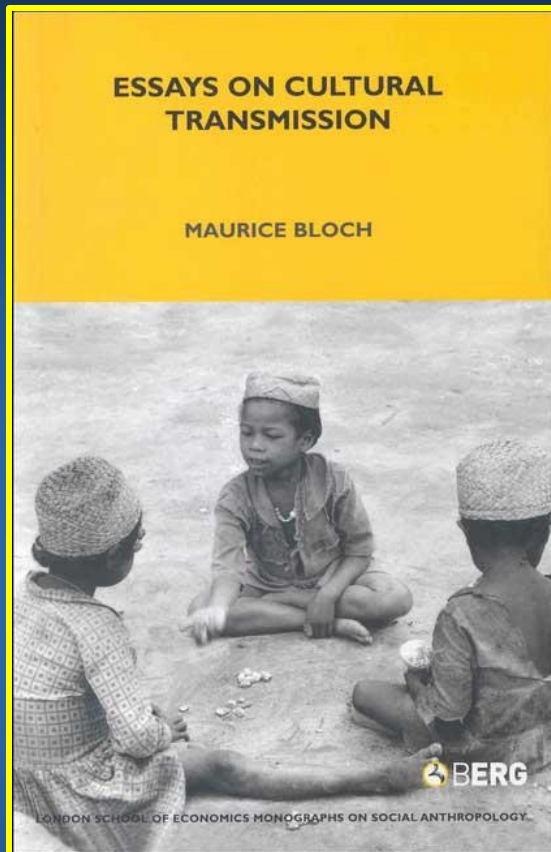




Cultural customs
are memes

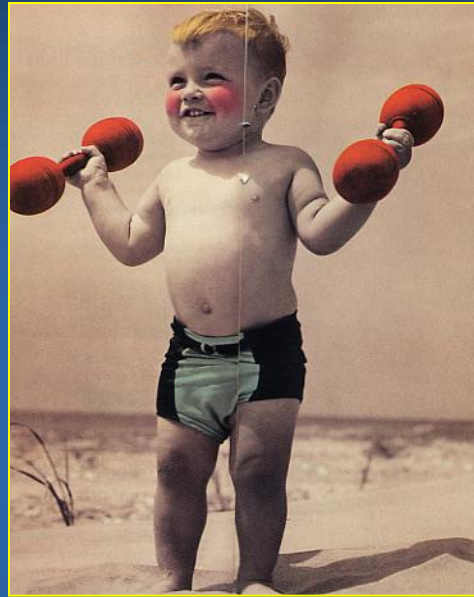


So are fashions!



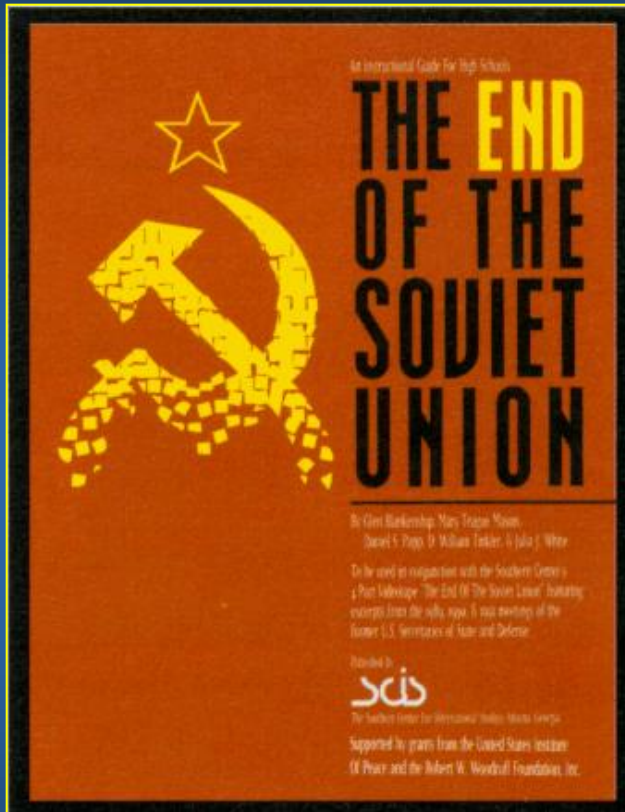
Critiques of memes and memetics

Mememes differ in their degree of 'fitness'



'Fitter' mememes will be more successful in being communicated, 'infecting' more individuals, thus spreading over a larger population

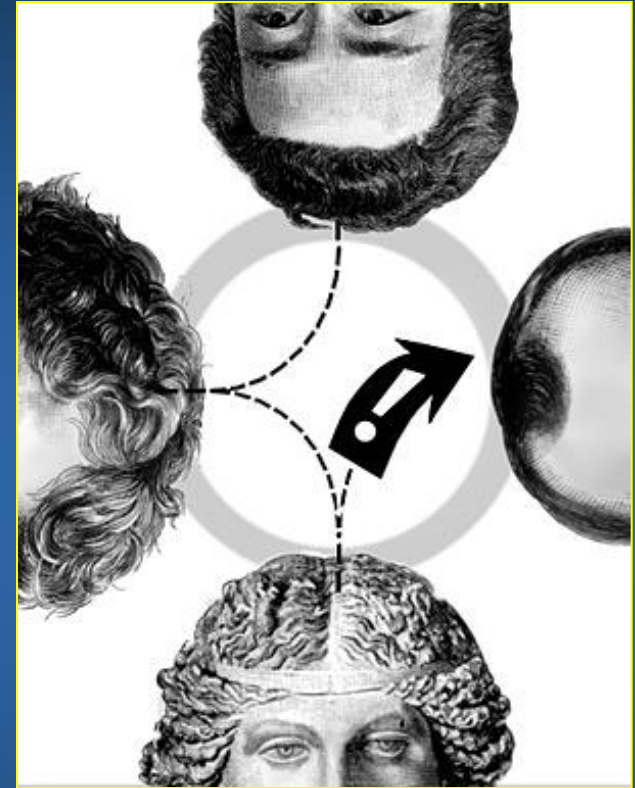
Mememes can have a 'use by' date and can lose their fitness...



Collapse of the Berlin wall, 1989

Dawkins considers that scientific theories are ideas that replicate by passing from one brain to another.

Can we not think of the idea of the obesity crisis similarly, as an idea that has 'caught on', and replicated?



Mememes often ‘group’ together in a sort of ‘cluster of ideas’



A *memeplex* or meme complex is “a collection of mutually supporting memes, which tend to replicate each other” (Heylighen & Chielens (2009)).


The obesity/exercise *memeplex*

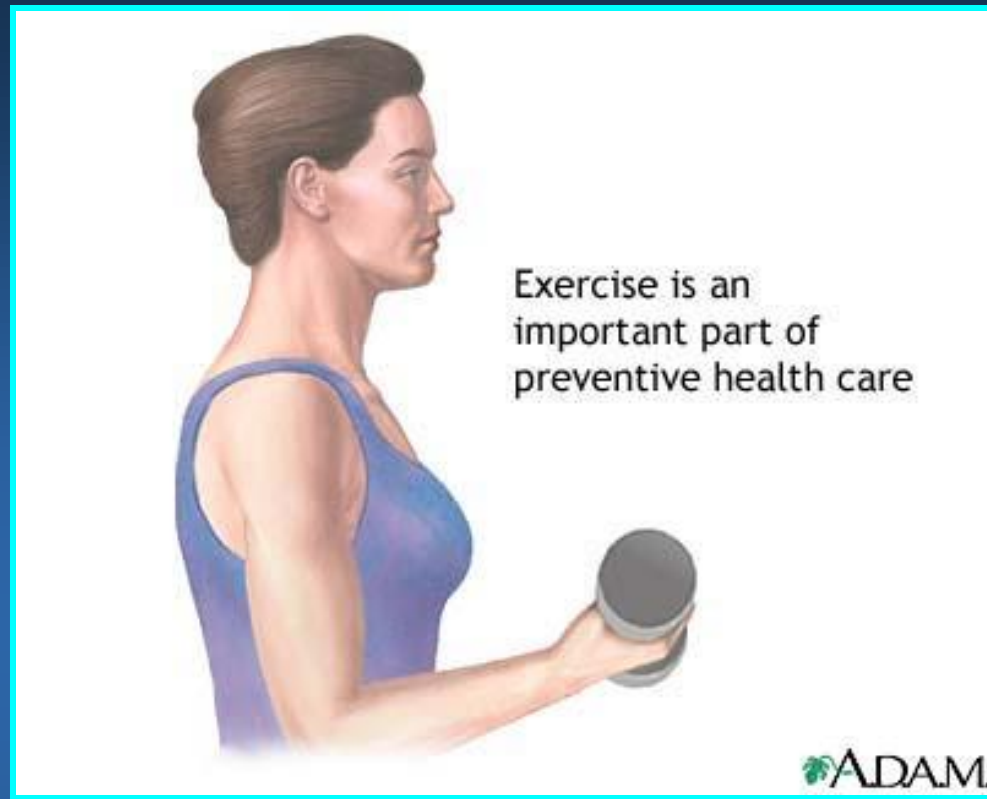


A collection of mutually supporting memes that relate to the role of exercise in weight management and control.

Obesity crisis memeplex is one of the memes and memplexes that collectively make up the obesity/exercise *memeplex*

- systematic bodily exercises
- calorie counting
- self surveillance
- obesity crisis
- Health-based PE
- weight control & discipline
- body as machine
-*and many more*

- 
- costs of obesity
 - sedentary living
 - moral decline
 - fat and illness



The *memplex* of obesity/exercise is now actively propagated within our field and we offer our expert knowledge of physical activity, bodies and health as part of the 'solution' to the obesity 'crisis'.

What is the environmental/institutional context for which the idea of the obesity crisis is a good fit?



Why are the memes of the obesity/exercise memeplex so attractive for replication?

Macro level Govt initiatives & policy

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WHY JOIN THE YOUR 30 CLUB? Get access to:

<p>MONITOR YOUR PROGRESS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Step counter 12 month chart Step counter 	<p>E-NEWS UPDATES</p> <p>Regular tips and tips to help you motivated.</p>	<p>DAY PLANNER</p> <p>Find your 30 minutes by creating your own day planner.</p>
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SOUND OFF

Find your step count | Find your recipes | Find your time | Find your activities

Get Active Centre
Fun and easy exercise programmes

Eat Well kitchen
Enjoy our video recipes

Get started
Don't wait till tomorrow

Qld step counter
041728508
Total steps of all Your 30 members in Qld.

Smart Moves

Physical Activity Programs in Queensland State Schools

Our Government is committed to supporting and promoting the health and wellbeing of Queensland by young people. We are determined to do everything we can to help combat child obesity and make young Queenslanders healthier.

The Department of Education, Training and the Arts, Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport and Recreation, and Queensland Health are working together to improve the health and physical activity levels of young people through a number of initiatives.

We've already stepped up to the challenge by providing multiple tool options in our schools and create an emphasis on the second part of our strategy.

Smart Moves - Physical Activity Programs in Queensland State Schools has been developed to increase the number of times students are engaged in physical activity at school and to improve the quality of their activity. It targets the regular physical activity of at least moderate intensity, one of the major components of a healthy and active lifestyle.

Smart Moves provides a set of principles to guide the development of a Physical Activity Plan in each Queensland state school. Each State Plan requires the school to address the components in order to build their physical activity program.

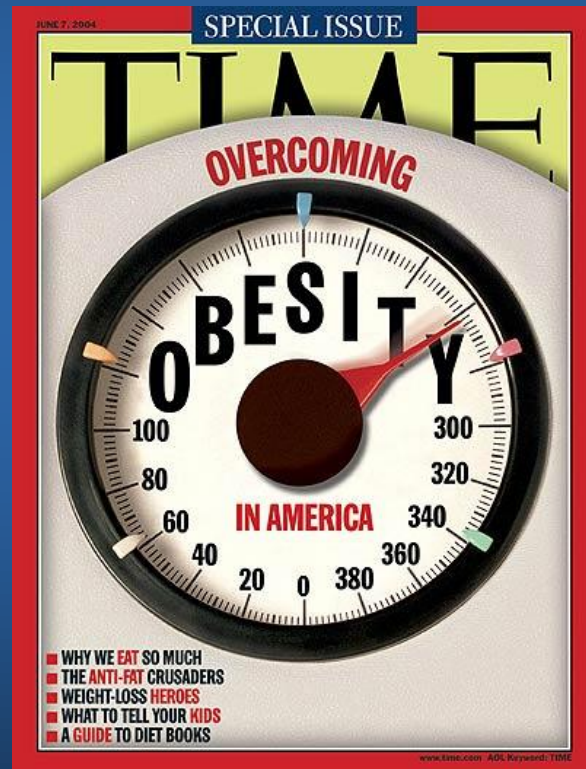
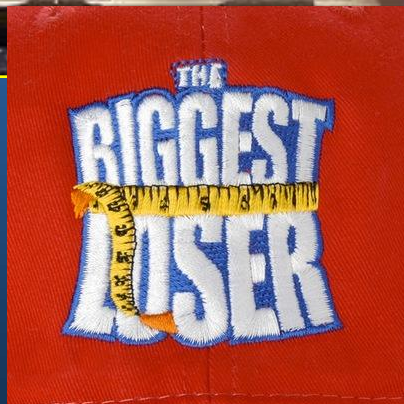
Believe our schools can make a difference to the future health and wellbeing of Queensland. By providing healthy food choices and quality physical activity, we can help our children and young people embrace good eating habits and active lifestyles which they can carry into their adult lives.

Paul Scully
Minister for Education and Training and Minister for the Arts

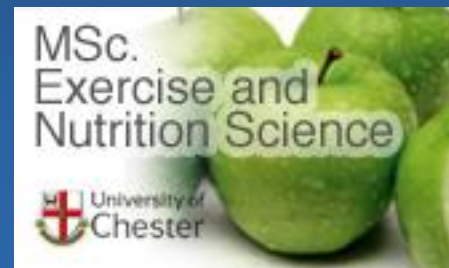
Eat Well Be Active

Queensland Government
Education, Training and the Arts
Local Government, Planning, Sport and Recreation

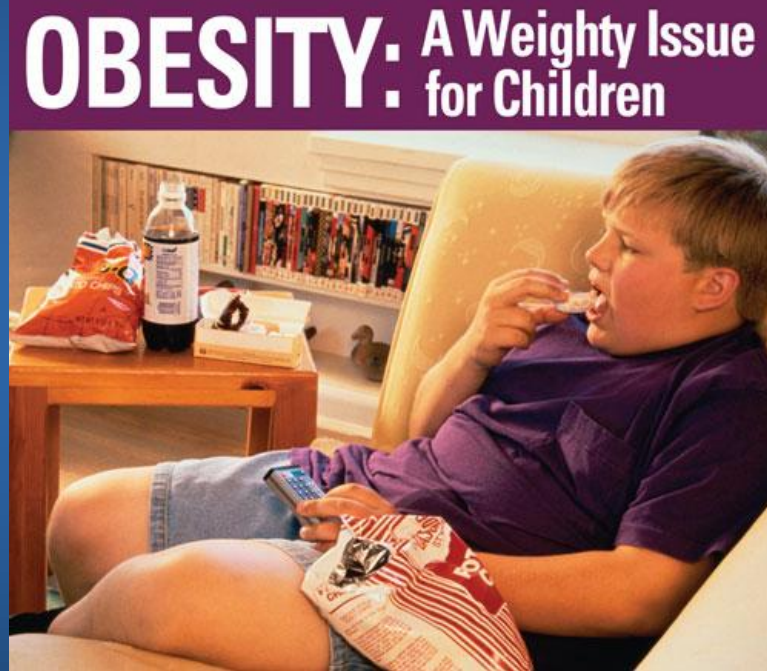
Macro level public discourse/popular culture



Meso level HMS degrees; grant monies



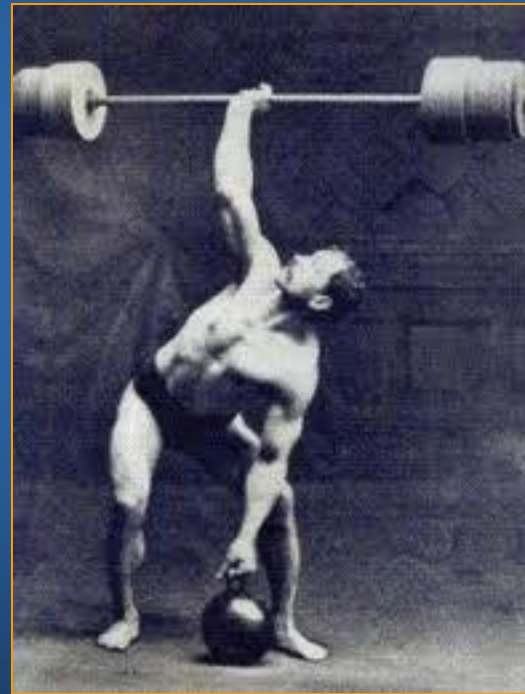
Meso level School PE



School PE has been targeted as a front-line site for the 'war on obesity'

Micro level

Our exercise and corporeal biographies



Flow of ideas or memes

Macro Govt policies; public discourse

Meso Kinesiology degrees; research
money

Micro Kinesiology faculty /student
biographies

How is HPE doing in regard to the obesity 'crisis'?



Is it a success story?
And how is success 'measured'?

Wednesday October 17, 2012

- 75% of 10 & 11 year-olds have dieted or exercised to lose weight
- 50% are consciously trying to lose weight
- 52% of boys and 48% of girls are trying to lose weight
- 18% of kids aged 8-9 are overweight or obese

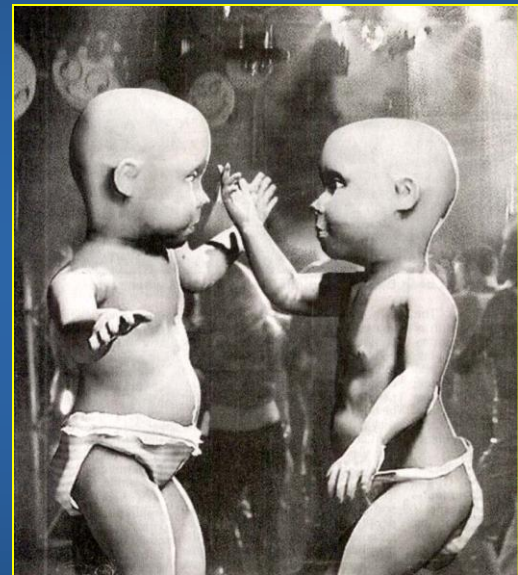


Does this mean HPE has
succeed or failed?

In the battle for the hearts and minds
(and bodies) of young people...

Claim: 1

The influence of schooling on
young people is diminishing,
paradoxically at the same time
as more is being asked of it.



Claim 2:

Many young people live in a highly technology mediated world in which the distinctions between education, entertainment and advertising are increasingly blurred.

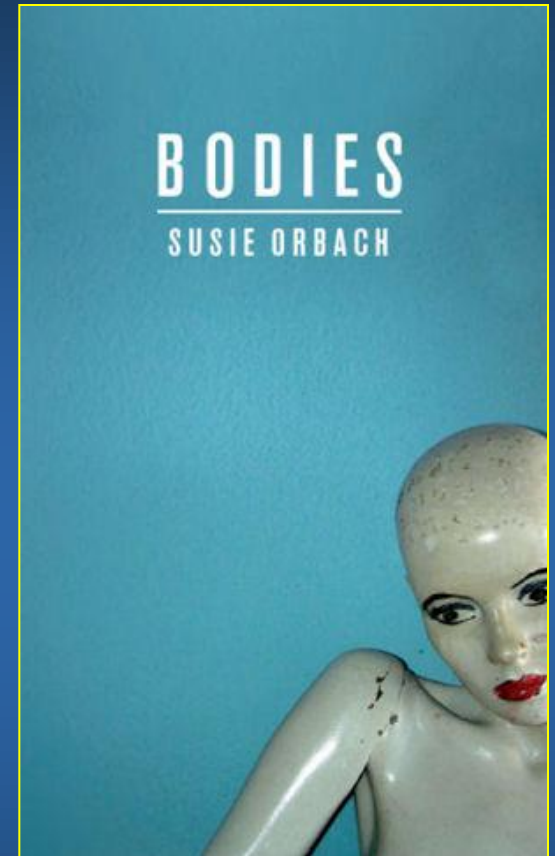


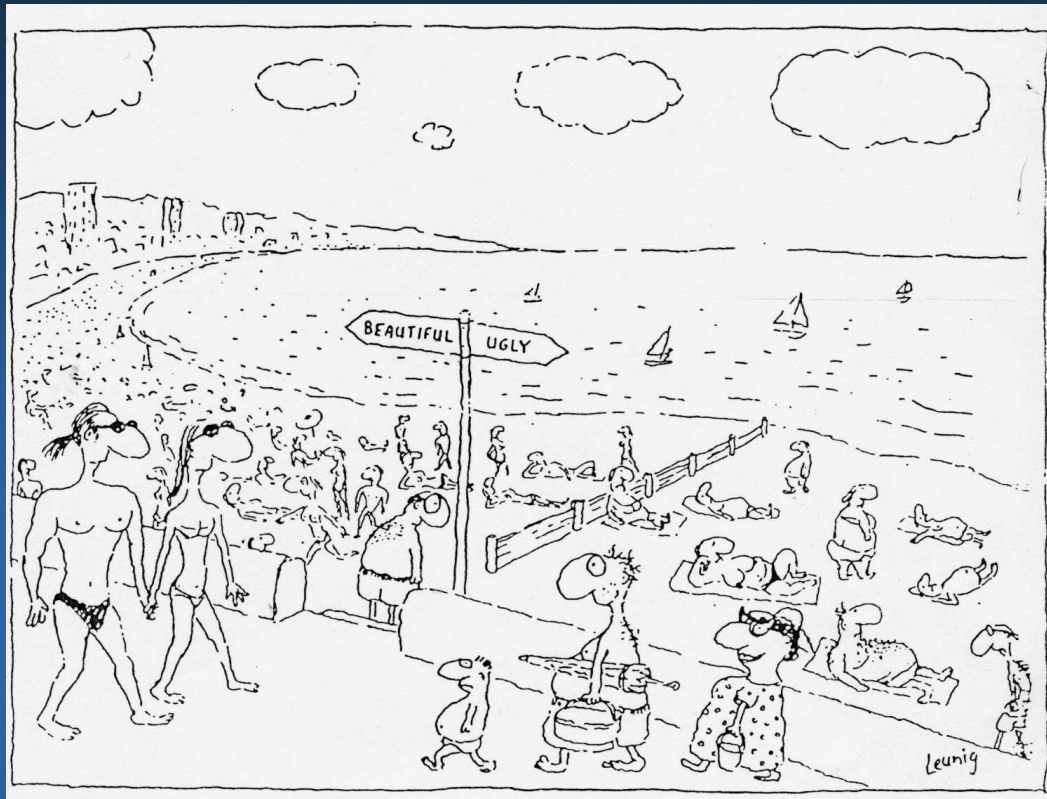
New (and dangerous?) spaces for 'learning' about bodies and health



Claim 3:

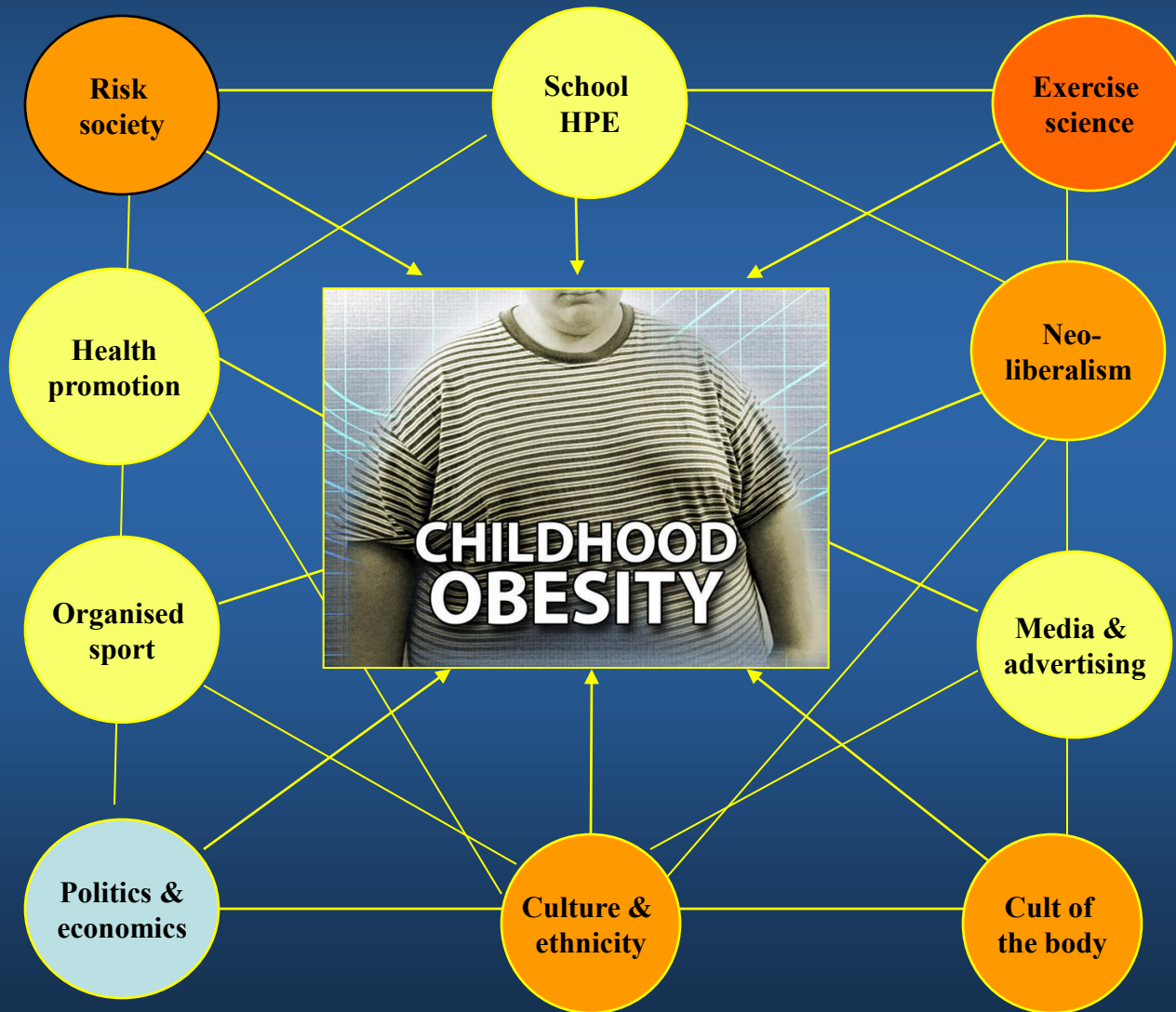
In recent years the body has become a major source for anxiety among young people and this is compounded by the contemporary hysteria regarding the obesity 'crisis'.





The obesity/exercise *memeplex* fits with the contemporary physical culture discourse and the cult of the body in which physical appearance has become a signifier of worthiness.

The complex mix of cultural players/discourses influencing the health issue of child obesity





Neo-
liberalism

Risk
society

Health
promotion

Cult of
the body

Academic PE

These 'planets' represent discourses that are
receptive to the obesity crisis memplex

Mememes of obesity ‘crisis’ also a good fit for the academic field of Physical Education in universities



Proliferation of university departments of 'Physical Education'

- Kinesiology
- Exercise Science
- Health & Sport Science
- Exercise Science & Sport Studies
- Sport Science, Exercise & Health
- Human Movement Studies
- Physical Activity & Health Sciences
- Exercise and Nutrition Science

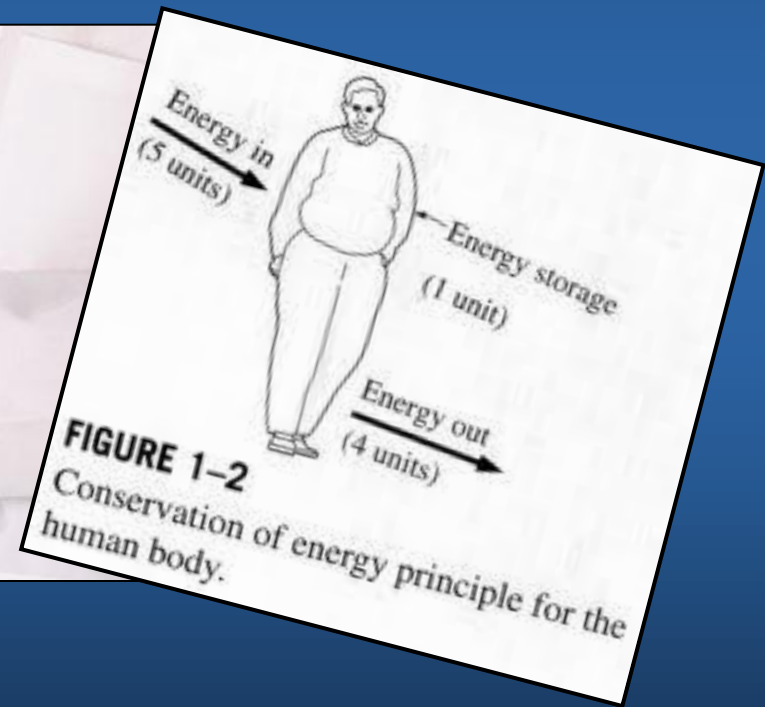
Science has gradually become the *lingua franca* of our field

- BMIs
- Clinical trials
- Epidemiology
- Caloric expenditure
- Skinfold measures



This produces a *particular* way of thinking about health and obesity

Such a view of the body tends to ignore (or at least marginalize) the social, emotional, cultural & aesthetic aspects of obesity.



Exercise science knowledge is important,
but...



It is insufficient to understand complex bio-social phenomena such as health and obesity.

Exercise science knowledge is important,
but...



It is also insufficient to understand complex socio-cultural activities such as sport.

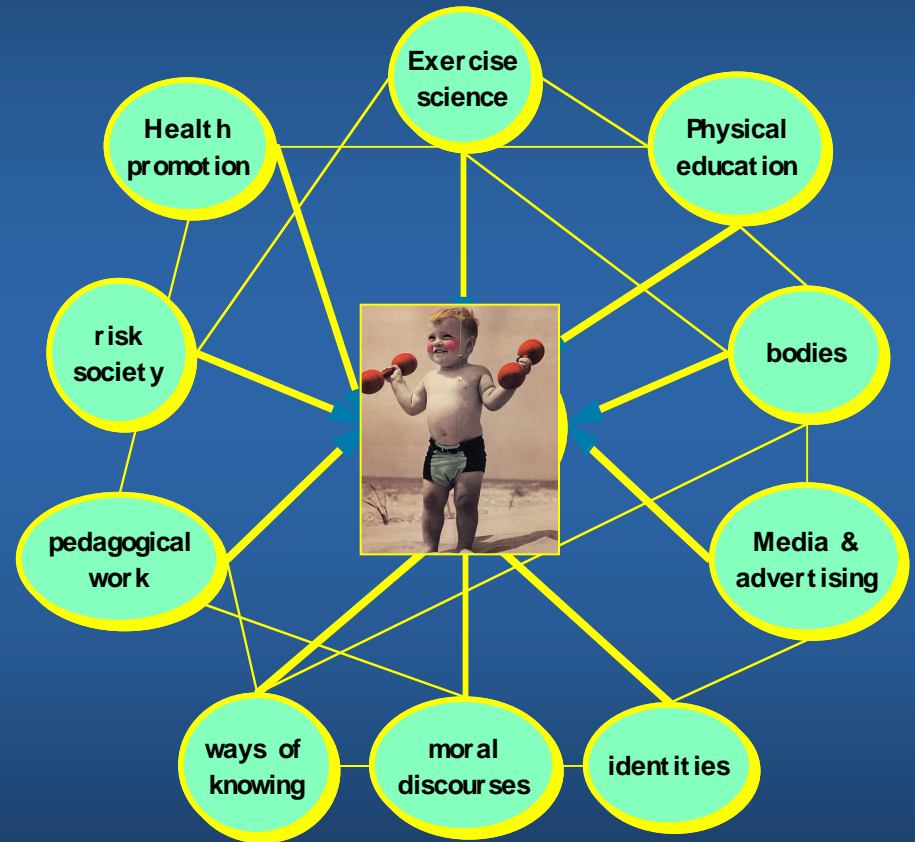
Our typically exercise science degrees reinforce knowledge silos of our field



Silos, “present practical problems related to fractionation, poor communication, and lack of mutual respect” (Kretchmar, 2008, p. 3)

Our degree programs should...

Help students (future professionals in the field) to ‘connect the dots’ regarding the *pedagogical work* they do in relation to the making of the healthy citizen.



Almost finished...



School PE must execute a delicate balancing act between...

- Responding to the obesity 'crisis' (an instrumental purpose related to the development of human capital).
- Emphasising its unique contributions to the movement education of young people





Unfortunately the future of physical education will not to be found in evoking arguments for the intrinsic value of physical activity as an educational activity.

“Although it is not possible for school physical education to provide all the recommended daily physical activity, physical education should be judged in part on how it contributes to national health objectives” (Sallis, McKenzie et al., 1997, p.1331).





Trying to defend PE by attempting to scientifically measure its impact on child obesity or future lifestyle practices will be doomed for failure simply because there are too many other variables which are beyond the control of schools or teachers.

At the end of the day
my memetic analysis
leads me to conclude
that ...



... as long as the idea of an obesity crisis
remains contagious in our culture, we will (for
better or worse) continue our commitment to
the obesity/exercise memeplex and our faith in
science as the answer.

Thank you for listening



For your diaries



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