



**Autobiographical narrative inquiry into movement and physical education:
The beginning of a journey**

***Recherche narrative autobiographique sur le mouvement et l'éducation physique -
Début d'un périple***

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Abstract

In this paper we use autobiographical narrative inquiry to examine the temporality, place and sociality of our own diverse 'educative' movement experiences as children, students, and physical education teachers. Through this inquiry we reflect on how these past 'educative' experiences have shaped our pedagogies as physical education teacher educators. We speak to the tension involved in being awake to our own stories that fit neatly into the dominant stories of physical education. Lastly, we illustrate how this inquiry process has helped us to begin to think more deeply about the stories on the margin, and to be attentive to how we might create spaces in our physical education teacher education classes to think about how movement, sport, and physical activity fit into those student's lives and interact with the dominant discourses of physical education.

Résumé

Nous avons utilisé une approche de recherche d'autobiographie narrative pour examiner la temporalité, le rôle et le caractère social de nos diverses expériences « éducatives » de mouvement comme enfants, élèves et enseignants d'éducation physique. Cette approche nous permet de réfléchir aux répercussions de ces expériences « éducatives » passées sur nos pédagogies de formateurs d'enseignants en éducation physique. Nous abordons les tensions créées par le fait d'être conscients que nos propres histoires s'insèrent très nettement dans les histoires dominantes en éducation physique. En dernier lieu, nous expliquons en quoi l'approche de recherche favorise une réflexion profonde sur les histoires marginales. Nous expliquons également comment l'approche nous amène à être plus attentifs à créer des espaces de discussion, dans nos cours de formation des enseignants d'éducation physique, sur la place qu'occupent le mouvement, le sport et l'activité physique dans la vie de nos étudiants et sur les interactions entre ces notions (mouvement, sport et activité physique) et les discours dominants en éducation physique.

Introduction

“I am a 50-year-old woman whose childhood experiences with sports, particularly as handled in school, were so negative that even as I write this, my hands are sweating and I feel on the verge of tears” (Strean 2009, p. 217). Strean originally attempted to find people who would talk about their positive experiences and the way teachers and coaches enhance fun and play. Through the process of emergent design, he ended up with participants interested in sharing their negative experiences. As individuals who are involved in, and passionate about, physical education teacher education [PETE], the quote shared above from one of Strean’s participants create tension and unease. It seems that for some physical education experiences are mis-educative. “Any experience is mis-educative that has the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience (Dewey 1938, p. 25).” As we see from the introductory quotation, mis-educative experiences in physical education seem to resonate with individuals for a lifetime. Drawing on Dewey’s philosophy of experience (Dewey, 1938), in a continuous and interactive way, these experiences inform individual’s future experiences with sport, movement and physical education [PE]. Through our own personal experiences, we recognize the existence of educative (Dewey, 1938) stories surrounding movement, PE and PE programs. Dewey defines educative experiences as those that, “...promote having desirable future experiences” (Dewey 1938, p. 27). Like Strean’s participant, in a converse way, our educative experiences with movement and PE continue to resonate and inform our pedagogies and lives, therefore we propose that educative experience can be as equally impactful and enduring as mis-educative experience. In this paper we use autobiographical narrative inquiry to examine the temporality, place and sociality of our own diverse educative movement experiences as young students and physical education teachers. Through this inquiry we reflect on how these past ‘educative’ experiences have shaped our pedagogies as physical education teacher educators. We speak to the tension involved in being awake to our own stories that may seem to fit neatly into the dominant stories of physical education. Lastly, we illustrate how this inquiry process has helped us to begin to think more deeply about the stories on the margin. Practically speaking, how can we create spaces in our PETE classes to think about and discuss how each student’s stories of movement, sport, and physical activity fit into their lives and pedagogy – regardless of whether their story is inside or outside the dominant discourses of physical education.

Theoretical Framework

“Before the technique of empirical method was developed and generally adopted, it was necessary to dwell explicitly upon the importance of “experience” as a starting point and a terminal point” (Dewey, 1958, p. 3). While empirical methods have devalued the epistemic status of experience, Dewey’s words speak to his conception of experience in which “experience is the fundamental ontological category from which all inquiry – narrative or otherwise – proceeds” (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 38). Narrative inquiries working from Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) framework, are strongly influenced by Dewey’s pragmatic ontology of experience, and see his conceptualizations of continuity and interaction as fundamental to the inquiry process.

Narrative inquiry is then not only a conceptualization of what experience is, but a way to study experience; it is a method and a phenomenon. Narrative inquiry points to the notion that experience can be expressed as story or narrative. Connelly and Clandinin explain further Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. To us narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular view of experience as phenomenon under study (2006, p. 375).

This quotation may help clear up the misconception that narrative inquiry is story telling, or even the study of story. In fact, narrative inquiry as a research methodology is a way of thinking about experience. As we began this inquiry work, we had initially located the phenomenon in our experiences as students in physical education, and teachers of physical education. However, as we inquired more deeply, the border between physical education and movement itself became blurry. It became apparent to us that our experiences with movement, at times outside of physical education class, have shaped our 'stories to live by' around physical education. The phrase 'stories to live by' "is given meaning by the narrative understandings of knowledge and context. Stories to live by are shaped by such matters as secret teachers' stories, sacred stories of schooling, and teachers' cover stories" (Connelly & Clandinin 1999, p. 4).

Our stories to live by are temporal, continuous, interactive, and shaped by our personal practical knowledge (Clandinin, 1985). Autobiographical narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), as used in this piece, locates the inquiry for both the author and the reader. It allows the author to begin to understand their relationship with the phenomenon under study (Schaefer & Clandinin, 2011; Schaefer, 2013a). "The writer can turn back upon her own texts and see there her own processes and biases at work" (Grumet, 1980, p. 25). Through an autobiographical narrative inquiry into our experiences, including movement and physical education, it is our hope that we might better understand why we are who we are; why we do what we do; why we believe what we believe and how these experiences, in a narrative way, have become interconnected with our physical education pedagogies (Schaefer, 2013b).

Story, Narrative and Narrative Inquiry in Physical Education

From their review of past literature, Dowling, Garrett, Hunter and Wrench (2013) show that there has been a litany of narrative research methods used to study phenomenon around, and in, physical education. A few examples of work done in the area include: storytelling as a teaching strategy for physical education teacher education (Garrett, 2006); development of personal teacher identities through constructed biographies (Wrench & Garrett 2012) and examining emerging stories of respect, resiliency and resignation with veteran Irish PE teachers (O'Sullivan, 2006). Recent research (Clandinin & Schaefer, 2011; Craig, You & Oh, 2012; Schaefer, 2013) has shown the promise and possibilities of using, specifically, narrative inquiry as conceptualized by Clandinin and Connelly (1990), to better understand the experiences of students, teachers and teacher educators involved in physical education.

Perhaps the closest research around physical education to Clandinin and Connelly's conception of narrative inquiry is Armour and Jones (1998) detailed work examining the case studies of eight PE teachers. Through interviews and observation, the authors investigated each teacher's philosophical perspective in the context of experience as pupils, students and athletes. Armour and Jones then went on to thematically analyze the eight case studies and explore five emergent themes found across the teacher's narratives.

From afar, it may seem that each of these studies is using narrative inquiry as a way to study experiences around physical education. However, if we look closely we begin to see a commitment to narratives as data that can be analyzed, generalized, and in some ways the data becomes decontextualized and transcendental. This is quite different from Clandinin and

Connelly's conceptualization of narrative inquiry, and while the scope of this paper is not to analyse the borderlands between specific narrative methodologies, it is important to point out a few key aspects. Narrative research is a broad umbrella under which a variety of more specific methods have been conceptualized. One of these specific methods is narrative inquiry, which like other methods, adheres to distinct ontological and epistemological commitments. As discussed earlier, narrative inquiry adheres to Dewey's notion of experience, in that experiences is the beginning and terminal point of inquiry (1958). Therefore, while we draw on previous work utilizing narrative conceptualizations in physical education to help explicate the importance of paying attention to story as a way to understand experience, what we are after in this paper is an attentiveness to narrative inquiry as a way to inquire into our own experiences with physical education and movement. Thinking about our stories in a way that adheres to Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) notion of narrative inquiry allows us to see experience as not only the beginning point and ending point of inquiry, but both the research methodology and the phenomenon under study (Clandinin & Rosiek 2007).

Methods and/or Techniques

In order to inquire into our experiences around movement and physical education, we moved through a three-stage research process. Using autobiographical narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly 2000), we first engaged in writing a series of stories about our experiences with movement and PE. When using narrative inquiry, experience is studied through explorations of the personal/social, temporality, and place. The narrative inquirer's gaze shifts from (inward) personal feelings, hopes and dispositions; to (outward) existential social conditions; to and examination of temporality, backwards and forwards (past, present and future), and finally, to a consideration of place "which attends to the specific concrete physical and topological boundaries of inquiry landscapes" (Clandinin & Connelly 2000, p. 51). These three dimensions constitute the metaphorical/conceptual space in which narrative research into lived experience operates. We then looked across our own stories for resonant threads, and across each other's stories for resonant threads. Lastly, we illustrate how this inquiry process has helped us to begin to think more deeply about the stories on the margin.

Data Source(s)/ Field Texts

As we began to frame this project, we realized the importance of beginning to understand how our stories around movement and PE have been shaped. Therefore, the main sources of data used within this paper are both authors' autobiographical story fragments around movement and physical education. Although we began by attempting to write about only physical education experiences, we became aware that experiences surrounding movement also still resonate with us today. In what follows, we share story fragments that continue to resonate with us as we reflect on the passion we have for movement and physical education. As we inquire into each story fragment we are attentive to the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space -- place, sociality and temporality (Clandinin, 2013). We selected these stories to share and inquire into, because they still resonate strongly with us today. However, we recognize that our portrayal of these experiences always involves selective emphasis (Clandinin & Rosiek 2007).

As we worked through the autobiographical inquiry process we began to see that stories of our early beginnings were important pieces of this puzzle. Dewey's (1938) notions of experience that draw on continuity and interaction, and Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) notion of temporality, helped us in the organization of our stories. Drawing on this work, we begin with stories around teaching physical education, and then move backwards to inquire into our past stories as young students in the formal school setting. We then look at the

continuity and interaction within our own experiences, with each other's experiences, and across our experiences. Our first story, told by Lee, recounts an experience of being a teacher of physical education.

Lee's Teacher Story Fragment: Crazy Legs¹

JB was a quiet student. He wore glasses far too big for his face, and his jeans often dragged behind his shoes as he made his way down the hallway to eat by himself. His interactions with other students were minimal, and it was difficult to know if JB was happy, sad or in between; his facial expressions seldom changed. When he did talk he often turned his head as if he was addressing someone beside you. In physical education classes he was awkward, his legs did not seem to be in tune with his body and his hand eye coordination made it difficult for him to catch any type of object. His lack of coordination never became an excuse for him. No matter how many times he missed, or how many times he awkwardly fell to the ground, he kept going. As he very seldom changed out, after each class he left with his sweaty hair combed over to one side and a damp t-shirt. I would thank him for being so active, and he would push up his glasses and continue out the door a good pace ahead or behind the other students.

Although I loved teaching dance, I was always anxious about how the teenage students would respond to each other. I spent an entire class addressing the importance of respect, the importance of others people's feelings, and the opportunity that dance provided to be active in a different way. On this particular day I was aware of JB, and kept an eye on him to make sure the students responded in a positive way. His legs were not any less awkward then while trying to run. They moved forwards backwards and side to side off beat as he moved around the circle. I watched as students, particularly female students, joined hands with him, clapped with him and stomped with him. I heard positive comments; "you're a good dancer JB," "nice moves JB." "Crazy legs JB", a student shouted out." My nerves dissipated as I watched a smile come across his face as he continued around the circle, switching partners; he was still off beat. As he finished his last 'stomp stomp', and the music ended, the self-confidence and joy in his face receded. As we waited a short time for the bell, the students conversed about how dance was not so bad after all. JB stood with the group. He walked out with the group on this day, his sweaty hair pushed to one side, glasses still too big, and jeans dragging behind his shoes. "Good work today Crazy Legs," I said as he left the gymnasium. He looked up, smiled, and continued on to his next class.

One of the critiques of narrative inquiry is that it is human nature to want to write a Hollywood ending (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). I hesitate to tell this story, as it may be construed as one of those Hollywood endings, a positive experience that transpired due to my pedagogy. However, this is not how I see this experience. In fact, JB struggled through the remaining years at this particular school, and has since tragically passed away. I never had the opportunity to talk to him about what happened on this particular day in the gymnasium. Perhaps it was not as monumental for him as it was for me. However, I am still perplexed by how the learner, teacher, subject matter and milieu (Schwab, 1970) shifted JB's story, if only for a short moment.

The dimension of place resonates as I wonder about this experience. I felt comfortable teaching in the gymnasium. JB's interactions in the gymnasium space were different than in the hallways of the school, or the classroom. In the hallways he seemed to want to disappear,

¹ Each story fragment (*italicized*) is told and inquired into by the individual authors.

but in the gymnasium, even though he often struggled, he seemed okay with being visible. In some ways, this particular place seemed to encourage human interaction. The energy and noise that came from students moving was not only acceptable but also encouraged. On the particular day of the story fragment above, I experienced the place as imbued with this energy.

As I shift to think about the sociality, I am attentive to the environment that was created on this particular day. It was the students who gave way to being “too cool” to dance, that shifted the environment. It was Emily, who laughed at herself as she tripped over her own feet. It was John, the soccer star, who said, “it’s not gay to hold hands with another guy, just do it,” who shaped the environment on this day. The space that was imbued with energy was also infused with vulnerability; the vulnerability of a movement that was somewhat foreign to the class. Perhaps it was this vulnerability that helped JB to let go on this day, to smile, and to walk out of the gymnasium with his classmates. While I can only wonder about how JB felt, through his interactions it seemed to me he was happy, that in some way he was situated differently with his classmates if only for a moment. His mother called me not long after and said JB had come home and talked about how excited he was for physical education. He had not done this before. I, personally, felt a sense of wonderment. I was well aware that something happened there that day, during that experience, but it was immeasurable and as the students left, the intangible seemed to leave with them. Yet, in some way, my experience with JB, in an interactive and continuous way, maintains it’s meaning, and continues to shape who I am, and who I am becoming.

Our next story is also from the experience and perspective of a teacher of physical education.

Doug’s Teacher Story Fragment: Mary

As I progressed through my career as a PE teacher, I began to develop a soft spot for those kids in my class who were awkward, or uncomfortable with movement and PE. One particular girl comes to mind - Mary. She flinched if a ball came too close, tripped over her own feet more times than I can count and was hopelessly lost in team games. Mary was a quiet student, who was part of a very loud, rowdy and challenging, but fun and loveable class. Over the two years of PE, I spent a lot of time with Mary on developing confidence and competence with all types of movement from games to dance. She was fortunate to be in a class that was not judgmental or critical of her lack of skills but rather, were accepting and supportive of her efforts. Towards the end of her grade nine year, Mary and her class were knee-deep in a lacrosse unit that was largely student lead and developed. We were playing a modified game and although I know that Mary’s PE development happened over time, it seemed like suddenly she came into her own. The girl who used to be scared of any ball in her vicinity was calling for passes. The girl who couldn’t catch with her hands, never mind an implement, was corralling balls at the far extent of her reach. The girl who did not understand teamwork in games was reading plays and making appropriate decisions. In a word, she shone. Incidentally, so did her face all through the class. It just so happened that on that same day, in the evening, there was a student awards night. I was walking down the centre aisle after the evening and came upon Mary, her father and her younger brother. Still being so pumped from Mary’s awesome lacrosse class, I decided to share my feelings of pride and joy with Mary’s family. “Hey! You should have seen Mary on the field today! She was amazing – passing, defending, shooting, scoring – wow! I am so proud of you Mary. You have worked so hard in PE and have improved an incredible amount.” Before Mary, whose face was again shining, could say a word, her father jumped in with, “Mary? Really? Mary? She is useless at any sport. That girl never could catch. I can’t believe she would be good in PE. Her brother on the other hand...” I don’t remember much of the rest of the conversation

except that Mary's face had stopped shining and she had withdrawn into a practiced blank look as her father rambled. I interrupted and said rather pointedly to Mary's father, "I need to go, but I just wanted to say again (at this point I focused on Mary's eyes and never again looked at her father) how wonderful Mary is and how fortunate I am to have her in my PE class. Great class today Mary – looking forward to the next one!" And I walked away.

What first emerges for me is the sociality of the experience. Since I never had the opportunity to ask her, I can't say for sure that Mary's experience and feelings about PE improved due to our created relationship based on trust and learning. What I do know is that my personal hopes and desires for the students in my class were expressed in a social milieu that included a culture of female dis-ability in sport and PE. However, Mary was part of a class that accepted and encouraged her to improve her movement skills and included her, despite her initial shortcomings in this area, right from the start. Her personal and cultural narratives intertwined with mine, and the rest of the classes, over the space of three years and I think that we created educative experiences together that resulted in a continuum of positive physical activity opportunities.

Related to the sociality of the story is the temporal nature of junior high. It is a time of great change, uncertainty and a continual search for self. The accepting and encouraging nature of Mary's class is even more critical when considered within the temporal frame that is adolescence. PE can be a place where it is extremely hard to be a teenager – all your physical faults and shortcomings are on display. Mary's experience could have been mis-educative due to the physical display that is PE. Instead, due to the safe sense of place that was created by her class, and perhaps in spite of her dad's classification of female dis-ability in PE and sport, Mary's experience seemed to be one of growth, progress and positive feedback.

The next story fragment shares a moment of Lee's past experience with movement and physical education as a young student.

Lee's Student Story Fragment: Wafting

Sitting in my school desk was never easy for me. Fitting books, pencils, sharpeners and erasers into the small cubby was a challenge that usually ended up with crumpled up papers, lost pencils and for some reason pen ink everywhere. I never understood how others kept their desks so "neat and tidy" as the teacher would say. I was often used as the non-example. "Look at Lee's desk, this is not what a desk should look like." This comment was reiterated by a variety of my elementary school teachers. Of course every time I could not find my homework, I wondered if maybe I should heed their advice. Sometimes I had to stay after school and make my desk neat and tidy. It was not that I didn't want the desk to be organized, but no matter how hard I tried the cubby became a nightmarish mishmash of half chewed erasers, pencil shavings and smashed up papers. It didn't help that my knees were crammed into the bottom of the cubby and the seat seemed too close to the desk. My messy desk was usually located in close proximity to the teacher's desk. Along with being unorganized I had a really hard time paying attention in class. Lucky for me the teacher's desk was usually near a window, which allowed me to imagine what I would do the second I got out of the classroom. On this particular day my desk was at the front of the class because this was where Mr. McLeod usually taught. I liked Mr. McLeod. He lived on a farm and would always tell stories about the farm that reminded me of our family farm. Although I remember him being a very reasonable teacher, we were not allowed to have sunflower seeds in the school. But I couldn't resist. I still had some salted spits in my pocket from our pickup baseball game the day before. The salt tasted so good after a recess period of playing tag. I remember all of these things because I learned a new word on this day that has always stuck with me. "Wafting." In context, "who has sunflower seeds?" said Mr. McLeod with a wrinkled face

“the smell is wafting into my nose.” Caught red handed I admitted it was me and immediately apologized for breaking one of the only rules Mr. McLeod had. Although I was sorry I had broken the rule, I was more sorry that my mishap might cost me an upcoming period of physical education. As we moved to the gymnasium, everything was normal on the home front. I had not been asked to stay behind, or been reprimanded any further for my sunflower predicament. I changed as I always did, and was the first kid out of the change room like I always was. Mr. McLeod was standing by the equipment room and called my name. I ran over, knowing full well that this was probably my cue to get changed back into my school clothes. “Would you say it might be a good idea to go outside?” “Yes I think it would”, I said waiting with baited breath. “Well good then, why don’t you get the equipment out for kick ball and get it set up. I know that you know what we need and where it goes.” “Okay” I said excitedly, still wondering if there was a catch. As I went about gathering up the equipment Mr. McLeod seemed to be in a better mood. As I passed by him I thanked him for letting me participate even though I had broken a classroom rule. He looked surprised, and said “I would never take away your physical education time, I know it is your favourite time of the day”

While this story happened a long time ago, as someone who is passionate about movement, it still resonates strongly with me. As I move into the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, I want to begin with thinking about the places described in this story fragment. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) make a distinction between the classroom place and other places. Although they are speaking more about how these places shape teachers’ experiences, as a student I see resonance in the distinction between in-classroom and out of classroom spaces. For me the classroom space was never comfortable. Metaphorically, the physical awkwardness in my desk transcends to how I felt in this place. I did not fit. I can remember certain teachers engaging me, but for the most part I remember being frustrated. I was used as a non-example, not only for my desk but also for not paying attention, not handing homework in and a variety of other things. These experiences created a tension and anxiety around this classroom space that still lingers with me today.

The gymnasium space was a much different place for me. I felt free there. I was successful there. I was used as a positive example in this place, as opposed to the non-example. I was often the person used to demonstrate a certain skill or to set up the equipment. As I got older I can even remember organizing activities for the entire class. I loved to move and physical education provided space for this throughout my school experience.

Moving to thinking about the sociality of this story fragment, this experience shifted my relationship with Mr. McLeod. Although he probably does not even remember it, in some way he showed me that he valued my experiences with school. He knew that I loved physical education, and that it was something that made school bearable. He did not make physical education a bargaining chip like I remember many of my other teachers doing. Perhaps he saw physical education as a subject that was as important as any other, that held an equal epistemic status to other classes. Whatever his perception was, the environment he created made me feel like he cared and made me feel like my knowledge counted. Although entrusting me with the equipment may have simply made things logistically easier for him, this small gesture empowered me. It was a moment in school that I felt like a teacher valued what I brought to the table. He valued the fact that I had an embodied knowing when it came to moving. He valued my knowledge of skills and tactics that allowed me to score, or hit more home runs. As a grade six student, this was important to me. It was a valuing of other ways of knowing and other ways of showing.

Temporally, I am attentive to the resonance this story still has with me today. Like the story fragment above, physical education in high school provided a space and place to feel

comfortable. I looked forward to the class time, to moving and to interacting in a way that was not possible in the classroom. It also reminds me of my feelings of marginality in other areas of school, how this felt, and the stories I began to create about myself around being a poor student, around being bad at school. In thinking about my own experiences, I am reminded of how dominant stories of physical education, often act to marginalize those who struggle with moving, and those who have no doubt created stories for themselves around being bad at physical education.

Our final story fragment looks back to an awkward moment from Doug's experience as a young physical education student.

Doug's Student Story Fragment: Long Johns

I grew up on a farm and took the bus to school an hour each way. When your family's livelihood depends on livestock, part of the farm reality includes being ready for any kind of weather, even the January in Alberta kind of weather. This same philosophy also applied to heading down the driveway to go to school. It did not matter what the weather forecast was, we waited for the bus regardless. Of course, my siblings and I always hoped that the bus driver had forgotten to plug the bus in the night before, or the radiator would freeze, or the battery would be dead. The longer we waited, the less we would look for the bus and the more we would look back up the driveway for mom's call to come back home (in which case we would go in the house for a quick hot chocolate and then head back outside again to play in the snow). Therefore, when I waited for the bus inside our little straw bale bus shelter each winter morning in grade 2 there was no luxury of freshly coiffed hair, fancy clothing or summer shoes. Nope. My fashion statement consisted of a toque, warm winter jacket, snow pants, snowmobile boots and – long johns².

PE, recess and lunch were always my favourite subjects in school. Perhaps it was a connection to my first 5 years of life running around on the farm but I found it tough to adjust to school and sedentary life. Opportunities to be active during the school day were not only my favourite times, they were critical to who I was as a person. My problem on this particular school day began with the excitement of heading to the local church basement for PE and ended with a frightening experience no grade two-er should have. I never forgot my PE clothes and shoes. NEVER. This day was no different. I had my shorts. I had my t-shirt. I had my shoes. As we were changing in the tiny bathroom of the church basement, however, I realized I had forgotten something. My regular underwear. I had neglected to put briefs on under my long johns and was therefore in a bit of a conundrum. I couldn't wear my shorts with my long johns, I couldn't wear my shorts without my regular underwear. I agonized about it until everyone else left the change room and decided to just head out in my jeans and t-shirt so no one would know of my problem. Surely the PE teacher would understand? As I headed over to try and quietly explain my embarrassing dilemma to the enormous ex-football player who was my teacher, he stopped everyone and singled me out. "Doug, you forgot your gym clothes! Come over here!" I sheepishly slunk over to the centre of the basement and was ready to explain my situation when suddenly I was swept off my feet, lifted high into the air and pinned against the ceiling. "Why do you not have your gym clothes?!?" Three quick, relevant facts. Number one, there was no way I was explaining myself in front of the whole class. Number two, I could barely keep myself from peeing my pants, much less actually talk. Number three, I stutter badly when forced to respond verbally under pressure. Therefore, I said nothing except for a few stuttered grunts. After a little more uplifted condemnation for

² Long Johns are full coverage thermal underwear.

not being changed, I was forced to sit out for the rest of the class. Although I kept a brave face for my friends, (“That was so cool how he lifted me up so high”) inside I was embarrassed, frustrated, mad and ultimately – helpless.

As I inquire into this particular story fragment, I am drawn first to the temporality of the experience. This story took place in my distant past yet it continues to shape who I am today. I wonder now how the experience shaped my PE teacher training and the philosophical shifts of my teaching career. How did this experience impact my treatment of Mary? Did I become a PE teacher who was not all that hung up on kids changing for PE because of my own narrative? Perhaps. But why didn't I just get turned off of PE completely like many others with poor experiences (Strean, 2009)? What kept me not only interested in PE but also on a career path infused with it? As I dig further into the story fragment, I am struck with the singular temporality of this experience. One day, one PE class, one time. Perhaps, not enough to dissuade an avid mover from the time of day he loved best. Or, perhaps my previous experiences with movement “inoculated” me so that I was immune to what could have been an un-educative experience.

If our identities are indeed firmly linked with our experiences in a particular place and the stories that arise (Silko, 1996) I am struck by how the “place” of PE meant comfort and joy for me. Whether in the gym, a church basement, or on the field, these are places that I could move and do my best. While I did not hate the classroom, it certainly did not provide me with the kinaesthetic learning that I craved and sought. Perhaps the reason the long johns story stuck with me is because it was incongruous with my dominant story of a PE space and place.

Finally, when I consider the sociality of this story I can see my farm story clashing with city culture; in my school, city kids didn't wear long johns, and I was the only farm kid. If everyone else had the experience of long johns to pull from, perhaps it would not have been as embarrassing. The sociality also speaks to my relationship with my PE teacher. I did not feel I could trust him after this experience; he did not give me the chance to explain. Temporally then, the lack of trust in grade two translated to a desire to be trustworthy, literally worthy of my student's trust, as a PE teacher and a teacher educator - continuity. With Mary, I strove to gain her trust first, and then was able to help her progress in PE. Although the two are linked, the trust comes first. As a teacher educator, I spend a lot of time building trust with my students – including taking time for personal discussions; learning about past experiences and; being aware and receptive to contextual changes in their lives.

Discussion

“Autobiography is the inroad par excellence into exploring the dynamic features – as well as the profound challenges – of narrative inquiry, or at least that portion of it that looks to the comprehensive study of lives as an important vehicle for understanding the human condition” (Freeman, 2007, p.12). As we sat in a dark college classroom thinking about this study, we remember the excitement that came from sharing our own experiences with movement and physical education. As we reflected on how these stories had shaped us, we began to see connections to our current pedagogies. We see a number of threads within our stories that might be pulled to illustrate how these particular experiences still resonate with us today, and have in some way become infused in our pedagogy as physical education teacher educators.

The thread of relationship is strong in each of our story fragments. When we speak to relationships we are speaking about the sociality of these experiences, the environments in which they took place. We see Lee's connection to Mr. McLeod as being an integral part of

the experience - it is the aspect that perhaps stands out the most. It is certainly Doug's ex-football player PE teacher who lifted him up to the ceiling, and perhaps his lack of relationship with Doug that resonates. We also see Doug's strong connection to Mary, a connection that enabled him to meet Mary where she was. Mr. McLeod and Mary are, in a very real way, alongside us now as we make pedagogical decisions in our classroom and gymnasium spaces.

JB and Mary come alive as we share them with pre-service teachers. These stories have the potential to resonate with emerging teachers as they hear about how powerful movement can be. These stories are not about winning championships, increasing student fitness levels, or about meeting a prescribed curricular outcome. They are about two students who did not fit the dominant stories of physical education. Mary and JB open up conversations about what really counts (Hellison, 2003) to pre-service teachers. Often times these conversations come about with tension around which knowledge counts in schools, and about how different pre-service PE teachers stories may be when you lay them alongside JB and Mary's stories. Stories live on as they are read, re-told and, perhaps most importantly, resonate and remind us of our own stories. Our students, through thinking with these stories, are encouraged to make sense of it on their own landscapes.

As we ruminate with these wonders, we are left thinking about the temporality of our own autobiographical experiences. Stemming from Dewey's (1938) notions of experiences around continuity and interaction, temporality speaks to the ways that our past experiences, inform our present and future stories. For us, as teacher educators, we see it as being of utmost importance to understand why we make the pedagogical decisions we do. Doug alludes to this in his story about Mary. Although his pedagogical decisions would be shaped by a variety of past experiences, one can't help but see the resonance of the rough ex-football player in Doug's gentle demeanour with Mary. In some way Doug's experience with his past PE teacher, resonates strongly with how he conducts himself, what he sees as important, and how he creates the safe and differentiated learning environment that he describes in the story with Mary.

Autobiographical Inquiry in PETE

You don't need to venture far into any education program to read or hear the word reflection. It's a buzzword and, quite frankly, a word that students become immune to because they are asked to do 'it' so often. While we see ourselves as reflective practitioners, engaging in the autobiographical narrative inquiry process provided us a method to engage in reflective practice. Being attentive to temporality, sociality and place allowed us to engage in an inquiry that helped us to think differently about our past experiences, and differently about how they are shaping our present and future pedagogy.

The scope of this paper does not allow us to share all of the experiences we inquired in to. What we tried to show was two experiences that are alive, and in some ways, embodied in who we are as physical educators. While this process was at times smooth, it was also bumpy. While we grew up in very similar environments, and had mostly positive experiences with movement and PE, it became glaringly obvious that our experiences are different than many past, current, and future PE students. As former physical education teachers, we also shared stories about students who disliked and even hated PE. It was easy at the time to think that there was something wrong with them, to wonder if they were just lazy, or even if their parents did not care about them.

These were the bumpy times, as we realized through our autobiographical narrative inquiry that what we saw as educative past experiences, had become part of the dominant stories that shape physical education, and often times oppress those that don't fit this story. This was certainly not the first time we had thought about how different our experiences may

be from those we teach, however, the autobiographical process created an opportunity to inquire deeply into our past, present and future pedagogical decisions.

As we moved through this process we began to wonder about how we might engage pre-service PE teachers in this method, and how they might begin to make sense of their own pedagogical decisions. Knowing our current students demographics and backgrounds we know that many of them grew up in supportive families. We know many of them are white. We know many of them are athletic. And we know many of them had success in sport. We also know that as society and classrooms are becoming increasingly diverse, PETE program participants are not (Melville & Hammermeister, 2006).

We began to wonder about how similar our PETE students' stories would be to our stories, and began to wonder about how we might begin to use these resonant stories, dominant stories, to think about the stories on the margins; to begin to think about the diverse backgrounds of students that will no doubt populate classrooms and gymnasiums of future teachers. Perhaps this process may allow a space to think about where movement, sport and physical activity fit into those students' lives who do not fit into the dominant stories of physical education.

Future Possibilities

Thinking about narrative inquiry as informing pedagogy is a new phenomenon (Huber, Caine, Huber, & Steeves, 2013). A recent study (Schaefer, 2013b) looked at the implications of thinking about narrative inquiry for physical education pedagogy. As we move forward we wonder about how pre-service teachers will make sense of autobiographically inquiring into their past, present and future experiences using the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space; we wonder how this process may help to shift and shape their pedagogies. We also wonder how this process may value the knowledge that students bring to their respective teacher education programs and at the same time, help them to be critical about how they have come to know about physical education. As such, we are crafting a pilot study to explore these puzzles with our own students. It is our hope that our study and future studies around this phenomenon will inform not only our own stories, our own research and pedagogy, but also help other physical educators and PETE instructors think about how these stories, and their own autobiographies, may shape their own thinking about the contexts within which they work.

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