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**A Paradox of Plenty:  
An Abundance Dilemma in Physical and Health Education**

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## **Author Biographies**

**Nathan Hall (PhD)**, is an Associate Professor in the Department of Kinesiology at Brock University. He specializes and teaches in the area of physical education pedagogy. Specifically, Dr. Hall is highly interested in the content delivered in physical education programs and the benefits of introducing children to a wide variety of activities that can promote physical health and well-being across the lifespan. His current areas of research include physical education, physical literacy assessment, alternative environment activities in physical education, and mental imagery.

**Derek Wasyliw**, is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Kinesiology and Physical Education at McGill University. His research explores how kinesiology and physical and health education programs can engage practitioners in socially just and culturally grounded pedagogy and health promotion. Working collaboratively with the Kanien'kehá community of Kahnawà:ke through the Kahnawà:ke Schools Diabetes Prevention Program, Derek uses CBPR and culturally grounded approaches to bridge Indigenous and Western research practices. His community-based work focuses on youth holistic well-being, intergenerational mentorship, and land-based learning rooted in Haudenosaunee (Kanien'kehá) values.

## Abstract

This paper examines the growing “abundance affliction” in physical and health education (PHE) scholarship, characterized by the rapid expansion of professional organizations, conferences, journals, and digital dissemination platforms. While this proliferation reflects a vibrant and innovative field, it also produces increasing fragmentation, financial burden, and challenges to scholarly coherence. Drawing on personal vignettes from both a Canadian graduate student and an associate professor, the paper illustrates how abundance shapes academic decision-making, professional identity, and the capacity to collaborate meaningfully within PHE.

The paper analyzes the expanding organizational, publication, and digital landscape of PHE, identifying both the benefits and the accompanying risks of having so many options for PHE scholarship dissemination and networking. Empirical evidence from bibliometric studies demonstrates that scholarship is increasing in volume but remains thematically and geographically siloed. The paper concludes by proposing strategies to enhance coherence and collaboration, including inter-organizational coordination, centralized digital infrastructure, expanded digital knowledge mobilization, and supports for equitable participation. These approaches aim to ensure that the field leverages its abundance to strengthen, rather than fracture, PHE scholarship globally.

**Keywords:** dissemination; research; physical education higher education; knowledge mobilization

## Résumé

Cet article examine le phénomène croissant de « profusion » dans la recherche en éducation physique et à la santé (EPS), caractérisé par l’expansion rapide des organisations professionnelles, des conférences, des revues et des plateformes de diffusion numérique. Bien que cette prolifération témoigne du dynamisme et de l’innovation du domaine, elle engendre également une fragmentation croissante, un fardeau financier accru et des difficultés pour la cohérence scientifique. À partir des témoignages d’une étudiante canadienne de troisième cycle et d’un professeur agrégé, l’article illustre comment cette profusion influence la prise de décision académique, l’identité professionnelle et la capacité de collaborer efficacement en EPS. L’article analyse le paysage organisationnel, éditorial et numérique en expansion de l’EPS, en identifiant les avantages et les risques liés à la multiplication des options de diffusion et de réseautage des travaux de recherche. Des données bibliométriques montrent que le volume de la recherche augmente, mais que celle-ci demeure cloisonnée thématiquement et géographiquement. L’article conclut en proposant des stratégies pour renforcer la cohérence et la collaboration, notamment la coordination interorganisationnelle, une infrastructure numérique centralisée, une mobilisation accrue des connaissances numériques et des mesures favorisant une participation équitable. Ces approches visent à s’assurer que le domaine tire parti de sa richesse pour renforcer, plutôt que d’affaiblir, la recherche en éducation physique et sportive à l’échelle mondiale.

**Mots-clés:** diffusion; recherche; enseignement supérieur en éducation physique; mobilisation des connaissances

## Introduction

Physical and health education (PHE) scholarship has entered an era of remarkable productivity and diversification. Across Canada and internationally, researchers now operate in a dense ecosystem of professional associations, conferences, journals, and digital platforms. While this proliferation signals vitality, it also presents a paradox: the increasing number of venues for dissemination and networking can fragment the field, dilute shared identity, and complicate meaningful collaboration. This phenomenon has been referred to as an “abundance affliction” within PHE research (Hall, 2023) yet has received minimal discussion in the PHE literature.

This article attempts to provide a Canadian lens on how this abundance affliction manifests in PHE scholarship specifically for graduate students and post secondary faculty. Particularly, the article focuses on the abundance of PHE related organizations to affiliate with, academic conferences to present and network at, scholarly publication outlets, and digital dissemination options, and posits that intentional strategies to integrate and coordinate could help reduce the risk of the PHE field becoming increasingly scattered and siloed as opposed to more connected and cohesive. It begins by reflecting on some of the struggles being faced by Canadian PHE scholars with respect to this paradox of plenty by sharing personal experiences. This will lead to an examination of the expanding PHE landscape; the benefits and risks related to this and conclude with identifying potential pathways to harness the benefits of abundance without succumbing to its costs.

## Personal Vignettes of Life Amid the Abundance Affliction

### *PHE Graduate Student Experience and Perspective*

What a privilege it is to be plagued by analysis paralysis when deciding which conferences to attend, journals to submit to, and what professional organizations to support. The large number of organizations, journals, publishers and digital platforms in PHE today highlights a thriving, productive field growing in diversity. Yet, as a graduate student, each opportunity also creates an internal dilemma where one must consider relational, financial and professional consequences. Therefore, navigating PHE academia’s “paradox of plenty,” is both a blessing and burden. I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the narrative of PHE yet simultaneously overwhelmed by the pressure to strategically convert each opportunity into measurable academic capital. With limited resources, time, and energy each dissemination decision seems to carry relational weight. A metaphorical balancing act of supporting the academic communities and people who have supported me while also expanding my professional network.

Despite my grounding in community-based participatory research, where the goal is to generate knowledge with and for communities, I often feel tension between these relational commitments and the institutional realities of academia. The tension becomes especially apparent when choosing where to publish or present my work. My research is guided by a desire to produce work that is pragmatic and useful, something that can be implemented in schools, after-school programs, or health promotion to improve lives. Yet within the academic structure, value is too often measured by citation counts and impact factors rather than community outcomes. Begrudgingly, I find myself weighing whether to submit to open access journals which will reach practitioners or those which are hidden behind paywalls yet deemed more prestigious by scholars and hiring committees. For graduate students, pursuing both paths is rarely possible without sacrificing significant time, financial stability, or further straining mental health in an already demanding and uncertain academic environment.

This ongoing negotiation between purpose and performance has reshaped how I see myself as an emerging scholar. Within me is a tension between the community-based researcher focused on reciprocity and the aspiring academic constantly calculating outputs and outcomes to best set myself up for the elusive PHE tenure track position. The process of choosing which conferences to attend, where to publish, and which professional organization to engage with has become a source of this tension. The more I invest in relational work, the less it seems to count in the formal metrics of productivity. Yet when I prioritize the publish-or-perish mindset, I feel like I am abandoning the relationships and responsibilities that give this work meaning. I often wonder the best way to balance this all. With that being said, the irony of it all is not lost on me. To feel burdened by abundance is, in itself, a privilege. Yet this abundance also carries weight, asking graduate students to make difficult choices that shape not only their careers, but their relationships, wellbeing, and sense of belonging within the field. Naming these tensions feels important, not as a critique but as an honest reflection of what it means to try to authentically and sustainably participate, and more specifically disseminate my work, in the academic PHE landscape. Perhaps acknowledging these complexities could be a step toward more honest conversations about how we can better show up not only for each other but for the field of PHE as a whole.

### ***Associate Professor Experience and Perspective***

As a professor with a desire to supporting various PHE related scholarly communities, I often find myself navigating a complicated mix of financial cost, professional obligation, and personal values. Membership fees, conference registrations, and travel expenses accumulate quickly, especially when trying to maintain involvement across multiple organizations whose missions I believe in. Publishing in their journals and presenting at their meetings feels like the right way to contribute, but the cost of staying active in all these spaces is far from trivial, and recently almost impossible. Adding the expectation to stay visible across numerous professional platforms only amplifies the stress I feel in relation to this issue. I just find there are so many PHE related organizations and dissemination venues. Each year I worry about which organization to support by attending their conferences, what knowledge or connections I may miss by not attending all of them, and what colleagues may say if I choose not to attend one that I traditionally support.

I personally feel this abundance can create a fragmented PHE landscape. I see colleagues aligning with different professional communities, attending separate conferences, and investing in distinct sub-fields. Internationally, this divide widens further. While I am participating in one set of meetings or initiatives, peers in other countries are gathering in entirely different circles. Despite our shared commitment to PHE, our opportunities to meet, collaborate, and exchange ideas become scattered. In 2020, I was ten years into my higher education career when I took a position at a new university. There, in my new Department, I met a highly published and extremely well regarded coworker who had been researching in the Canadian PHE field for over 25 years and yet I had never before connected with her. I wondered how this was possible?

I want to remain engaged across the sector, but I also recognize the cost—financially, relationally, and intellectually. The more organizations I join, the more dispersed my attention becomes. The more conferences I try to attend, the less likely I am to connect deeply with peers who have made different choices about where to invest their time and resources. Recognizing this does not diminish my appreciation for a thriving field. The diversity of organizations and initiatives reflects genuine growth and creativity. Yet it is worth acknowledging that abundance comes with pressure as well as opportunity. In this crowded landscape, I continue to seek a balance between

contributing meaningfully to the profession and protecting the relationships, values, and communities that give purpose to my work.

## **The Expanding Landscape of PHE Scholarship**

### **Organizational Proliferation**

In the current scholarly environment, PHE researchers have access to an extraordinary variety of professional organizations. In North America alone, organizations such as Physical and Health Education Canada (PHE Canada), SHAPE America, the National Association for Kinesiology in Higher Education (NAKHE), the American Educational Research Association (AERA), and the Canadian Society for the Study of Education (CSSE) all serve as significant potential hubs for PHE related research and practice. These organizations provide opportunities for networking, mentorship, and knowledge dissemination, but their proliferation also requires scholars to make strategic choices about affiliation, membership, and participation.

Internationally, organizations such as the Association Internationale des Écoles Supérieures d'Éducation Physique (AIESEP) offer platforms for global collaboration, professional development, and cross-cultural research engagement (AIESEP, 2023). Similarly, the International Physical Literacy Conference (IPLC) brings together scholars from multiple continents to discuss developments in physical literacy theory, assessment, and pedagogical application. The diversity of these organizations reflects both the field's dynamism and the complexity of navigating multiple, sometimes overlapping, networks.

### **Publication Diversity**

The dissemination of PHE scholarship is similarly complex. Scholars can publish in established journals such as Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy, Sport Education & Society, European Physical Education Review, Journal of Teaching in Physical Education, Quest, Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport, and the Canadian based Revue phénEPS-PHENex Journal, among others. Open-access platforms, including Frontiers in Sports and Active Living, have broadened accessibility and expanded the audience for research outputs. Additionally, specialized journals focused on adapted physical activity, measurement, motor learning, and health promotion provide targeted outlets for niche areas of study.

Bibliometric analyses illustrate both the scope and some of the fragmentation of the field. For example, in the sub-domain of research focusing on PHE teacher education and training (PETE) Hernández-González et al., (2025) examined publications from 198 authors representing 27 countries, highlighting the wide geographic and thematic spread of PETE research. Notably, their analysis pointed to relatively low levels of international co-authorship, indicating that, despite global engagement, PETE scholarship is often produced in isolated networks. Similarly, in the domain of physical literacy, bibliometric mapping shows a rapid increase in research output but a concentration of work within a small number of journals (Mendoza-Muñoz et al., 2022).

### **Emerging Digital Platforms**

Digital platforms provide additional avenues for dissemination and networking, often with fewer resource constraints than traditional conferences and journals. Podcasts such as Playing with Research in Health and Physical Education, The Meaningful Podcast Experience, and Global PhysEd Voxcast, alongside blogs, preprint servers, and social media platforms (e.g., X, LinkedIn, ResearchGate), enable real-time discussion, collaboration, and public engagement. Social media, in particular, facilitates the rapid spread of research insights and pedagogical innovations, though

questions remain regarding quality control, equity, and the permanence of digital content (Dingwall, 2024; Goodyear et al., 2014; Goodyear et al., 2019).

## **The Paradox of Abundance: Benefits and Risks**

### **Benefits of Proliferation**

The expanding landscape of PHE scholarship has generated a range of positive outcomes for researchers, educators, and practitioners. Increased publication outlets, international networks, and digital dissemination channels have diversified the ways knowledge is created and shared. This growth has fostered inclusion, specialization, and collaboration across subfields, enabling scholars to pursue niche interests while contributing to a broader global dialogue on PHE (O'Connor & Jess, 2020; Quennerstedt, 2019; Van Der Mars, 2018).

Multiple venues now allow scholars to publish research that aligns closely with their specific interests, whether in physical literacy, sport pedagogy, adapted activity, or health education. Such specialization encourages innovation in both theoretical development and methodological design (Kulinna et al., 2023). The growth of international organizations such as AIESEP and the International Physical Literacy Conference (IPLC) further enhances global reach by facilitating cross-cultural collaboration and expanding the impact of PHE scholarship beyond national boundaries. Additionally, digital democratization through open-access publishing, growth of academic podcasts and knowledge mobilization through social media platforms reduces barriers for practitioners and researchers in under-resourced contexts, promoting more equitable knowledge dissemination and engagement across the global community (McNamara et al., 2024; Persohn & Branson, 2025).

### **Risks and Challenges**

While the expansion of PHE scholarship has created valuable opportunities for innovation and collaboration, it has also introduced several structural and conceptual challenges. The same forces that promote diversity and inclusion can, paradoxically, fragment the field and complicate the communication of shared purpose. As the number of conferences, journals, and professional networks continues to grow, researchers face increasing pressures related to visibility, competition, and coherence. These dynamics can hinder collective advocacy and weaken disciplinary identity (Hall, 2023; Kirk, 2010; Lawson, 2009).

One of the central risks is the potential for fragmented visibility, as the dispersal of scholarship across numerous journals and platforms makes it more cumbersome for researchers, educators, and policymakers to identify and access key findings. This diffusion of knowledge can sometimes obscure significant advancements and reduce the cumulative impact of research. Closely related is competition for attention, with overlapping conferences, journal deadlines, and organizational events diluting participation, lowering submission quality, and creating logistical and temporal strain for scholars (Hall, 2023). Moreover, the financial demands associated with participation (e.g., membership fees; travel expenses; open-access publication charges) can impose a substantial financial burden, limiting opportunities for early-career researchers and those in under-resourced institutions. Finally, the increasing specialization of subfields contributes to identity fragmentation, weakening the coherence of PHE as a unified discipline and constraining its collective capacity to influence educational policy and practice (Kirk, 2010; Lawson, 2009; O'Connor & Jess, 2020; Reis et al., 2022).

## **Evidence of Fragmentation**

Empirical studies on PHE related domains demonstrate the tangible effects of the abundance affliction facing PHE scholars. Hernández-González et al. (2025) found that, in the specific sub-domain of PETE scholarship, despite widespread international contributions, co-authorship networks remained modest, limiting collaborative innovation. Similarly, González-Ruiz and colleagues (2024) observed that research on anxiety in PHE formed distinct clusters, revealing thematic compartmentalization. Likewise, research on educational technology in PE indicates a parallel pattern: the adoption of virtual and augmented reality tools in PE is growing, but co-authorship and cross-institutional collaboration remain limited (Calabuig-Moreno et al., 2020). Finally, in physical literacy scholarship, bibliometric analyses reveal concentrated authorship and limited cross-network collaboration, highlighting persistent fragmentation (Mendoza-Muñoz et al., 2022). The emerging evidence paints a picture of a field flourishing in quantity but fragmented in connection, raising important questions about how PHE scholars might better coordinate inquiry and share conceptual ground.

## **Impacts of the Abundance Affliction**

While increased avenues for PHE scholarly dissemination can foster innovation and specialization, they also produce tangible consequences for collaboration, disciplinary coherence, equity, and the sustainability of scholarly infrastructure. Understanding these impacts is essential for recognizing how the abundance affliction shapes the production, visibility, and influence of knowledge within the field.

## **Networking and Collaboration**

Overlapping conferences and multiple organizational commitments necessitate difficult choices for scholars. For instance, in 2022, PHE Canada's Research Forum, SHAPE America's National Convention, and the AERA Annual Meeting all occurred during the last week of April. Such scheduling overlaps restrict opportunities for cross-network engagement, limit exposure to diverse perspectives, and reduce the overall impact of scholarly exchange. These overlaps also create barriers to the development of sustained international collaborations, as scholars must often prioritize logistical feasibility over intellectual alignment, resulting in parallel rather than intersecting communities of practice.

## **Scholarly Identity and Coherence**

Fragmentation weakens collective identity within PHE. Without unified forums or core journals, the field struggles to maintain visibility and exert influence on policy, curriculum development, and teacher education (Kirk, 2010; Lorusso & Richards, 2018; Reis et al., 2022). This dispersal may also affect the perception of PHE as a coherent academic discipline in higher education and government policy discussions. Over time, this lack of shared infrastructure and purpose can lead to conceptual drift, where overlapping subfields (i.e., health promotion; physical literacy; adapted physical education; sport pedagogy) develop in isolation, limiting opportunities for cumulative knowledge building and strategic advocacy.



## **Access and Equity**

The abundance of affliction exacerbates disparities between well-resourced scholars and those with limited institutional support. While digital platforms and open access (OA) journals may reduce some barriers, substantial inequities persist in areas such as travel funding, institutional infrastructure, and article processing charges. For example, research in health professions education indicates that authors from lower-income countries pay article processing charges that are often 1.9 to 10.3 times higher relative to those from wealthier countries, creating a structural disadvantage (Abdel-Razig et al., 2024). It would likely be naive to think that similar issues do not face PHE authors from lower-income countries. This dynamic means that voices from underrepresented regions or smaller institutions may remain marginalized, influencing not only who participates in the scholarly conversation but also which research questions and methods are prioritized in the global PHE discourse. Moreover, we acknowledge that this represents only a narrow view of the broader access and equity challenges embedded in PHE knowledge dissemination (an issue substantial enough to warrant its own dedicated analysis).

## **Sustainability of Scholarly Infrastructure**

Providing continued support for multiple conferences, editorial boards, journal peer review demands, and organizational committees places significant strains on volunteer time and institutional support. Without better coordination, there is a risk that high-quality scholarly venues may become unsustainable, particularly in specialized subfields with limited membership bases. This strain may also diminish the quality of peer review, mentorship, and editorial oversight, undermining the very scholarly standards that the proliferation of outlets initially sought to promote.

## **Potential Strategies for Enhancing Coherence and Collaboration**

Addressing the proliferation of outlets and networks in PHE requires intentional strategies to promote coherence, coordination, and equitable participation across the discipline. By implementing targeted initiatives, professional associations, scholars, and institutions can strengthen collaboration, improve access to knowledge, and enhance the broader impact of PHE scholarship.

One key strategy could be fostering inter-organizational coordination. Establishing ongoing dialogue among major PHE associations such as PHE Canada, SHAPE America, NAKHE, AIESEP, NAFAPA and IFAPA can help align conference schedules, coordinate joint symposia, and support collaborative initiatives across international networks. Complementing this, a centralized digital infrastructure could consolidate access to publications, conference proceedings, and preprints, thereby improving discoverability and reducing duplication of effort.

Leveraging digital dissemination is another strategy that has the potential to further extend the reach of PHE scholarship. Integrating traditional outputs with podcasts, infographics, social media posts, and blogs allows researchers to engage wider audiences while maintaining scholarly rigor (Casey et al., 2017; Persohn & Branson, 2025). Ensuring support for inclusive participation is also critical: travel grants, open-access publication support, and mentorship programs for early-career or under-resourced scholars can reduce inequities and broaden engagement within the field.

Finally, fostering reflexive dialogue and meta-research, through bibliometric analyses and cross-organization forums, can identify gaps in collaboration, emerging thematic trends, and areas for strategic investment. For example, bibliometric work in PHE sub-domains shows growing

output but limited co-author network density, suggesting potential for enhanced strategic coordination (Hernández-González et al., 2025). Coordinated efforts to strengthen policy and pedagogical engagement can ensure that PHE scholarship informs curriculum development, teacher professional development, and public policy, thereby reinforcing the discipline's relevance, coherence, and societal impact.

## **Conclusion**

PHE scholarship is vibrant and expanding. However, the proliferation of journals, organizations, conferences, and digital platforms has created a paradox of plenty, which risks increasing fragmentation, reduced visibility, and inequities in participation throughout the PHE field. The “abundance affliction” is not inherently detrimental; rather, it highlights the need for intentional coordination, strategic collaboration, and equitable access. By encouraging and seeking ways to implement inter-organizational coordination, centralized infrastructure, digital dissemination strategies, and inclusive support mechanisms, the PHE community can transform abundance into synergy and ensure that scholarship remains visible, coherent, meaningful and impactful on a global scale.

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