



**DE/REconstructing my Athlete-Student-Teacher Self:
A Critical Autoethnography of Resistance in
Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE)**

*Déconstruction et reconstruction de l'athlète-étudiant-enseignant en moi :
Auto-ethnographie critique de la résistance en formation
des enseignants d'éducation physique*

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Abstract

Through a yearlong critical autoethnographic study, I explore key moments, shifting perspectives, and pivotal transitions that have impacted my journey as a critical scholar in the field of physical education teacher education (PETE). I draw upon my experiences as an athlete, student, and now teacher in a PETE program in an attempt to answer the question: What informs and continues to inform the athlete-student-teacher I am? By sharing my story, I hope to promote reflexive first-person narrative in order to support alternative approaches to knowing ourselves as PETE practitioners and feed a growing need for “re-searching” ways forward in the field of physical education (PE). It is my hope that meaning will emerge from my story in such a way that teachers and students alike are stimulated to reflect upon how their experiences inform their PE pedagogy and practices.

Résumé

Dans le cadre d'une étude auto-ethnographique critique d'une durée d'un an, j'ai exploré les moments clés, les perspectives changeantes et les transitions cruciales qui ont influencé mon cheminement de chercheur critique en formation des enseignants d'éducation physique. J'ai puisé dans mes expériences comme athlète, étudiant et, maintenant, comme formatrice en enseignement en éducation physique pour répondre à la question suivante : « Qu'est-ce qui a motivé et qui motive toujours l'athlète, l'étudiant et l'enseignant en moi? » En relatant mon histoire, j'aimerais lancer une autoréflexion narrative et favoriser le recours à d'autres approches utiles pour apprendre à mieux nous connaître comme formateurs d'enseignants en éducation physique. J'aimerais aussi propulser vers l'avant la « re-cherche » dans le domaine de l'éducation physique. J'ose croire que mon récit sera assez percutant pour inspirer les enseignants et les étudiants en éducation physique à réfléchir aux façons dont leurs expériences personnelles influencent leurs approches pédagogiques et leurs pratiques.

Introduction

Through a one-year critical autoethnographic study, I endeavored to explore my journey as a critical scholar in the field of physical education teacher education (PETE). To do so I draw upon classroom experiences, reflective journaling, and reflective dialoguing with scholars in physical education (PE) to explore the following question: *What informs and continues to inform the athlete-student-teacher I am?* This study is important for two reasons. First, it is important to learn more about ourselves as we cannot help but teach from who we are, just like our students can't help but learn in ways that reflect their past learning experiences (Palmer, 1998). Second, there is a need for more stories in PE. Storytelling as a form of research inquiry in PE has been emerging as a strong methodological tool (Garrett, 2006) providing a deeper appreciation for the diverse ways in which self-understanding develops for different people and groups (Denison, 1996; Lyons, 1992; Oliver, 1998; Sparkes, 2002). By sharing my story, I hope to promote reflexive first-person narrative "as an approach which creates space for others to engage in critical thought" (Lyle, 2009, p. 294) in order to support alternative approaches to knowing ourselves as PETE practitioners and feed a growing need for "re-searching" ways forward in PE (Kalyn, 2006). It is my hope that meanings will emerge from my story in such a way that teachers and students alike are stimulated to reflect upon their own experiences and practices in PE.

In this paper I will: 1) outline the nature and the benefits of critical autoethnography, 2) reflect upon my journey as a critical scholar to date and how this is informing my current athlete-student-teacher self, and 3) highlight the resistance that emerged from the study and opportunities for future research.

Auto "ethno" what?

Autoethnography has been described as "an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural" (Ellis & Bochner, 1996, p.739). It builds upon the personal experiences of an author/researcher for the purposes of extending sociological understanding (Sparkes, 2000) with an emphasis on the self-interrogation of the sociocultural processes of identity construction (Hickey & Austin, 2007). It sets a scene, tells a story, weaves connections between the personal and cultural with the hope that readers will bring the same attention to their own lives (Jones, 2008).

Critical autoethnography differs from conventional autoethnography because of its explicit focus on power. It highlights and values reflexivity and requires researchers to grapple with their own social, cultural, and political positioning within wider research context/s (Fitzpatrick, 2010). It is a particular method, especially written in dialogical style, that involves contextual intentionality that welcomes different interpretations to be explored, interpreted, and represented (Afonso & Taylor, 2009) with the purpose of extending our sociological understanding of particular phenomena (Richardson, 2000; Sparkes, 2000).

Through this methodological approach I explore my athlete-student-teacher self in the field of PETE through two key methods: reflective journaling and dialogues. Journaling is a tool frequently used by ethnographers and is simply a type of 'field note'. It is useful for documenting both the experience itself and the study of the experiences for the research. It is a useful tool for helping draw the researchers' attention to the existential aspects of research, creating a duality of experience where the researchers are aware of "themselves as part of the field experience being studied and... themselves experiencing that experience" (Clandinin & Connolly, 2000, p.88).

While journaling was meant as an internal-reflective tool, I used online dialogues (skype and email) with six prominent critical PE scholars (David Kirk – United Kingdom, Juan-Miguel Fernández-Balboa - Spain, Richard Tinning - Australia, Joannie Halas - Canada, Ellen Singleton - Canada, and Earle Zeigler – USA and Canada) as an external-reflective tool. The dialogues helped me to further reflect on my own critical journey within the larger historical, social, and cultural context of PETE and PE.

Critical autoethnographies can be presented in many ways (Ellis & Bochner, 1996). Some take the form of short stories, while others take the form of memories, poems, and presentations. For the purpose of this paper, I have chosen to weave together textual fragments from all three aspects of my study, namely: ‘critical classroom incidents’, reflective journaling ‘aha’ moments, and reflective dialogue insights. This is meant to both capture the spontaneity and depiction of my experiences, while building upon my growing sense of ‘relational accountability’ (Wilson, 2008) to myself, my work, and to the field of PE and PETE. I use existing critical and social theory to make sense of this journey in an effort to not only contribute to a developing theorization of PETE but to make ambiguous experiences more visible and obvious to readers. While Canadian author Thomas King (2003) once wrote “The truth about stories is that that’s all we are” (p.32), it is arguably the meaning we give stories that gives them power (J.M. Fernández-Balboa, personal communication, April 4, 2011).

(DE)Constructing Myself: A Journey in Critical Scholarship

The First Class: Aug 31, 2010

[It was a bright sunny day. We played a few icebreaker games to begin and now we were sitting in a sharing circle introducing ourselves. As the student beside me finished I began.]

My name is Erin and I am a Doctoral student in the Faculty of Education. I have an Undergraduate Degree in English and Kinesiology, a Bachelor of Education, and a Masters Degree in Communication and Sport. Previous to this, I competed as a professional athlete for over ten years and worked in the field of sports journalism and public relations. I look forward to getting to know all of you and having many great critical discussions.

I was excited today. To go from being a student in the course last year to teaching the course this year is a great exercise of praxis – putting my developing pedagogy into practice. After weeks of planning and thinking about how to employ a critical pedagogy lens, I am proud of the approach - a blending of the critical and practical in both content and pedagogy. After introducing ourselves as the co-instructors, my colleague and I walked carefully through the course syllabus. I watched the students’ expressions intently – some were nodding while others looked absolutely stunned. Some of their faces seemed to say ... ‘What kind of PE is this!? Gardening? Spirituality? Death Education? Book Clubs? Journaling?’ I had to stop from laughing out loud out of nervousness. I can’t help but think about the year ahead. How will our critical approach be received?

Over the last decade society has been inundated with news about Canada’s failing grade in the area of active play and physical activity and the increasing obesity levels in youth populations (Active Healthy Kids, 2010). As a result, schools have spent valuable financial resources towards programs and curricula in an attempt to change youth behaviour. While this

response is widely accepted, some argue it drastically oversimplifies the complex social, political, and historical contexts in which youth live (Leahy, 2009; McDermott, 2008; van Ingen & Halas, 2006).

Within schools, PE is increasingly seen as the place to “fight the war against obesity” as it is perceived to provide a wide range of health benefits to children and youth (Bailey et al., 2009; Pate, O’Neill, & McIver, 2011) and help prepare them for a life of healthy living. Despite these intentions, research suggests that only a small number of children and youth become physically active adults who continue to play the games and sports they learned in PE (Kirk, 2012). More worrisome is the fact that school PE has remained relatively unchanged over the last fifty years (Dale, Corbin, & Cuddihy, 1998) and continues to be influenced by its militaristic, fitness, and sport origins (Morrow & Wamsley, 2005; Zeigler, 1979). The field’s resistance to change is of particular concern since there has been no shortage of innovative pedagogies and practices to emerge in PE (Bunker & Thorpe, 1983; Hellison & Martinek, 2006; Launder, 2001; Siedentop, 1994; Whitehead, 2010).

Given this, a growing number of experts in the field of PE have been arguing that physical education’s resistance to change poses a serious problem (Kirk, 2010, 2012; Laker, 2003; Sage, 1993; Tinning, 2011). Others have suggested the field requires serious reconsideration and reinvention (Hardman & Marshall, 2009; Lawson, 2009). This call for PE reform, both in theory and praxis, is what inspired my critical journey and provided the impetus for this study. This call for reform also inspired the orientation to the course I was teaching in the PETE program.

This critical journey began long before commencing doctoral studies, in fact I first noticed it as a student in a PETE program. I began to feel uncomfortable with some of the dominant discourses and ideologies within the course. I had a growing sense that PE was failing to adapt to the social and cultural diversity within the 21st century and that it needed to do a better job of disrupting the social injustices that were occurring in gymnasiums and locker rooms in Canada and around the world. Seeking a vocabulary and language to understand the reason for my discomfort, I searched through the PE literature and finally discovered critical pedagogy. It felt like a coming home. It opened up a space to think and a language to express myself. As a result, I applied to a doctoral program and proposed the following research question: *Why is there a lack of criticalness in PETE? Why are PETE programs failing to address the social injustices occurring in PE?*

As a doctoral student, I began writing about the need for reform in PE. I was critical of anyone who took a positivistic, reductionist approach to PE practice and research and endeavored to trouble, disrupt, and critique the field in general. In addition to writing about PE, I had the opportunity to co-teach a PETE course with my doctoral supervisor. Together, we revamped the course drawing heavily upon feminist pedagogy, poststructuralism, and critical pedagogy. We not only endeavored to center gender, class, race, and privilege in all classroom discussions, but we endeavored to invite students’ experiences and perspectives to be equally as necessary in the creation of classroom knowledge. In doing so we hoped to acknowledge the possibilities and limits of our own knowledge and perspectives and challenge the notion of teacher as expert.

We drew heavily from Juan-Miguel Fernández-Balboa’s (1995) work around reclaiming PETE through critical pedagogy. In preparing for the course, we drew from his fundamental critical pedagogical principles, namely: “(a) connecting the courses’ content and objectives with broader social issues, (b) scrutinizing and eliminating conventional relations of power in the classroom, and (c) bringing the personal and the political into the learning process” (p. 100). For

example, we not only engaged students in creating the course syllabus and course assignments but we also overtly talked about power at the beginning of the course, who has it and who doesn't in PE, and drew attention to the power we had as instructors of the course. In doing so, our goal was to create spaces that were full of emancipative dialogue. We wanted to address the fact that as Canada becomes increasingly diverse; the majority of physical educators in Canada are white and come from a middle-class, able bodied, and athletic backgrounds. This approach stemmed from our desire to inspire a group of students to value difference and diversity, be attentive to power and privilege, and care about and protect the health of each other, the environment, and oneself.

While I believed in feminist pedagogy and critical pedagogy as epistemological pathways to creating reform in PE and developing more socially aware physical educators, I couldn't help but feel a glimmer of uncertainty that first day of class as I saw the students' reactions to our syllabus. Were these reactions forewarning of the struggle we were going to face in trying to make PE "more real than less real" (hooks, 1989, p.51)?

The Third Class: Sept 7, 2010

[Two guest speakers stood at the front of the classroom. The first speaker had just finished and the second speaker was just beginning.]

"I consider myself an athlete now, running marathons and such, but I haven't always," said Mark to the twenty-five PE pre-service teachers. Well dressed in a black jacket and pink tie, Mark spoke for fifteen minutes about the traumatizing moments he had experienced in his elementary PE class. He spoke about being bullied and harassed in the locker rooms and called a fag. He told the class that it took him until his mid 40's before he began to recognize and reclaim his identity as an athlete. He concluded by stating, "I completely agree with what the first speaker had to say, there is a need to undo the jock mentality in PE and we'd all be healthier for it".

While the goal of this class was to get students thinking outside of their own experiences, it made me think inside my own. As the guest speakers were telling their stories I found myself looking around the room. It dawned on me in that class that I was more like my students than I wanted to admit. Furthermore, I represented the very thing that I was trying so hard to trouble, critique, and disrupt. I was white, middle-class, able-bodied, athletic, and had excelled in PE and sport all through school. It was in being a jock/athlete that I had gained social currency and capital, and to a large degree still did.

I hadn't always been critical of PE; in fact most of my early experiences of PE and sports had been positive. I was on every school sports team throughout junior high and high school while pursuing my two main sporting loves: figure skating and cycling. At the age of eight I had begun competing provincially and nationally in skating. A few years later due to injury (a stress fractured vertebrae) at the age of thirteen, I started cycling. Little did I know I would spend the better part of the next fifteen years cycling on the Canadian National Cycling team and for a variety of North American professional women's cycling teams.

While I had shown that I was good at moving, I had shown I was equally as bad at sitting in school. My attention span was short and I was often disruptive in elementary school. I learned to count down the minutes until recess or gym. Over time though, I learned to sit, obey, and

objectify my body (Hunter, 2011). In fact, I began to take pleasure and found a space not only in elite sports through training my body but also in academia through focusing on the material body. For my undergrad, I pursued a degree in Kinesiology where I learned about the body in objective paradigms through such courses as anatomy, physiology, and human movement. While the explicit curriculum of the program was teaching me the names of body parts and movement principles, the implicit curriculum was reinforcing a mesomorphic, anti-intellectual, sexist, homophobic, and competitive jock culture within the department (Brown, 2005; Flintoff, 1994; Kirk, Macdonald, & Tinning, 1997; Skelton, 1993; Sparkes, Brown, & Partington, 2010). My sports background provided a discursive framework in which I ‘measured up’ and was able to easily fit within the ‘physical culture’ (Andrews, 2008), otherwise known as jock culture. At the time not only did I define myself as a jock, but also others defined me as such. My ability to fit in with this culture not only gave me a sense of ontological security, a sense of confidence, continuity, and trust in a society, (Giddens, 1984), but it reinforced the subjective sense of who I was and supported my actions and choices. It is this construed reality, that Gramsci (1971) argues controls the masses and enables injustice and oppression.

Whether because of negative experiences with coaches, injuries, drug tests, political dramas, or the superficiality of a culture based on winning, at some point my sense of ontological security within the jock culture began to change. It is hard to pinpoint the one moment or experience; rather I feel it was the combination of a number of negative experiences that threatened and undermined my sense of security and led to a growing feeling of dissatisfaction and discontentment. What exacerbated these feelings was a sense of a failed promise. While sport claims to be inclusive, fair, and fun while providing opportunities for positive development and critical life skill development (Mulholland, 2008), I had begun to see past these promises towards dominant sport ideologies of capitalism, elitism, and sexism. As a response, I began to question the social rules and responsibilities I had once lived by.

According to Giddens (1984), power is a part of all social life and refers to the capacity of individuals to change the social worlds they occupy. He believes that subordinate individuals or groups have access to resources in order to change power relationships. As my view of sport began to change, so did my relationships within sport. I began to ask questions and to seek out my own answers. Bourdieu’s (1991) discussion of the complicity of the dominated provides another useful lens to explain that complicity is first necessary for power to occur. In my case, this complicity was in the form of the unconditional support and power I had once given to the coaches; now I was reclaiming this power for myself.

However, as I sat there listening to our guest speaker’s talk about the need to undo the jock I couldn’t help but think that I was the mirror image of my students – a *hegemonic functionariate* (Fernández-Balboa & Muros, 2006), someone who serves to reproduce the dominant ideologies within PE. I represented the very phenotypic cues that match “with students’ socialized expectations of ‘who teaches’ ” (Smith & Lander, 2011). In other words, students not only learn *what* to expect from teachers, but also *who* to expect as a teacher. Despite my critical intentions in the course, I still looked like a jock and I still had the background to fit within the jock culture. So, how does one contest the very thing one represents?

The Halfway Point and Class Debrief – January 4th, 2011

[The sun streamed in through the windows but it was a bitterly -35 degrees Celsius with the wind-chill. We all sat in a sharing circle debriefing the course to date. Students were taking turns with the talking stick sharing their thoughts about the class.]

“I thought this class would teach us about volleyball, basketball, and hockey”, said one male student. “It hasn’t taught us anything like that.” The room went silent. My heart pounded in my chest. A female student reached for the talking stick. “But that’s the point,” she said. “That’s how we were taught. We were taught to play sports and what good has it done society. We have some good athletes but on the whole we are a less healthy nation because more people are turned off by sports than turned on by them. Why. Because of all the things we have covered in this class – the sexism, elitism, and racism that still exists in sport.”

I wanted to stand up and cheer as the female student finished. I felt grateful to her. At least one student got it – or voiced that she did. Before she spoke, I was beginning to feel despondent. Most of the students’ comments had to do with how the class wasn’t meeting their expectations about what should be taught in health and PE. Before the female student spoke up I was wanting to yell THAT’S THE POINT! Either the students weren’t listening to what we were saying or they didn’t want to listen. Why?

During the 17th and 18th centuries, rationalism and the scientific revolution gave shape to reductionism, the idea of mind/body separation and body as machine. This idea of the body as a trainable tool inspired educators to use PE for military training and evidently lead Germany to unity and freedom from French control (Phillips & Roper, 2006). This inspired many societies around the world, in particular Western societies, to use PE to develop military masculinity, drive paternalistic control, and build disciplined, orderly and fit bodies (Wamsley, 1999).

In the 19th century, the fields of medicine and psychology influenced how schools approached bodies. For example, PE became a site to promote health by promoting sanitary practices and physical activity (Van Dalen & Bennet, 1953). It supported the emerging Western ideals of the “perfect men” and “perfect women” that went hand in hand with the fit muscular military body and the faultless, clean, sanitary body. To date, some argue these Western ideals continue to fuel North America discourses around physical activity, health, and obesity (Brownell, 2005; Brownell & Warner, 2009; Gard, 2010; McDermott, 2008; Rail, 2009).

In the 20th Century, a new settings-based approach to health emerged where it was believed that “health is created in the context of everyday life: where people live, love, work, and play” (Kickbusch, 2007, p. 9). This approach was more prescriptive about how to live than ever before (Tinning & Glasby, 2002). Health slogans like ‘avoid fat’, ‘stop smoking’, ‘get fit’, and ‘practice safe sex’, focused on how risk factors could be navigated by individuals and how individuals needed to adopt more ‘healthy’ lifestyles. Arguably, this turned health into a regime of power and knowledge (Foucault, 1984). In other words, power and capital were gained and/or lost by demonstrating obedience to these prescribed Western notions of health. Just like in the early 1900s when PE was driven by militaristic consumerism, PE became based on health consumerism.

Through this brief historical lens, it is not difficult to see that PE has been, and continues to be, dictated by political agendas, policies, and strategies. Furthermore, a lack of critical and

theoretical grounding in PE research and practice (Fernández-Balboa, 1995; Kirk, 2006; Lawson, 2009) continues to nurture master narratives derived from privileged, white, elite, Western worldviews that exult the continual progress of science and technology, industrialization, and human domination (Fernández-Balboa, 1997). This blend of master narratives and regimes of power, arguably make PE resistant and resilient to change.

In a study that looked at students attending a PETE program in Australia, Brown (2005) notes that a small but dominant group who subscribe to hegemonic masculine sporting practices, shape the social perceptions of what is appropriate and accepted within the jock culture. As she argues, “attitudes and ‘unspoken’ rules appear to be subscribed to and accepted by a significant proportion of both male and female PETE students; whether by choice, or social survival, is an issue of debate” (p. 124).

I couldn’t help but think as I sat there listening to students share their thoughts on the course to date, I was not only hearing the voices of my students but the voices from generations of students fighting to keep the status quo in PE. While my co-teacher and I were trying to employ content that challenged the master narratives and regimes of truth, we felt as if we were getting nowhere. So, how does one effectively stop this status quo revolving door?

The Last Class - February 22nd, 2011

[Two male students stood at the front of the class. They quickly introduced their final project – a video they said that “compared a traditional PE class to more progressive approaches.” They pressed play]

I felt sick. The color slowly drained from my face. What could we do? Could we stop it? I glanced over at my supervisor; she sat stoned faced staring at the screen. Nothing. In the opening scene of the video the two students, dressed up as different members of our class, – mocking different students in the class including us the instructors. Then it went from bad to worse. One by one they picked apart and mocked the social justice issues that we had asked them to critically reflect upon, such as racism, sexism, elitism, healthism. When I didn’t think it could get worse, IT DID. In the next scene, one of the students dressed in a fat suit pretended to wake up out of bed and reached into his pants for what looked to be an erection but turned out to be a chocolate bar and proceeded to eat it. I wanted to cry. At the end of the video, as the credits were climbing the screen I sat stunned while a number of the other male students in the class gave the video a standing ovation.

Had it all been a waste? The year, the time, the energy? If I measure it in terms of our initial objectives and goals – to get students thinking critically about social justice issues in PE – then yes. It certainly didn’t feel like we had made any headway with our students. However, if I measure it in terms of all that I have learned about myself as an athlete, student, and teacher in the field of PE and PETE, the course was an invaluable experience. This journal is evidence of that!

When I think back to that video on the last day of class, I can still remember sitting there paralyzed by disbelief and at a loss for words. In fact, neither my co-teacher nor I said anything at the conclusion of the video or the standing ovation by half a dozen students. What I now realize is that in that moment I wasn’t prepared enough for the degree of danger I had provoked.

As Juan-Miguel Fernández-Balboa (1995) writes, “in searching for possibilities, it may be helpful to find the roots of the danger in order to avoid it” (p. 94). While I’m not sure we could have avoided this type strong resistance, I feel as though we could have been better prepared for it. Not only could we have prepared some strategies for dealing with resistance but we could have better prepared other students to cope with such situations.

While there were a few students in the class who supported our approach, in the end it was the most vocal in the class that resisted. While I could argue that their resistance stemmed from their unquestioning compliance with the field’s determined boundaries, their privileged backgrounds, or their hegemonic intent on preserving the association of masculinity with sport as a particular kind of physical power, control, and domination of others, I feel as though this would limit my understanding. In considering their resistance within the wider context of society it is easier to understand, as many of the issues we presented are routinely contested within society. For example, consider the recent “Occupy Wall Street” movement that has now spread around the world, and how much of a statement it is on global power, privilege, and politics. As within large social movements, it is helpful to ask what can be learned from acts of resistance? Who is doing the resisting, and who is not? What is the root of the resistance?

When I began this study my intention was to explore my athlete-student-teacher self, and while I feel as though I have accomplished this, the greatest learning to come out of this study has been my struggle to understand resistance. Through the following section, I begin to explore the roots of resistance expressed by my students and admittedly by me, in my roles as athlete-student-teacher.

Discussion

(RE)Constructing Myself: Radical Resistance

I came into this year thinking that change needed to happen. As a result, while I still think change is needed, I have gained an appreciation for the strength of our human resistance to change. Resistance is often defined as a manifestation of oppositional or anti-school behaviours, such as “an unwillingness to consider”, a “denial or recalcitrance...to learning” (Moore, 1997, p.128). Historically the paradigm of resistance theory has been viewed in response to reproductive theories in education (Zine, 2010) and has been predicated upon the notion that anti-school notions stem from class-based motives (Willis, 1981). More recently this has been challenged because it fails to acknowledge human agency and a number of studies have redesigned the boundaries of resistance as racialized (Zine, 2010) and gendered (Moore, 1997). I position this discussion of resistance within this redefined space of resistance theory.

Research has shown that student resistance in teacher education can stem from a lack of preparation towards alternative praxis, being pushed too quickly towards thinking critically, and specific expectations of teacher education (Bruenig, 2006). Others have argued that student resistance originates from not wanting to share authority, negotiate learning, and understand criticality (Shor, 1996). While some resistance is arguably healthy as it demonstrates that students are struggling with the issues (Davis, 1992), I argue strong resistance to a course can be discouraging and even harmful to some students and teachers. For instance, at the end of our course a few students indicated that while they had enjoyed the course and appreciated our attempts to disrupt the dominant discourses, the overt resistance displayed by some students had turned them off of wanting to teach PE in the future. One student went as far as to suggest that the overt resistance had made her feel unsafe and unwelcome in the class and the field in general.

As the teacher I echoed their sentiments and similarly felt disorientated and discouraged by the resistance. While the research may suggest PETE programs need to begin to “offer knowledge about inclusion, equity, involvement, enjoyment, social justice, cooperation, and movement” (Melnychuk, Robinson, Lu, & Chorney, 2011, p. 163), I believe that there is a need for more strategies that support teachers who are engaging with critical pedagogies in PE.

When I think back to the resistance we experienced in our class, I can’t help but wonder if, despite our efforts to scrutinize and eliminate power, sadly the dominant discourses were further inscribed. As it has been argued, sometimes “sexist, homophobic, and racist discourses have been aided and abetted by such courses” (Schick, 2000, p.97). For example, in the course feedback, one student argued that course was bad because we were “feminist, male haters”. In this simple statement, this student effectively discounted everything we had tried to do through the year blaming gender as the cause of his discomfort. If we had been male, would this student(s) have resisted? Interestingly, Schault (2000) discusses his resounding success using a feminist pedagogy as a male educator. He writes, “I am amazed that, over the years, I have found that some of the course participants who have been most drawn to and influenced by my classes are some of the most stereotypical masculine, often misogynist, individuals found at the campuses I have taught” (p. 6). While I am encouraged by Schault’s approach, it appears to reinforce what Moore (1997) argues in her paper *Student Resistance to Course Content: Reactions to the Gender of the Messenger*, in that the “gender of the instructor is a key component to resistance” (p.132). Despite gendered resistance, Moore suggests that educating students about resistance can and is important for reducing its impact. As such, perhaps preemptively teaching students about resistance theory at the beginning of a PE course could be a useful strategy to help students understand and appreciate forms of resistance. For as Felman & Laub suggest (1992), “if teaching does not hit upon some sort of crisis, if it does not encounter either the vulnerability or the explosiveness of (an explicit or implicit) critical and unpredictable dimension, it has perhaps not *truly taught*” (p.53).

While teaching about resistance may be useful, Schick (2000) also argues it is important for teachers to recognize the roots of resistance for students. She suggests that as students face identity deconstruction and reconstruction - they undergo a level of trauma. She warns that this identity (de/re) construction can bring hope but it also “may be characterized by hysterical responses and disavowal” (p.100). It is when identities and knowledges are being questioned and challenged, that resistance is often at its worst but where possibilities for exploration and change reside (Lather, 1991).

In considering the roots of resistance in our class it is no wonder that there was such a strong reaction by some of the students, for not only were we challenging their sense of physical capital but also their capital as future teachers. We were endeavoring to disrupt ideas of expert teacher and passive student. When I think back to my own experiences as athlete and student, I can now easily see it was within the challenging moments, where my identity and ideas were contested, that I learned the most. While the lessons from these experiences often didn’t surface for days, months, even years, the learning always emerged eventually. While it may be hard for me to see all the learning that has happened in my role as teacher, this study provides a jump-start for this process.

As I reflect back upon this year, I don’t know if I fully understood all the challenges I would face engaging in critical pedagogy. Instead, I feel I am guilty of what some scholars have criticized critical pedagogues for – being too idealistic and putting their moral values on others (Gore, 1993; O’Sullivan, Siedentop, & Locke, 1992) – and perpetuated the “repressive myth” of

critical pedagogy (Ellsworth, 1992). For as much as we tried to de-center ourselves as the expert teachers, we still maintained a position of authority over the approach, the content, and the students in the course. Drawing from the work of Ellsworth, Breunig (2006) argues that it is not enough to commit to empowerment and dialogue, what is needed “is a reconceptualization of the very notions of rationalism and logic as well as greater student preparation to engage in this form of classroom praxis” (p. 50). While the literature within critical pedagogy and our experiences teaching the course all indicate that there are more challenges to engaging critical pedagogy in the classroom than successes, I, like Breunig, hope this will change and evolve with time.

Even if critical pedagogy within PE takes a long time to evolve, I draw upon the hope I derived from listening to critical scholars in PE. In many cases, these scholars suggested that while it may take a long time to try and figure it out, that the effort to do so is very important in terms of keeping some kind of perspective on life and scholarly work. While it wasn't said explicitly, there was implicit interest in better understanding the journey of the critical scholar in PE. A preliminary literature search illustrates that there is research that looks at the challenges and successes of critical pedagogy, but there is a lack of literature around the journey of the critical pedagogue. Within this study, some of the PE scholars started off feeling different and isolated within the jock culture, and drew upon this sense of difference for their critical journeys. Others, like myself, fit in with the jock culture at first but over time began to see differently. Perhaps by exploring the experiences of critical scholars not only in PE, but also in other disciplines, we may open up new opportunities for understanding change, resistance, and critical pedagogy. I not only believe that this will help serve to inform critical pedagogy in a new way, but it may help to inform future teachers about how to prepare for alternative forms of classroom praxis.

Conclusion

Arguably PE, while perceived to be dominantly a physical phenomenon, has become more of a social, cultural, and political phenomenon. As the idea of PE has evolved into new spheres such as politics, popular culture, economics, and religion it has arguably taken on new meanings. As we begin to consider these different meanings and explore the evolving ideas of PE, we must begin by exploring the complexity within humanity. At a deeper level our different values, beliefs, and actions arise from the diversity within the human story, our different interpretations of the past, and our competing visions for the future.

Through this study, I have endeavored to show that taking time to become deeply conscious of one's multiple positionalities (Davies & Harre, 1990) is a worthwhile journey. It builds upon the notion that we live storied lives and build stories through our life experiences and that these 'storied' selves are worth deconstructing (Aveling, 2001) because “the simplicity of Cartesian rationalism and mainstream forms of educational knowledge production has not met our needs” (Kincheloe & Tobin, 2006, p.6) to date. This interpretive approach to research not only emphasizes “a journey of becoming” (Bloom, 1998, p. 65) but it is “well suited to addressing the complexities and subtleties of the human experience in teaching and learning” (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p.1). This approach not only enabled me to explore the complexities within my journey as an athlete, student, and teacher, it also helped me to better understand the substantive acts of resistance demonstrated by the students in my class. My hope is that by sharing my experiences I have opened up a space for others to look at their own experiences and to respond in a similar way. We have much to learn from our storied experiences!

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