

## Competition as an Appropriate Instructional Practice in the Physical Education Environment: Reflective Experiences

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**Abstract :** The purpose of this study was to explore gender differences of former physical education students related to reflective experiences of competition in physical education learning environment. In the school environment, students are positioned in competitive situations, including in the physical education context. Therefore it is important to prepare future physical educators to address the role of competition in physical education. Participants for this study were 304 college-aged students and young adults ( $M = 1.53$ ,  $SD = .500$ ), from a private university and local community located in the western United States. When comparing gender, significant differences ( $p < .05$ ) were reported for four (questions 5, 7, 12, and 14) of the nine scaling questions. Follow-up quantitative findings reported that males (41%) more than females (27%) witnessed fights in physical education environment during competitive games. Qualitative findings reported fighting were along the lines of verbal confrontation. Female participants tended to experience being excluded from games, when compared to male participants. Both male and female participants (total population; 95%, males; 98%; and females 92%) were in favor of including competition in physical education for students. Findings suggest that physical education teachers and physical education teacher education programs have a responsibility to develop gender neutral learning experiences that help students better appreciate the role competition plays, both in and out of the physical education classroom.

**Keywords :** competition, physical education, physical education teacher education, gender

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