

The Physical Activity Profession in Process: Unity, Diversity and the Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation, 1970-1997

David Kirk and Doune Macdonald

The Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation (ACHPER) is a peak association for professionals in the physical activity field, with a federated structure of Branches in each State and a National Board, Office and salaried National Executive Director. Between 1954 and 1970, the Australian Physical Education Association (APEA), ACHPER's antecedent organisation, was firmly associated with physical education. Since 1971, and reflecting the organisation's name change, ACHPER sought to provide a professional home to health educators, physical recreationalists, sport educators and administrators, fitness professionals and movement scientists, as well as physical educators. However, as its members' interests and professional backgrounds became more diverse, the Council found it increasingly difficult to represent all of these interests in a unified manner. Reflected in ACHPER's struggles to manage this tension between a desirable degree of diversity of interests and expertise and a unified mission and purpose are the growing pains of a rapidly expanding physical activity field in Australia during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s.

Some members of ACHPER have been aware of this tension and of what it implied for a 'profession in process'. Tom Thompson was one of two Vice Presidents of the APEA in 1954, the year in which the Association was founded,¹ and he also served as the ACHPER Queensland Branch President for many years. Writing in a special retrospective issue of the ACHPER *National Journal* in 1983, Thompson² argued that ACHPER's survival depended on members' ability to maintain 'unity in the face of diversity'. He acknowledged that diversity of interests and expertise was important to a professional body such as ACHPER, since it signaled

‘vigour and growth’. But he expressed concern that diversity could also become divisive and in the longer term lead to conflict and fragmentation. Unity was important, according to Thompson, because ‘it gives strength to the organisation’ in terms of its ability to ‘speak from a position of prestige and authority on public issues’.

Thompson’s analysis was insightful because, as we intend to show in this article, it was the tension between unity and diversity that prompted members of the APEA to change the Association’s name in 1970 to better reflect their emerging diversity of interests. This tension also fueled ACHPER’s development through the decades following the name change. Speculating on ACHPER’S future progress beyond 1983, unity was to be achieved, according to Thompson, through the development of common goals and a ‘positive attitude of cooperation’, the maintenance of special interest groups to accommodate diverse interests, and the continued existence of a national, federated structure that acted as a peak body representing its constituents.

The extent to which ACHPER has been able to achieve unity in the face of diversity is a key point of focus in this article. More generally, we are concerned with ACHPER’s progress between 1971 and 1997 as a means of examining the development of the physical activity field. This focus on ACHPER is part of a larger project³ concerned with the relationships between the emergence of professional groups within the physical activity field and the ways in which the field itself is defined and configured in educational institutions, publications such as books and journals, and in forms of more general public discourse such as the print and electronic media.

We begin the article with a brief sketch of some of the key concepts that have allowed us to think about these relationships between the formation of professions and the formation of fields of knowledge. We then examine the transition from the APEA to ACHPER and the forces and events that lay behind the name change. In the third section of the article we discuss some of the key issues surrounding the tension between unity and diversity identified by just over 40 leaders in the field, many senior and long standing members of ACHPER, and then offer an interpretation of their comments. We conclude the article with some speculations on ACHPER’S development during the next 20 years, and its relationship to the development of the physical activity field and the physical education profession in Australia.

Professions in Process

In 1961, American sociologists Bucher and Strauss⁴ introduced the idea that the formation of professions can be thought of as a socially dynamic process. They sought to highlight through this notion features of professions that until that time had tended to be overlooked, particularly conflict within professions and a lack of homogeneity that researchers had previously attributed to professions. They explained their notion of professions in process by taking as a paradigm case the medical profession, and they showed through this example how fractionalised this model profession actually was.

Rather than being characterised by homogeneity, according to Bucher and Strauss the medical profession consisted of groupings or 'segments' and that these segments represent 'many identities, many values, many interests'. They go on to remark that these identities, values and interests 'amount not merely to differentiation or simple variation. They tend to become patterned and shared; coalitions develop and flourish — and in opposition to some others.' They conclude that their notion of professions in process reveals that 'professions are loose amalgamations of segments pursuing different objectives in different manners and more or less delicately held together under a common name at a particular period in history'.⁵

Some 20 years later, curriculum historian Ivor Goodson⁶ saw in this notion of professions in process a way of explaining the social construction of the school curriculum by thinking of school subjects as 'shifting amalgamations of sub-groups and traditions', (or segments in Bucher and Strauss's language). These sub-groups or coalitions of interested parties compete with each other, claimed Goodson, in the pursuit of a range of resources and interests such as power, status, career development, facilities and equipment. A key feature of the definition of the field of knowledge represented by a particular school subject is fragmentation of the subject community. An important outcome of the process of contestation between rival segments of a profession is that some versions of the field, in terms of knowledge, methodologies, and values, are privileged over others. Along with Bucher and Strauss, Goodson argued that neither professions nor the fields of knowledge they lay claim to are homogenous nor are they monolithic nor static.

This linking of the processual nature of professions with the social construction of fields of knowledge is important to understanding the

various forms that school physical education, health education, university human movement studies, sports science or leisure studies take, and the professional identities of the people who work within these fields. Informed by the framework developed by Bucher and Strauss and Goodson, it is possible to gain some insights into how ACHPER's progress between 1970 and 1997 has contributed to the social construction of forms of knowledge in the physical activity field, to the development of professional identities and to the forms of public discourse on sport and physical activity in Australian society.

Origins of the Name Change

The Annual Meeting of the National Council of the APEA was held on 1 August 1970 during the joint ICHPER-APEA International Congress in Sydney. Motion 4 of the meeting requested 'that the National Association initiate the process of changing the name of the association to include the three disciplines Physical Education, Health Education and Recreation and thus widen the sphere upon which the Australian Physical Education Association bears influence'.⁷ The name proposed as part of the motion — the Australian Health, Physical Education and Recreation Association — was not supported. Two attempts at amendments also failed and the name 'ACHPER' was supported marginally by thirteen votes to ten, with one member of the Council abstaining. It was decided to refer the matter to State Branches for advice. The State Branch committees showed less hesitation than the National Council and the new name ACHPER was ratified by the National Executive the following year.

There can be no doubt that the ICHPER-APEA International Congress provided some significant impetus to the movement to change the name of the APEA. In her report on the Conference, Elaine Chesworth claimed that it was 'in every way a milestone in the history of health, physical education and recreation in Australia'.⁸ The conference was the best attended in the history of the APEA and had provided a significant boost to membership.⁹ The title of the conference, 'New Endeavours in Physical Education, Health Education and Recreation', suggests that the three areas of focus were already on their way to becoming increasingly visible within the APEA. According to Chesworth, the Congress indicated that 'we in Australia are now part of the international scene',¹⁰ and it may have been this feeling of connectedness internationally through ICHPER along with the great success of the conference that led to the acceptance

of an Australian version of this name.

However, this international congress was only one factor, perhaps little more than a window of opportunity, in changing the name of the APEA to ACHPER. There were a series of significant events occurring in a number of professional spheres leading up to the name change that help to explain why the APEA membership decided to change the organisation's name and with it, its identity as a professional association. Changes were occurring in at least three spheres that were of particular importance to APEA members.

In the tertiary sphere, the Martin Report of 1964 proposed that sub-degree programs should be removed from universities and relocated in more appropriate institutions, a matter that was of clear significance to those responsible for the preparation of physical education teachers. The academicisation of physical education, manifest for example in the proliferation of undergraduate degree programs throughout the 1970s and 1980s, and the increasing need for tertiary level staff to gain postgraduate qualifications, were direct results of this change. This academicisation of the field also had a direct influence on the name change through the influence of members of the APEA returning from overseas higher degree study. As former ACHPER National President Elaine Murphy described this influence

Australians coming back from overseas, they were saying that the associations over there are including these other streams (in health and recreation), and our description of physical education is just not adequate when health is such a large component (of what we do) ... they wanted those words included otherwise they felt that physical education was too narrow.¹¹

In the sphere of State and local government, there was increasing intervention in the provision of community sport and recreation facilities and opportunities, a role that was eventually to take over the work of the National Fitness Councils. And in the sphere of education and schools, the ongoing development of compulsory universal secondary education brought about increasing opportunities for teachers to work in secondary schools. Changes in each of these spheres through the 1960s contributed to shifts in the circumstances in which APEA members worked and consequently to the professional context in which the APEA operated.

Behind these events lay another factor that is of key importance in

understanding the name change, the professional identities of APEA members as these developed during the 1950s and 1960s. The APEA was formed as a national body in 1954 in order to better coordinate the work of the various State associations that had begun to develop to represent the interests of graduates of the five universities offering physical education programs. The Association was formed at a time when physical education in schools was becoming increasingly sport based as it moved away from the formerly dominant drilling and exercising programs.¹² The Commonwealth and State Councils for National Fitness, mostly formed in the late 1930s, had also by 1954 begun to have an impact on adult recreation which included sports and games, and also outdoor activities such as camping. And the approaching Melbourne Olympic Games offered the neonate APEA an opportunity to become involved with colleagues on the international stage through its organisation of the World Congress on Physical Education held in Melbourne eight days before the Games.¹³

The emerging professional identities of APEA members and concomitant shifts in the shape of the physical activity field are suggested in the comments of two leaders in physical education during the 1950s and 1960s, Fritz Duras and Bert Willee. In 1955, as inaugural President of the APEA, Duras suggested that the World Congress would allow colleagues to discuss the 'educational, physiological and socio-psychological aspects of Physical Education' and stated that 'Physical Education is an essential part of every education program, whether this program be designed for the normal child, adolescent, or adult, or whether it has to serve the physically, mentally or socially handicapped individual'.¹⁴ Some twelve years later in 1967 in his role as the APEA Journal Editor, Bert Willee argued that 'while it is true that the majority of physical education students become teachers, there are many who do not'. For this reason it was essential that the training of physical educators remain in the universities, where they could be exposed to a range of fields of knowledge, rather than be transferred to teacher colleges, designed for no other purpose, claimed Willee, than to train teachers.¹⁵

Not everyone would have agreed completely with the ideas of Duras and Willee, of course. For instance, George Hay, a prominent figure in Queensland physical education in the 1970s and 1980s, may have concurred that the APEA 'linked physical education very strongly with sport and recreation', but his position within a State government Education

Department rather than a university lead him to the view that the APEA 'was an organisation built around physical education teachers in school'.¹⁶ While we should note these shades of difference of opinion, the comments of Duras and Willee serve as general markers for some of the prevailing views of physical education as a field of professional activity that was influential in bringing about the name change in 1971.

Physical educators saw themselves as educators first and foremost, but not necessarily as school teachers alone. Individuals trained as physical educators worked in sites other than schools and with adults as well as children, with disabled as well as able bodied learners, with elite athletes as well as recreational participants. Moreover, the idea had developed through the 1950s and 1960s as individuals began to acquire higher degrees and to publish research that, in the words of Bert Willee, 'Physical Education is essentially a multi-disciplinary approach to the central problem of human movement'.¹⁷ In these comments by Willee and in those of Fritz Duras, we can begin to discern forms of professional identity and emerging forms of the fields in which physical activity is of central concern that are recognisable as contemporary to the 1990s.

It was on the basis of this emerging idea of themselves that members of the APEA were prepared to vote for a name change in 1970 to better reflect and acknowledge the diversification of interests of what had been up until that time a relatively small and relatively homogeneous professional group. As Motion 4 of the National Council's meeting in 1970 suggests in its aim 'to widen the sphere upon which the Australian Physical Education Association bears influence', the APEA was making a bid to be the authoritative voice in these fields of practice. Few within the APEA would have suspected that the glue that bound together physical educators as a small professional group between 1954 and 1970, the primary concern with education, could no longer be assumed to apply as the 1970s wore on. Just as the APEA moved to legitimise its claims to authority in the fields of health education and recreation, events were already in train that would strain the unity and spur on the fractionalisation of the newly formed ACHPER.

Mission and Membership

The act of identifying physical education, health education and recreation as the three major professional fields of interest of ACHPER members began to solidify by the mid 1970s in the actual organisational structure

of the Council. In a 1976 Editorial in the *Australian Journal of Health, Physical Education and Recreation*, National President Howard Mutton raised his concern that:

many members of ACHPER are not happy about the kinds of programs being offered by the State Branches. Although membership has increased marginally over the last two years, there are many more people who have not bothered to renew their membership ... I wonder if the main reason is simply the reaction of people feeling that ACHPER is not offering them their money's worth.¹⁸

The South Australian Branch of ACHPER had already struck on a solution to this problem, the creation of separate meetings for the three areas of the Council, 'while at the same time providing for combined activities to provide social and professional intercourse'.¹⁹

The comments by Mutton and the early initiative of the SA Branch which led to the establishment of special interest groups (or segments, in Bucher's and Strauss's language) within ACHPER reflect attempts to manage the tension between unity and diversity. Two issues continually resurface in this effort to manage the tension, the questions of membership and of ACHPER's proper role or mission as a professional association. The issue of membership has included concerns for the actual numbers of individuals in ACHPER, and the range of the jobs they do, their interests and expertise. The issue of ACHPER's mission and proper role has tended to be polarised around the need to provide services to members and the need to act as a peak body and political lobby group on their behalf.

Given their pivotal position in understanding ACHPER's progress, we were not surprised to discover that the issues of membership and ACHPER's mission surfaced frequently as interdependent problems in our conversations with the profession's leaders and senior members. Moreover, in all of our discussions, it became clear that the tension between unity and diversity worked itself out differently in each State. These points can be illustrated through the contrasting ways in which physical education teachers in different States participated in ACHPER activities.

In Queensland, for example, Lester Eisenmonger, a long time member of the APEA and ACHPER, expressed his frustration at those people who should have been supporters of ACHPER but were not: 'those in high

positions in the fraternity of the Education Department in physical education who weren't even members of ACHPER'.²⁰ John Kane, another Queenslander and Eisenmonger's colleague in the Queensland Education Department, pointed out some of the difficulties of ACHPER's operation in a state the size of Queensland, particularly in terms of serving the interests of physical education teachers:

State conference attendances have been very poor in Queensland considering the number of phys ed teachers. I think there was something like 45 phys ed teachers at the last state ACHPER conference (in 1993). And out of the 1200 phys ed teachers employed approximately by the Education Department there'd have to be another 350 to 400 in the private school systems, so you're looking at probably about 1600 to 1700 phys ed teachers in Queensland employed, and yet 45 attended a state conference.²¹

Victoria provided a contrasting case, where the State conference has been successful for many years in attracting high numbers of physical education teachers. According to David Lawson, Faculty Dean at Victoria University of Technology (VUT), ACHPER has 'maintained quite a high membership in Victoria, and been active. I think particularly from a physical education perspective and a teacher education perspective it's provided a lot of good services for its members.'²² Commenting on developments in Queensland in the late 1970s, Queensland University of Technology lecturer Col Purdy felt that 'ACHPER has worked reasonably well. When the Hindmarsh scheme was mooted and trialed in South Australia, ACHPER got behind the move to put out materials for the daily physical education program ... I probably feel that this is an area where ACHPER needs to work on in trying to keep promoting this idea of physical education.'²³

Underpinning these State differences was a prevailing view within ACHPER that it was not a professional association serving physical education teachers alone. Indeed, John Miller, former Balmain Teachers' College lecturer and Inspector of PDHPE in the NSW Department of School Education, commented:

I don't know that a lot of people would be happy to say now that they are really a physical education professional group, because most of them no longer consider themselves just physical education. They certainly say they're physical and

health education, and with the other groups associated.²⁴

This diversification of ACHPER's interests was viewed by some as a source of neglect of physical education teachers. George Hay commented that 'ACHPER hold their (State) conference in November while schools are still in session and it always used to be in January when teachers could attend it. I think that's comment enough.'²⁵ Tony Parker, currently Head of Human Movement Studies at QUT, also identified the issue of diversification explicitly as a source of neglect of physical education teachers:

The people that really need the greatest representation, the people as I see them in the school system, the physical educator, are not being well represented at this point in time because there are so many other interest groups within that organisation ... who have different agendas, they have different needs in representation.²⁶

On the other hand, as Peter Reichenbach, Head of the Preston Institute program in the 1970s, pointed out, ACHPER in Victoria may serve the needs of physical educators but in doing so fails to meet the needs of other members:

I was disappointed that the APEA was disappearing and becoming ACHPER because it just didn't seem to function. I don't think and I still don't think it functions very well. It functions well for phys eders, in other words it could still be the APEA and do a great job. I'm not sure that it meets the needs of the recreation people. We had recreation under our wing here under my School of Phys Ed and Recreation and Leisure Studies and they moved. So I was fairly close to an understanding of their feelings and they were much more aligned to other organisations than ACHPER.²⁷

The questions of ACHPER's ability to provide services that cater for the diverse needs of its membership and its ability to represent their interests in professional and public forums comes through insistently in these comments. Head of Department at VUT Terry Seedsman summed up the situation by saying:

there's been as you know a history of breakaway—there are people in recreation who would argue they haven't been represented, there are people in health that say that they haven't been represented, and then there'll be people in

physical education who will say they haven't, but because ACHPER tried to do all things to all those groups they've done nothing very well at all.²⁸

These comments seem to suggest the fracturing and fractionalisation of ACHPER along the lines of physical education, health education and recreation. However, this appeared to be only one source of division identified by the participants in our study.

Another series of fault lines had their source in the perception that academics had taken over the organisation from practitioners. George Hay was characteristically forthright on this point:

Physical education has been absolutely devastated right throughout Australia, and I think one of the big influences within this has been the work of the people within the tertiary institutions who've never come to grips with an identity for physical education and consequently have concentrated on saying what physical education is not, rather than on what physical education is or could be. The thing became so difficult that they've all stopped calling it physical education now within the tertiary institutions and they call it all sorts of other different things and they still are seeking for a name ... we've fragmented and specialised so much that they've forgotten they're dealing with one human body, one human being, who is part of a group. And that's what's all been forgotten.²⁹

Offering support for this view, Keith Lansley, who led up program development at Footscray Institute of Technology in the 1970s, felt that there was a perception within some sections of ACHPER that 'the academics got into positions of power and then they started to say that we've got to have quality journals, and they started to write for each other and the practitioner very much became a lost soul, and there was nothing put in place to really serve the practitioner'.³⁰ In Queensland both Eisenmonger and Kane noted the disquiet amongst teachers with ACHPER conferences. Lester Eisenmonger commented that 'the field staff always maintained the ACHPER conferences were only academia airing their theses'.³¹ John Kane remarked that 'over the years I've heard various comments like ACHPER is dominated by tertiary lecturers, or ACHPER doesn't deal with the things that we're faced with in schools'.³²

However, this increased academic specialisation has not necessarily impacted on ACHPER in the ways these comments would appear to

suggest. David Lawson observed that 'it took a little while to bring into the fold the sports scientists and ACHPER never did it terribly well, and as a result they've felt dissatisfied and they've gone to their own associations. And you've now got the position where I guess a lot of people like me belong to three associations.'³³ Lawson's view that some academics have deserted ACHPER is supported by Tony Parker who said 'if you look at ... the academic or research side of things, the biggest focus in Australia right now in this exercise and sports science research is the ASMF conference. Many people would not present their research now at the ACHPER conference.'³⁴ Peter Swan, physical education teacher educator at Ballarat University, added the comment that 'there's this amorphous group of sports scientists out there ... who are keen professionals and committed to ACHPER in some way, but try and give them a voice within ACHPER or get them to do anything or give them the opportunity and it doesn't become meaningful. It appears that the nature of an organisation like (ACHPER) isn't appropriate for the growth of that (sports science) area.'³⁵ If academics had taken over ACHPER, it appears from these comments that it was not those academics working in the sports sciences.

Since the 1970s, it is the case that individuals working in the physical activity and related fields within the tertiary education sector have increasingly felt the pressure to gain research qualifications and conduct research programs, a trend that has intensified following the Dawkins reforms of 1987. However, this academicisation has fractionalised the field to the extent that sports and exercise scientists have sought to represent their research interests through associations such as Sports Medicine Australia and the Australian Association for Exercise and Sport Science, the socioculturalists through such groups as the Australian Society for Sports History, and sport administrators through the Australian Society for Sport Administration. Within the physical activity field, some segments of the profession have been further disadvantaged by this fracturing along the academic fault line because they lack a tradition of research in their field. For example, according to Elaine Murphy, recreationalists 'work with people and their main interest is really client focused, doing things for people, they're not as good at for instance doing research, writing about how good they are, when they'd rather be out in the field doing things'.³⁶

One of the consequences of these various forms of fractionalisation of

ACHPER's membership is the difficulties this presents for the Council to lobby effectively on behalf of the professions it ostensibly represents. Indeed, if the membership of ACHPER projects a range of professional identities, the question arises as to who has the authority to speak on behalf of ACHPER as a whole. As Tom Thompson remarked, does the diversity of the memberships interests weaken the collective's ability to speak on professional topics with the authority derived from unity?

It is this tension between multiple professional identities and the spectre of competing interests that led some participants in the study to suggest that ACHPER's ability to act as an effective political lobby group has been limited. Even though we were told of a number of successes in approaching government where ACHPER's support had been important, these successes tended to be local and short-lived in terms of their impact, a good example of this being the Victorian Branch's courtship of Norm Lacey in the late 1970s.

In attempting to sum up their reflections on these issues in relation to ACHPER's progress between 1970 up to the time they were interviewed in 1994, an overwhelming view was expressed that ACHPER had fallen short of what it might have been expected to achieve. Much credit was given to ACHPER in relation to its aspirations, particularly its commitment to contribute to the health of all Australians by supporting the activities of its members. There was also some acknowledgement that ACHPER had over the years provided good quality professional development experiences to its members. In addition, there was always an awareness that there was and is much variation across States. However, it is perhaps due to the ambitious nature of these aspirations in relation to the tensions we have discussed in this paper that ACHPER was judged to have fallen short. This view is expressed in the following comments:

I guess I've seen ACHPER at its peak and I think it's on a slide at the moment, and it's a problem because ... it tried to be all things to all people.³⁷

I think ACHPER is running around in circles trying to work out where its best interests do lie and it's never really been able to pin anything down long enough because they haven't been there long enough.³⁸

I thought ACHPER was good. I was involved in those days it was just two professions, ACHPER and with the old sports

medicine, and I actually have been a long term supporter of ACHPER, but I think to a certain extent it's tended to miss the mark a little bit.³⁹

I mean one of the good things that ACHPER does is it tries to provide for all the groups and incorporate them, and some of them don't otherwise have an adequate representation, but at the same time I would tend to think that some recreation people may feel undervalued within ACHPER ... As far as the professional association of ACHPER's concerned it's difficult for them to try and do everything given the limited size that they are.⁴⁰

In all cases this view was expressed alongside an understanding that ACHPER, like the APEA before it, is a professional association run, in the main, by volunteers. As such, in all of our discussions, participants tended to be hesitant in making criticisms. Since most had long associations with ACHPER/APEA and many had been office bearers, this critical conclusion on ACHPER's progress was not made lightly or without sadness and regret. In this context, where many volunteers have worked hard on ACHPER's behalf for many years, how can we best understand what went wrong, and how can this analysis be used to assist ACHPER's progress over the next twenty years?

What Went Wrong?

In attempting to understand how it is that so many participants reached the conclusion they did on ACHPER's progress, we will return to Bucher and Strauss and their notion of professions in process. Bucher and Strauss suggest that there are a number of characteristics the segments of professions do not share which lead to fractionalisation, conflict and disunity. Several of these characteristics are important in ACHPER's case.

The first characteristic is the sense different sub-groups or segments of ACHPER have of the Council's mission. While members of the sub-groups of ACHPER we have identified did not necessarily dispute the sense of ACHPER's mission that members of other sub-groups held, the data from this study would seem to suggest that they nevertheless foregrounded their own views as most important and consequently as a standard by which to judge ACHPER's effectiveness,

So, for example, we learned earlier in this article that members of

particular segments such as physical educators or recreationalists felt that they had been poorly served by ACHPER because greater support was given to other groups. Those who believed ACHPER's mission was primarily to support the work of practitioners felt that they gained little from conferences, while academics, particularly sports and exercise scientists, criticised ACHPER because conferences did not provide an adequate forum from the presentation of their research. Those who believed ACHPER's mission included political lobbying were inclined to be critical of the organisation's apparent preoccupation with professional development issues. Attempts to develop overarching principles for ACHPER's mission such as the notion of promoting healthy lifestyles have themselves been criticised by members of ACHPER's sub-groups for either inaccurately or too simplistically representing what they believe themselves to be working towards.

This apparent diversity in members' sense of ACHPER's mission can perhaps be best explained by a second characteristic identified by Bucher and Strauss concerning the nature of members' work activities. Again, as the data presented earlier suggests, ACHPER members are engaged in a range of often quite diverse kinds of work. Apart from the diverse physical environments in which ACHPER members work, there are important differences in relation to the skills and expertise required of them, to the clients (if any) they serve, to the structure of their organisations, and to the forms of collegial relationships available to them in the workplace.

Most obvious are the differences in workplace conditions between tertiary academics and school teachers, or research scientists and field workers. These examples should not disguise the fact that even within groups such as tertiary academics, workplace conditions vary considerably and have a profound influence on the professional identities of individuals. The range of different kinds of work ACHPER members do quite clearly can be seen to contribute to the production of different forms of professional identity and to diverse views of ACHPER's mission.

Bucher and Strauss identify an important consequence of differences in sense of mission and work activities, which is the potential for conflict between sub-groups over material rewards, status, career development and so on. In a voluntary organisation with a limited connection to the occupational fields in which its members work, ACHPER is less likely than some other professional associations to experience conflict overtly

in relation to such matters. Nevertheless, we suggest the data from this study shows that members of sub-groups do guard their territory jealously and will defend what they believe to be ACHPER's mission. We believe that conflict does take place between members and groups of members at all levels of ACHPER's organisation, though this is not always overt or visible. In the process of this conflict, some values are foregrounded over others, some forms of knowledge and expertise are privileged, and the interests of some groups dominate those of others.

Finally, Bucher and Strauss suggest that many of the tensions highlighted by mission, work and interests come to a head when the question of the public face of a profession is raised. This suggests that who has the right to speak on ACHPER's behalf and the ways in which ACHPER is represented to the public, the media, to other professional groups and to governments provides some important insights into dominant interests within the Council. Indeed, the act of naming the professional body 'ACHPER' is itself part of this process of presenting the public face, of saying who ACHPER members think they are and what is the domain of their collective expertise.

The view expressed by members that ACHPER has fallen short of its own expectations and aspirations can be explained, at least in part, if we choose to view the sub-groups or segments currently contained within ACHPER as a profession in process. In so doing, we can begin to understand that the overarching tension between unity and diversity is dynamic and has the power to reshape and reform ACHPER. However, we should also realise that the power inherent in the process of managing the tension between unity and diversity could tear ACHPER apart perhaps as easily as it might forge a strong professional group. If we accept that ACHPER represents a profession in process, what can we learn from this study that might assist ACHPER to avoid the likelihood of the former scenario and enhance the possibility of the latter?

The Next Twenty Years?

Between 1993 and 1997, the percentage of ACHPER's members who listed physical education as their first area of interest has increased, while all other areas of interest apart from sport have decreased.

Main Area of Interest	% of Membership/Years				
	1997	1996	1995	1994	1993
Physical Education	66.8	61.6	61.3	54	54
Health Education	14.1	15.2	16.3	19.7	19.3
Recreation	5.2	7.3	7.4	8.7	8.9
Movement Science	3.8	4.4	4.2	4.5	4.8
Community Fitness	2.2	3	3.3	4.6	4.2
Sport	6.6	6.3	5.5	5.9	6.2
Dance	1.3	2.2	2	2.6	2.6

(Source: ACHPER National Office, Aug. 1996 and Dec. 1997)

We propose that these figures and the trends they suggest may provide some clues to ACHPER's future. While these percentages tell us nothing about the actual numbers of members of ACHPER, they provide some information on the proportions of members who identify themselves primarily with the Council's professional sub-groups. In the 1960s, such a distribution would have been read rather differently from today. It would have resembled the contemporary reading with respect to the concern for education and physical activity in a number of sites. But the term physical education would also have been used rather more broadly than it is now, to include recreation and health, and also to denote the tertiary field of study. In the 1990s, we suggest that those individuals who identify physical education as their primary field of interest in ACHPER are almost certainly teachers or involved professionally in some form of the pedagogy of physical activity. If these assumptions are correct, what we may be witnessing over this five year period is an increasing tendency for ACHPER to be attracting or holding on to members whose professional identity is in education and physical activity.

Perhaps if this trend continues, ACHPER's ability to manage the tension between unity and diversity may become easier, since this would suggest the establishment of an increasingly homogenous professional group focused around the field of physical education in its contemporary sense. While this notion may hold some appeal for some ACHPER members, we wish here to treat this interpretation as problematic.

In purely financial terms, ACHPER needs to increase its revenue from membership fees if it is to be able to provide a range of services to members, including National and State offices and waged staff. Since the name change in 1971, ACHPER has pursued an explicit policy of increasing its membership in order to increase revenue and to be as inclusive as possible in defining who can become a member.⁴¹ One of the consequences of doing this, however, has been to increase the range of professional backgrounds and expertise of the membership and so to risk increasing the differences between sub-groups in terms of sense of mission, work activities and interests, leading to fractionalisation.

It appears to us that ACHPER has already passed through this phase of attempting to recruit widely and, as decreasing membership figures in areas such as health education, recreation and so on suggest, has begun to lose ground to other professional bodies representing these professional groups and fields of knowledge. Even at its peak, it is unlikely, as Ian Jobling observes, that ACHPER has been able to attract a critical mass of members that would allow it to capitalise on the diversification of members' interests, and at the same time benefit from increased revenue, by restructuring into an alliance.

One could argue that the American Association (AAPHERD) is an umbrella because it's got a very strong health strand, a very strong recreation (strand), it's a federated group. We never took that route, we might have been able to but we weren't big enough, you see we were only dealing with probably just over 2000 members in those days and not much more today ... So ACHPER's been losing out and... in the last decade it's lost a lot of ground.⁴²

An alliance would have provided important benefits to ACHPER, especially in relation to the early aspiration mooted in motion 4 of the 1970 APEA National Council meeting to 'widen the sphere upon which the Australian Physical Education Association bears influence'. An alliance of sub-groups who also possess strong individual identities would have given ACHPER an increased legitimacy to speak with authority on behalf of 'the profession'. We re-iterate our view that this opportunity has passed by, and ACHPER must look to other possibilities.

One of these possibilities is to remain with the current structure of ACHPER and to attempt to recover any ground that has been lost in areas such as health and recreation. This is the status quo scenario. Because of

its policy of inclusivity, ACHPER has been able to do little to influence the workplace conditions of its members or to have some say over their certified levels of competence. So, the two of Bucher's and Strauss's factors it can affect would need to become the focus of strenuous efforts in order to maintain the organisation's current structure. That is, ACHPER must be able to diminish the range of differences among sub-groups in their sense of mission, and to eliminate possible sources of conflict between vested interests.

This is in our view the most likely scenario for ACHPER's future, but also, we suggest, the most problematic. Our analysis suggests that there are now, in the 1990s, too many powerful trends towards specialisation, academicisation and certification, and too much commercialisation and professionalisation of organised physical activities,⁴³ for ACHPER to continue with a mission that had its genesis in the quite different times of the 1950s and 1960s and which was already struggling to survive in the 1970s. However, we believe that it will be mainly the vested interests of existing groups within ACHPER that will make the status quo scenario the most likely until crisis forces changes that may have to be implemented in less favourable circumstances than currently exist.

One further possibility exists, the radical possibility, that resembles our initial interpretation based on the table of membership trends. The radical possibility is for ACHPER to attempt to define its core business on the basis of the proportions of its constituency, and to use this definition as the central plank in a revised sense of mission and in all of its representations of its public face. If the majority of members by a long way identify themselves with physical education in its contemporary sense of the pedagogy of physical activity in schools and other settings, then ACHPER needs to identify physical education as its core business. This possibility was suggested to us by a number of the participants in the study. John Gross's statement is representative of this proposal:

ACHPER I think is trying to do too much. I think they're trying to cover sports science, the pedagogy, etcetera and I think they just got too big ... they're including recreation and health. I just don't see now that you can do it all. New Zealand is a good example where as part of the New Zealand Association of Health, Physical Education and Recreation they've gone to call themselves PENZ now, just focusing on phys ed and I think they've got their focus back, and they said look, we're here for the teaching of phys ed and making

it a good deal so don't make any pretences and make sports science a feature of what they do, nor the other areas.⁴⁴

The notion of core business is useful in this context, because it suggests the foregrounding and backgrounding rather than the inclusion and exclusion of interests. ACHPER could identify its core business as physical education without excluding other topics of interest such as health, recreation, sport or dance. But it would suggest an ordering and prioritising of interests that ACHPER has to date seemed reluctant to create, preferring instead to treat all sub-groups equally. In light of the relative proportions of members' interests, this principle, while laudable, may not now be defensible.

We accept that the physical education profession's attempts to gain influence over a wider sphere of related activities in the 1960s and 1970s might have benefited the careers of individuals. But we question whether, in struggling to manage the tension between unity and diversity, the profession of physical educators or the field of school physical education has necessarily benefited from this process. Perhaps it is more than a coincidence that school physical education has appeared to continue to struggle for credibility in some education systems and at some levels of schooling at a time when the profession of physical educators numbers many thousands more than it did in 1970 and boasts a cadre of teachers who are now four year qualified and, indeed, are often among the most highly qualified teachers in the school.

By defining its core business in this manner, ACHPER would not necessarily be set to prosper. Another name change would most likely be a necessary part of re-presenting the profession's public face. There would need to be a careful analysis of the differing needs of each of the State Branches. And there is also the practical question of revenue, and an urgent need to recruit as many disillusioned or disenfranchised teachers of physical education as possible. But this task may not be easy in light of the perception that ACHPER has been taken over by academics and does not serve the interests of practitioners. Clearly, there would be important work to be done concerning strategies of re-representation in pursuing this radical possibility.

While we personally and professionally find this last possibility compelling and persuasive, since we believe the evidence presented in this article lends strong support to this option, we are not suggesting it is the most likely possibility for ACHPER, at least within the near future. By

raising this as a possible and thinkable future, however, we are intending to signal that perhaps the time has come within ACHPER to begin to reflect collectively on its ability to manage the tension between unity and diversity in the face of new challenges and new times. Perhaps there is a need to begin to revise a rationale developed for different times, in the optimism of the 1960s when the fields ACHPER seeks to represent were in relatively early stages of development. Perhaps there is a need to look ahead to the uncertainties of the new millennium and to begin to develop a new rationale based on an analysis of future risks and opportunities rather than the circumstances of the past.

Notes:

- 1 *Physical Education Journal [PEJ]*, 1955, no. 3.
- 2 *ACHPER National Journal*, 1983, no. 101, pp. 53-4.
- 3 All participants were provided with the opportunity to edit a verbatim transcript of their interview. Each participant provided written permission for use of the text of their edited transcript in conference papers and journal publications. At the same time, we take sole responsibility for the interpretations of the extracts from interviews included in this article. We wish to thank most sincerely everyone who participated in this study.
- 4 R Bucher and A Strauss, 'Professions in Process', M Hammersley and P Woods, eds, *The Process of Schooling*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, pp. 19-26, 1976.
- 5 Bucher and Strauss, 'Professions in Process', p. 19
- 6 I Goodson, 'Subjects for Study: Towards a Social History of Curriculum', I Goodson and S Ball, eds, *Defining the Curriculum*, Falmer Press, London, 1984, pp. 25-44.
- 7 *Australian Journal of Physical Education [AJPE]*, no. 50, 1970, p. 38.
- 8 *AJPE*, no. 50, 1970, p. 26.
- 9 *AJPE*, no. 49, 1970, p. 36.
- 10 *AJPE*, no. 50, 1970, p. 27.
- 11 Murphy interview, 20 Nov. 1994.
- 12 See D Kirk, "Making the Present Strange": Sources of the Current Crisis in Physical Education', *Discourse: The Australian Journal of Educational Studies*, vol. 15, no. 1, 1994, pp. 46-63.
- 13 *PEJ*, no. 3, 1955.
- 14 *PEJ*, no. 3, 1955.
- 15 *AJPE*, no. 41, 1967.
- 16 Hay interview, 2 Nov. 1994
- 17 *AJPE*, no. 41, 1967.
- 18 *Australian Journal of Health, Physical Education and Recreation [AJHPER]*, no. 74, 1976.
- 19 *AJHPER*, no. 72, 1976, p. 44.
- 20 Eisenmenger interview, 7 Nov. 1994.
- 21 Kane interview, 13 Oct. 1994.
- 22 Lawson interview, 19 Oct. 1994.
- 23 Purdy interview, 26 Oct. 1994.
- 24 Miller interview, 17 Oct. 1994.
- 25 Hay interview.
- 26 Parker interview, 26 Oct. 1994.

- 27 Reichenbach interview, 17 Oct. 1994.
- 28 Seedsman interview, 20 Oct. 1994.
- 29 Hay interview.
- 30 Lansley interview, 14 Oct. 1994.
- 31 Eisenmonger interview.
- 32 Kane interview.
- 33 Lawson interview.
- 34 Parker interview.
- 35 Swan interview, 17 Oct. 1994.
- 36 Murphy interview.
- 37 Ian Jobling, The University of Queensland, interview, 30 Aug. 1994.
- 38 Brian Stoddart, University of Canberra, interview, 7 Nov. 1994.
- 39 David Lawson interview.
- 40 John Miller interview.
- 41 The decision of the National Board in 1985 to admit as full members individuals who had fitness accreditation and level 1 coaching certificates, in contrast to the earlier requirement of a tertiary diploma or degree in the physical activity field, is one example of ACHPER's explicit drive towards increasing membership numbers.
- 42 Jobling interview.
- 43 See for an analysis of these issues J McKay, *No Pain, No Gain: Sport and Australian Culture*, Prentice Hall, Sydney, 1991.
- 44 Gross interview, 7 Nov. 1994.