Examining the Culture of HPE in a Canadian High School Setting Through Practitioner Research

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to examine the impact of the culture of Health and Physical Education (HPE) in a Canadian high school setting, and analyze how teachers' experiences have been impacted by role conflict, advocacy fatigue, and burnout. A review of the literature revealed that initial concerns around the dual role of teacher-coach, subject marginalization, and burnout existed as separate topics, but very few narrative based approaches were present that examined teachers' cumulative experiences. A collaborative duoethnography was chosen, and dialogues, observations, artifacts, and personal narratives, were analyzed as part of a dialogic inquiry by two female high school HPE teachers at two Canadian high schools. Themes emerged around school and HPE culture, identity/role conflict, ongoing marginalization, and burnout. Next steps reviewed the inclusion of the Comprehensive School Health (CSH) model, administrative support, and policy considerations as possible solutions to the challenges experienced. The experience with duoethnography also yielded an opportunity to examine and explore the benefits and drawbacks of participation in practitioner research. The literature revealed that there still exists a gap between theory and practice in the educational landscape and the inclusion of practitioner research is integral to moving the field forward. However, participation in the duoethnography coding of findings resulted in the researcher experiencing emotional challenges when rectifying the sum of the challenging experiences being explored in her work environment. Given the results of the duoethnography, this subsequently led to questioning if practitioner research would simply be adding more to the already large workload of a group of individuals (HPE teachers). This dichotomy that exists between the efficacy of practitioner research and its demands was explored through a critical exploration and reflection of the practitioner research experience. Ultimately, the importance of practitioner research is

apparent, but until teachers workloads can be managed, effective communities of practice are established, and/or the vulnerability of ethnographic research can be effectively supported, teachers will continue to have challenges in embarking on practitioner research. Strategies to mitigate and manage the concerns presented by conducting research in the workplace were explored, and recommendations for next steps were offered.

Preface

This thesis is an original work by Sarah Elizabeth Succee. The duoethnography, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name “Burnout as a Badge of Honour: A duoethnography on the HPE educator culture of balancing pedagogy, respect and extracurriculars”, Pro00135014, Sep 25, 2023.

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My heartfelt thanks also goes out to many of my HPE and workplace colleagues, whose camaraderie, collaboration, and encouragement made this journey both transformative and educational. Their shared enthusiasm and constructive discussions greatly enhanced the quality of the research. I would also not be here without the immense support of the U of A Master of Education HPE cohort. This group of "Phys-Eddies" gives me great excitement for the future of HPE across Canada and the impact on student learning they will have. Their collective knowledge has been integral to my learning. I also would not be here without the "dream team" of Jacqueline, Lila, and Adam, whose perspectives on the teaching profession have challenged and expanded my thinking. Specifically, Jacqueline's commitment to finding meaningful solutions within our locus of control has made a significant impact.

To my closest friends—Melanie, Lisa, Lauren, Tiffany, and Caitlin—who provided support and/or distraction as needed, thank you for being a part of my journey. Your friendship means so much to me. Finally, I wish to express my profound appreciation to my parents, Dorothy and Bruce, for their constant love, patience, and unwavering support. Their belief in me provided the strength and motivation needed to complete this endeavor. This thesis is as much a testament to their encouragement as it is to my own efforts.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

Background

"That is what learning is. You suddenly understand something you've understood all your life, but in a new way." - Doris Lessing

Early in my teaching career the power of reflection and calls to embrace being a "lifelong learner" were frequent. When I embarked on a Master of Education program at University of Alberta, twelve years into my teaching career, I thought I would simply be continuing a reflective journey and sharing experiences and ideas with like-minded Health and Physical Education (HPE) educators, or, "Phys-Eddies." But what I didn't realize was that this process, and most definitely this thesis, would have the power to provide a completely new perspective on everything I had thought I knew and understood about my experiences teaching HPE in a high school setting.

I have been teaching HPE in the York Region District School Board (YRDSB) in southern Ontario for thirteen years. I have worked hard to provide meaningful opportunities to students in my classes, coordinate and support extracurriculars (e.g. athletic director, coaching, and club facilitator), participate on school leadership teams and committees, and establish school culture in the two brand new school buildings I helped open. I have taken on several roles including teacher, department head, athletic director, coach of a variety of sports teams, regional HPE department head chair, health and wellness committee chair, PD planning committee chair, graduation committee member, school first aider, and a number of other roles that support the day-to-day running of a successful public secondary school. The majority of the above roles are volunteer roles and are only accomplished by teachers who recognize the importance of creating a culture of care and support for our students both inside and outside of classrooms.

The reason I ultimately became an HPE teacher was because I wanted other young women to enjoy the physical, social, and emotional benefits of physical activity as much as I did. Growing up as a competitive synchronized skater (and eventual Team Canada member), and participating in a variety of other teams inside and outside of school (fast-pitch, basketball, volleyball etc.), I intrinsically felt that if others could just experience the enjoyment, endorphin rush, and satisfaction of improvement that physical activities offered me, more young women would be sticking with their sports and physical activity pursuits. However, for me it has become about so much more than physical activity. Every skill related to resilience, collaboration, and hard work was cultivated in those early morning and late night practices and through a plethora of sweat, tears, and injuries. These are skills that I continue to rely on today. Given those early experiences, I suppose it is no surprise that in my work as a teacher, I gravitate toward volunteer roles in extracurricular sports and wellness planning, view and treat my colleagues as teammates, and often perceive the day to day challenges in teaching as being surmountable if I simply work harder.

One naive realization that took some time to sink in during my career, is that not everyone in my work environment will approach "work" in that same way. I wouldn't put my time and effort into a subject area I didn't feel deserved respect, but the challenges faced trying again and again to convince a variety of people that HPE is just as important as any other subject has often been exhausting. Perhaps this isn't surprising that I would take my advocacy role quite seriously, considering synchronized skating wasn't exactly a sport that everyone had heard of, and I often had to convince people it was in fact a real thing. Moreover, my "more effort" mantra that is a hidden reality of my upbringing, may also be a contributing factor to the challenges I continually face as a teacher. I was always encouraged to try my best through increased effort to

find answers or solutions to the challenges I faced. However, the "more effort" I put in, the more the term burnout is increasingly becoming a part of my reality as I try to balance everything I choose to take on in the realm of work and the rest of my life.

As I began to share my teaching experiences with others in the master's program, I couldn't help but realize we would bond over similar experiences of the joys of teaching HPE, but we also frequently identified similar barriers and challenges as well. This was not unlike the conversations I would have with other HPE leaders at our YRDSB regional heads meetings (a space where all HPE department heads from across our school board come together three times a year to share, learn, and plan). From a challenges perspective, within both groups there was often a sense that our contributions, work, time, and effort aren't identified in a way that gives us a sense of being truly "seen," appreciated, or understood - a sense of belonging. Many felt we were doing more than our fair share of volunteer work, especially within the realm of after school athletics. Some felt athletics was even viewed as more important than their HPE curriculums, while some felt neither contribution (curricular or athletics) was viewed as a significant contribution to their school community. Compounded by numerous examples of HPE department matters that need to continually be advocated for, I have often sensed a certain amount of physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion experienced by a number of people in both the masters program and by HPE department heads around my school board.

Rationale

The above realities resulted in reflection on and consideration of a variety of questions. I was curious if others within the greater HPE culture, and perhaps across Canada were experiencing similar challenges. How do we overcome these challenges? Are we advocating for HPE issues but in such a way that we are burning bridges instead of building them? If we can't

change broader systems in place, can we develop our own systems that can help us support one another? What truly is the role of extracurricular athletics, and why does that seem to be more urgent to discuss in my day-to-day conversations with administrators than the provincially mandated curricular content I provide in classes?

One masters colleague in particular, Jacqueline McDonald, also found that the above experiences and challenges resonated with her, which paved the way for us to share and analyze our experiences in HPE and school culture through a duoethnography. Up until spring 2023, most of our conversations had been informal in nature and mainly allowed us to feel understood and supported by someone going through similar challenges. It wasn't until our EDEL573 (Practitioner Research in Education) course, when we were asked to submit a research proposal that focused on a narrative style method, where we more seriously considered sharing our stories in a way that might bring about change. Ultimately, we wanted to share our lived experiences as high school HPE specialists, disrupt norms, and claim some voice within the HPE culture (Casey et al., 2018; Ellis et al., 2011). Teachers are the backbone of a successful public education system, and thus any continued success is contingent upon having teachers who are equipped not only educationally, but physically and mentally as well (Lever et al., 2017; Zhang & Sapp, 2008). Our conversations began with trying to define the purpose of an HPE educator's job and the exhaustion we have felt advocating (Pennington et al., 2023) for the importance of HPE as a valued discipline amongst colleagues, administration, and students. We have discovered that the interpretation of the HPE culture is blurry, and the conflicts between the roles of teacher and coach are a large contributing factor (Alsalhe et al., 2021; Brouwers, et al., 2011; Harding-Kuriger & Gleddie, 2022). The blurred lines are embedded in our school and HPE cultures as many HPE specialists find that, "coaching skills are more valued and motivated than teaching"

(Konukman et al., 2010, p. 21). What further complicates these already blurred lines, is that many HPE educators enjoy both of the roles (teachers, coaches/athletic directors etc.). However, the balance to do both - well - is likely unattainable. What also impacts this balance is the emotional exhaustion from experiences that indicate the subject is less valued and requires HPE educators to advocate for their needs and importance (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020). In our experiences, we lose quality and certified HPE specialists to burnout because the demand to sustain extracurriculars, quality pedagogy, and the energy to advocate for HPE in general, is too challenging as a teaching career progresses (Brouwers et al., 2011). Alternatively, we also know schools likely aim to hire those that are willing to coach in order to balance the workload amongst all educators within the building.

We chose, therefore, to embark on a duoethnography that will provide an insider perspective (Ellis et al., 2011) on the challenges of the dual role, coupled with our experiences with advocacy fatigue, and work/life balance. When ethnographic approaches like duoethnography are used, they allow for the sharing of life stories that have the ability to provide insights that will increase the understanding of factors that have influence on a particular social culture (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). Therefore, if our colleagues, administration, and community members are able to have an inside look at our experiences, we hope it can lead to a greater understanding of the challenges we face, lead to better support for HPE teachers, and assist teachers in finding balance amongst all that they take on. In turn, we hope our story will impact the education received by our students, as teachers will be more equipped to face the demands of their job, thus maintaining their energy for excellent instruction (Oberle & Schonert-Reichl, 2016). Moreover, if these stakeholders can begin to advocate alongside HPE teachers and specialists, the subject as a whole will require less energy for advocacy from the HPE teachers

themselves. Furthermore, it is important to mention that the intent behind this research is not to discredit other educational disciplines as a way of strengthening our findings on what needs to change within the HPE culture. But rather, the intent is to shed light, with insider knowledge (Casey et al., 2018; Ellis et al., 2011; Sparkes & Smith, 2014), on the challenges of the job that are so deeply rooted and misaligned with reality, that through our experiences are creating imbalance and burnout amongst HPE specialists. Teaching is a demanding career, and from our perspective the demands have only been increasing. The duoethnography will address the difficulties and challenges of the HPE culture we have faced, in hopes of making the profession more sustainable for current and future HPE specialists.

The process of writing the duoethnography provides a variety of opportunities to reflect on my teaching, practice, philosophies, and purpose. Moreover, it presents a unique opportunity to reflect on the intentional use of collaborative style ethnographies as a means for personal and professional development in physical education, and in teaching in general. While the merits of reflective practice are plentiful (Brookfield, 2017; Dewey, 1938; Jay & Johnson, 2002; Rodgers, 2002; Schön, 1983; Svendsen, 2020), little has been written about the in-practice Canadian physical educator journey through the lens of ethnography (Harding-Kuriger & Gleddie, 2022). Given that this was my first time contributing to the profession through practitioner research, the full process of completing the duoethnography provides many opportunities for reflection, and thus provides opportunities to develop as a practitioner and leader in HPE.

When practitioners participate in research themselves, not only can they benefit from the reflection it provides, there are also benefits to the advancement of the profession as a whole (Brookfield, 2017; Casey, 2013; Stenhouse, 1981). However, in my current practice, perhaps unsurprisingly from understanding the above rationale for completing the duoethnography, I

rarely have time to read a lot of the latest research to help inform and improve my practice (Miretzky, 2007). Logically, this extends to being unable to carve out the time to meaningfully participate in practitioner research as well. Teachers also need structured opportunities and effective communities of practice in place to embark on research that is meaningful to them. Contemplating the adequate development of communities of practice, where groups of teachers can work together towards similar goals and support the research practitioner process, is essential for the longevity of changes in practice that may occur from completing research (Goodyear & Casey, 2015). As part of the reflective process after completing the duoethnography (Chapter 3), I felt I needed to reconcile this juxtaposition. Given that I was completing practitioner research but was also deeply reflecting on the emotional challenges, and time-consuming nature of it, I found myself at a crossroads considering whether participating in practitioner research again would be best for my well-being without changes to my daily work culture. These considerations provide me with the opportunity to explore the challenges that exist around participating meaningfully in practitioner research, especially as a deep thinker and reflective practitioner, while still recognizing and valuing the necessity to contribute to practitioner research to move our collective practice forward. Taking the time to struggle with this challenge presents an opportunity to utilize my own reflections to inform and support other practitioners.

Significance

The purpose of our duoethnography is threefold and seeks to 1) highlight the variety of factors contributing to teacher burnout in our HPE cultures, 2) explore how to enhance the value and recognition of HPE as a discipline, and 3) differentiate and define the purpose versus the reality of teaching HPE in the high school setting. To achieve these objectives the impact of HPE and school culture on HPE specialists will be explored.

Generally speaking, cultural anthropologists believe that culture is learned, shared, drives behaviour, and that humans use it to interpret our experiences (Dettwyler, 2011). Moreover, Schein (2017) has expressed that culture is directly related to the evolution of a group over time through learning, both explicitly and implicitly. “This accumulated learning is a pattern or system of beliefs, values, and behavioral norms that come to be taken for granted as basic assumptions and eventually drop out of awareness” (Schein, 2017, p 6). As such, in a HPE context, when HPE teachers arrive at various schools with already established cultures, their identity formation is established through negotiating the “social and cultural contexts of schools and society” (Sirna et al., 2010, p. 72). Eventually, how a teacher views themselves, their contributions, and their effectiveness is central to their identity and is likely embedded in the culture of the school. Therefore, for the purposes of this thesis, “HPE culture” will refer to any normalized behaviours and experiences related to HPE that influence the identity of individuals (mainly HPE teachers), which originate from functioning within the social, professional, and organizational structures of a public secondary school or HPE department.

Interestingly, the interpretation of aspects of the HPE culture are blurry, and the conflicts between the roles of teacher and coach are a large contributing factor (Brouwers, et al., 2011; Harding-Kuriger & Gleddie 2022). The blurred lines of this dual role expectation are embedded in HPE culture as many HPE specialists find that, “coaching skills are more valued and motivated than teaching” (Konukman et al., 2010, p. 21). Managing time for learning more about the sport one volunteers in, managing time for family obligations, and managing administrative duties for both roles are also noted as being some of the biggest challenges when taking on the dual role (Camiré et al., 2016; Sulz et al., 2021; Winchester et al., 2013). While it is important to note that HPE teachers are not the only Canadian high-school teachers taking on coaching roles,

almost 40% of coaches identified in Camiré et al. (2016) were HPE teachers. Camiré et al. (2016) also found that HPE teachers coached more sports than other teacher-coaches. In my high school setting, this commitment could translate to approximately 6% of the teaching population taking on more than half of the coaching duties. Therefore, when one combines the inherent cultural expectation to coach with the fact that majority of teachers in Canada (97% - Camiré et al., 2016), do not receive any relief from their teaching load when taking on coaching duties, it puts pressure on HPE teachers to take on more than their fair share of the coaching load (Konukman et al., 2010). Furthermore, it raises concerns about how the culture of high school athletics may be placing HPE teachers in a position to take on more than they can reasonably manage which may also lead to losing some coaches entirely (Sulz et al., 2021). Clearly, there is an inherent obligation, either self-prescribed or culturally expected, that we coach sports, and this can lead to a perceived role conflict trying to balance the expectations of both teaching and coaching. Unpacking the impact of this dual role is at the forefront of the research.

What further complicates the idea of dual role and potential role conflict is that many HPE educators enjoy both roles, but perhaps the balance to do both well is unattainable. Therefore, it is not a stretch to consider that over time, HPE teachers may be in a position to burn out. “Teacher burnout can affect teaching goals and educational environment, which may contribute to severe problems not only at individual level, but also at organizational context” (Alsalhe et al., 2021, p.11). Add this to the mounting evidence that due to the increases in workload and expectation for unpaid work across the educational landscape (Clandinin et al., 2015; Johnston-Gibbens, 2014; Whiteley & Richard, 2012), which creates less control in the day to day operations of classrooms (Apple, 1987; Jeong & Luschei, 2018; Paradis et al., 2019; Stenhouse, 1981), the impact can be seen in the increasing job dissatisfaction and burnout of

teachers (Brouwers, et al., 2011; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020). From an HPE specific lens, Brouwers (2011) caught on to some of the more unique challenges facing HPE teachers, stating that, “PE teachers have received little attention in the burnout literature” (p. 19). The study hypothesised that strict job demands in combination with a lack of support would add to an increased likelihood of burnout in HPE teachers. Ultimately the study revealed that perceived job control and supportive colleagues were integral in decreasing burnout, but also that as HPE teachers progress in their career they are at a greater risk for burnout. Moreover, the results of Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2020) linked the lack of feeling valued and lack of student engagement to increased cynicism, and less autonomy to a decreased perception of self-accomplishment. Both of these links lead to an increased likelihood to quit, and to less effective teaching overall. These results aren’t surprising given my own experience and definitely mirror some of the conversations I’ve had with HPE teachers beyond the ten year mark in their career.

Another factor that is inherent when a person arrives on the scene as a first year HPE teacher is that they will need to be prepared to advocate for the importance of the subject matter, and for the respect of parents, administrators, and colleagues (Kell et al., 2020). Moreover, many Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) teachers come to understand that the biggest way to advocate for quality physical education (QPE) supports is to demonstrate the benefits of QPE in action through progressive pedagogy in classrooms (Richards, 2015). My own approach has been to show the value of HPE through quality programming, teaching strategies, and the use of statistics from research. Over time however, even if you have made progress, the push for advocacy can still lead to a sense of marginalization, lack of job satisfaction, and stress/anxiety (Laureano et al., 2014). Some researchers (Richards et al., 2019; Wilson et al., 2020) link these feelings to concepts around perceived mattering and/or perceived belonging, however, for the

purposes of this thesis I will also use the term “advocacy fatigue” (Basas, 2015) to describe this feeling. This term is often associated with cultural narratives impacting race and ability inequality, which this thesis does not exclusively explore, however I feel the term articulates this feeling of exhaustion from advocating for HPE issues as well. Interestingly, to combat these challenges and feelings some research does suggest that factors like cultivating organizational support, engaging with the parent community often, and engaging with like-minded colleagues can increase one's sense of belonging and feelings of perceived mattering (Gaudreault et al., 2018; Laureano et al., 2014; Lux & McCullick, 2011; Mitchell & Bott, 2012; Walters et al., 2024). In my experiences, I have found these things to be true. However, I also resonate with research that suggests that over time HPE teachers can suffer from a “washout effect whereby teachers who no longer feel as if they are making meaningful contributions to children’s education may compromise their teaching practice” (Richards et al., 2018, p. 446). I’ve personally seen it happen to quality HPE teachers, and can certainly see the benefits to my own health if I were to reduce my efforts to match the level of respect given.

Similarly, through personal observation, experiences, and conversations with others over the past thirteen years of my career, I have been provided with a window into the rewarding, but also challenging, culture of HPE within public schools across Canada. While research specific to Canadian contexts on some of the inherent challenges discussed above is limited, evidence is present in the wider research to suggest the challenges are very much present in the HPE culture globally (Alsalhe et al. 2021; Richards, 2015). Adding Canadian experiences to the global conversation is one major goal of this research given the lack of Canadian specific content on HPE teacher burnout in particular, as all of the above studies had subjects outside of Canada. Alsalhe et al. (2021) completed a systematic review and meta-analysis of HPE educator specific

burnout literature available, and out of 56 studies identified, not one was Canadian. Based on my personal experience, I don't believe this is because burnout amongst HPE teachers is not present in Canada, in fact the burnout literature on Canadian teachers in general is quite robust (Agyapong et al., 2024; Fernet et al., 2012; Koenig et al., 2018), but somehow HPE teachers in Canada are often missed in the burnout literature.

The second part of this study involves reflecting on the experience of participating in practitioner research. Not just simply focusing on the teaching of curriculum anymore, as educators we are tasked with teaching 21st-century skills, providing individualized opportunities, scaffolding feedback, maximizing skills associated with the development of technology, and considering the interests and motivations of their students when creating learning opportunities (Butville et al., 2021; Miulescu & Tacea, 2023). Combine this with educators' intimate knowledge of the practices that allow them to be successful in all of the above, we are uniquely positioned to produce practitioner research that advances not only our own practice but also bridges the current gap between theoretical research and practical applications of that research. For this approach to be successful however, professional development practices that focus on allowing teachers to find autonomy, voice, and agency in their professional learning, will allow teachers to effectively make stronger links between theory and practice (Casey, 2013; Schnellert & Butler, 2021). This in turn will allow us to apply our learning more specifically in our contexts and contribute to the wider field of education. Embarking on this thesis was the first step in allowing me to experience both practitioner research and a full time teaching schedule simultaneously, and thus allowed me to fully experience the benefits and drawbacks of taking on both at the same time.

Although the benefits of participating in research are numerous (Cole et al., 2022; Miulescu & Tacea, 2023), one of the biggest barriers in getting teachers to value and perceive themselves as researchers is workload and time (Bullo et al., 2021; Casey, 2013; Stenhouse, 1981; Tindowen et al., 2019). Those findings resonate with my experience both before and during the duoethnography. Beyond just the time and workload constraints, a perceived lack of relevance in the topics researchers choose, issues around the practicality of implementing theory-based suggestions, and cultivating best practices around the creation of communities of practice and research-practice partnerships (RPP), are barriers that persist (Broekkamp & van Hout-Wolters, 2007; Cain, 2015; Goodyear & Casey, 2015; Opstoel et al., 2024). Additionally, during my experience of participating in ethnographic research in which I was simultaneously the researcher and the subject of the research, I encountered some emotional well-being implications. While some research has indicated that this is not abnormal to experience, the researchers were participating in much more intense research topics around death, abuse, or previous addictions (Chatham-Carpenter, 2010; Woodby et al., 2011). In my case this is likely an indication of embracing the research process and reflecting deeply thus enabling me to understand and reflect upon my "psychological and emotional states before, during, and after the research experience" (Creswell, 2007, p.112). However, if we are asking practitioners to support the completion of research and help close that research gap between theory and practice (Broekkamp & van Hout-Wolters, 2007), this is something we might want to be aware of. After all, in my case these emotional challenges placed a strain on my working relationships with administrators and colleagues as I navigated the deeper realities of my circumstances.

As a deep thinker and reflective practitioner, I believe it is important to unpack the significance of what I was reflecting upon and the intent of Chapter 3 is to do just that. On one

hand I thoroughly embraced the role of practitioner researcher and enjoyed adding to the collective attempts to drive research about the culture of HPE forward. On the other, I was simultaneously being confronted with the barriers (time, workload, emotional stress) while teaching full time. How can we reconcile both? I will aim to unpack the benefits and drawbacks of participating in practitioner research, while still finding ways forward to participate and benefit from research-based practices to move teaching strategies forward. I hope this reflective piece opens up a dialogue about the way in which we conduct practitioner research. I believe as a field we need to review the climate and culture needed in schools, and consider whether a group like HPE educators, whose culture might already be setting them on track for burnout, is the best group to expect practitioner research from unless mitigating structures can be put in place to support their participation more effectively.

The Question(s)

With the previous reflections and considerations in mind, this thesis will explore two questions. First, through a duoethnography as co-researchers and participants (Chapter 2), we plan to ask the question, *"how does school and department culture impact the experiences of two female health and physical education (HPE) teachers, and how might these experiences lead to role confusion, advocacy fatigue, poor work-life balance, and/or burnout?"* Utilizing an ethnographic approach will allow us to investigate and describe the culture sharing practices of HPE teachers in both of our respective schools and departments (Creswell, 2007). Given that ethnographic approaches cultivate a space for the sharing of personal narratives, it will allow for the unique culture of our experiences as HPE teachers and leaders to be examined, and specific ways of knowing and understanding our group's inherent culture to come to light. By analysing and reflecting on our understanding of the social contexts we navigate in our daily lives, this will

give voice to unique and subjective experiences that can often be lost in quantitative data alone, and potentially allow us to challenge inequitable cultural narratives if they persist. Moreover, by exploring the culture as a partnership, we can emphasize the importance of honest and respectful dialogue between researchers and thus place an importance on the co-construction of knowledge and developing a shared understanding of a particular socio-cultural context (Sawyer & Norris, 2013). The sharing of our stories and the strengthening of our reflections through dialogue is the form of deriving knowledge that will be the underpinning of the conceptual framework in our duoethnography (Burleigh & Burm, 2022; Sawyer & Norris, 2013).

As mentioned above, while some literature on the individualized aspects of these topics can be reviewed, overall there is a lack of current research on the examination of HPE culture and its impacts on the day to day lives of HPE teachers. While storytelling and narrative sharing in the HPE field has been documented (Fisette, 2015; Lambert et al., 2022; Sparkes, 1996), and studies exist separately on burnout influenced by the dual role HPE teachers face (Iannucci et al., 2021; Richards et al., 2019; Richards & Templin, 2012), only one narrative style approach that we have found, a collective autoethnography by Harding-Kuriger and Gleddie (2022) comes close to exploring the collection of factors inherent in the HPE culture that might produce burnout in HPE specialists. Our proposed research plan would serve an important purpose in helping to fill this gap in the research.

The second question will be explored through an autoethnographic reflection on the use of duoethnography (Chapter 3). "*How can we respectfully consider the challenges around time, workload, and negative emotional outcomes, while still honouring the importance of practitioner generated research and reflection?"* Participating in practitioner research for the first time provides an immense opportunity to consider the benefits and drawbacks of doing so while

working a full time teaching schedule. Given that I value the learning that can come from being a reflective practitioner (Brookfield, 2017) and deep thinker, this is an opportune time to consider the cognitive dissonance that can be felt when one honours the call to contribute to practitioner research, but in doing so experiences significant barriers. Similar to the barriers mentioned above, time due to workload and emotional impacts were experienced when participating in a duoethnography. There is now an opportunity to wade through the messiness that presented itself and try to help the field find a way forward. While more recently there is some existing research that suggests the environment and structures that must be in place for teachers to participate in research, including time (Stenhouse, 1981), communities of mutual practice (Goodyear & Casey, 2015), and research practitioner partnerships (Opstoel et al., 2024), this personal account has the ability to add to the conversation around closing the gap between theory and practice (Broekkamp & van Hout-Wolters, 2007). Ideally, this reflective piece will contribute to the consideration of how we will move the field of HPE research forward, while not contributing to the burnout of its amazing practitioners.

Structure

All of the conversations surrounding the above challenges have inspired the two chapters that are central to this thesis. Through a duoethnography (Chapter 2) we will unpack our HPE cultures, and ultimately the circumstances that might contribute to the challenges around the dual role HPE educators are often expected to take on, the advocacy fatigue felt trying to legitimize our field of work, and the potential burnout from trying to balance it all. Next, through a reflective process (Chapter 3), I will explore the benefits and barriers of effectively participating in practitioner research to further develop the field of HPE.

The primary intent of Chapter 2 is to find resonations with current and future HPE specialists, and encourage reflective dialog on the topics. As well, by sharing our insights with stakeholders we will endeavour to create a level of understanding that acknowledges the value of HPE as a subject, the advocacy fatigue endured by its supporters (Lux & McCullick, 2011), and the demands of the dual role of teacher and coach (Camiré et al., 2016; Winchester et al., 2013). With this knowledge, we anticipate individuals in school and school board leadership positions will be better able to support HPE specialists facing these challenges, so that they are less likely to face burnout, fatigue, and turnover. Next, within our workplaces, we hope to encourage our colleagues and administrators to help shift the cultural narrative by emphasising that coaching extracurricular sports should be a whole school staff approach, and that hiring practices and course allocations should be solely centred on sound pedagogy and philosophies, as opposed to willingness and qualifications to coach. Lastly, within the literature on HPE specialists and burnout, we want our contribution to open up academic conversations on the HPE culture in its current form, and open up avenues for other HPE specialists to share their experiences through narrative.

In Chapter 3, I explore the benefits and barriers of using a duoethnographic approach as a form of culture based reflection in the teaching profession. First, I will aim to contribute to the HPE literature by taking up the call to participate in practitioner research, and then deeply reflect on my experience. Second, I will review the biggest barriers facing teachers who, like myself, are already reflective practitioners and are considering participating in research. Ideally, the personalized account of my experience can push the field to reflect on the structures that should be in place to create the ideal conditions for more practitioners to produce quality research. Third, especially considering the results of the duoethnography that will account for the

challenges currently present in the culture of HPE, intermediate approaches will be discussed that might support HPE practitioners in the meantime to still conduct research but in smaller, more manageable ways. Ultimately, in taking the time to reflect and consider my experience in practitioner research, I will have the opportunity to learn about, and from, my experience. Ideally this will lead to understanding myself and this profession in new ways and illuminate my current and future place in the field of HPE.

Chapter 2

Burnout as a Badge of Honour: A duoethnography on the culture of Health and Physical Education for two high school teachers

Co-Researchers/Participants:

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Purpose: In this study we share our experiences as two female health and physical education (HPE) teachers and analyze how those experiences have contributed to poor work/life balance, advocacy fatigue, and burnout. ***Methods:*** We collaborated through duoethnography to examine our dialogues, observations, artifact collection, the sharing of personal narratives, and discussion of individual experiences. ***Results:*** Dialogic inquiry and thematic analysis coding assisted us in revealing similarities and differences within our experiences as HPE teachers. Themes emerged around school and HPE culture, identity/role conflict, and ongoing marginalization. ***Discussion:*** After identifying factors contributing to fatigue and burnout, we began looking at PETE programming, administrator support, the Healthy School Champion (HSC) program and the Comprehensive School Health (JCSH, 2008) framework to strengthen support for current and future HPE teachers. We want to encourage current and future HPE teachers to reflect and question the HPE culture and dual role of teacher/coach (T/C) in their contexts.

Keywords: Teaching, coaching, burnout, role conflict, physical education

Introduction

Walking together down University Avenue, about to embark upon the start of our Masters of Education program specializing in health and physical education (HPE) at the University of Alberta, we (Jacqueline and Sarah) chatted and bonded over our roles within our athletic programs, coaching experiences, and sport backgrounds. Neither of us thought that in one year we would be challenging the established HPE cultural narratives that we have contributed to and discussed at length on those walks to class. As both of us are leaders in our respective HPE spaces, we find ourselves talking more about the things we do outside of the school day; teams we coach or support, success of our programs, or administrative tasks associated with running athletic programs, rather than pedagogy and instruction. These roles are central to the reasons we find an abundance of mutual respect and admiration between each other, and we also wear these responsibilities as badges of honour within our field. However, recently we have begun to consider that despite our personal efforts perhaps we are unknowingly discrediting ourselves and the discipline by continuing to contribute to a culture that contributes to burnout.

We are both female HPE teachers, coaches, and athletic directors (AD) in large secondary schools in Canada. Jacqueline teaches in the northern part of Winnipeg, Manitoba, is a member of the executive for her high school athletic conference and a mom and coach of her two young active boys. Sarah teaches in a school board north of Toronto, Ontario and is a regional department heads chair, school first aider, and a synchronized skating judge. We both became HPE teachers to make a difference in the lives of young people, and hopefully set them on a path to personal wellness through physical activity. Early in our teaching careers we both eagerly took on the role of the AD and additional extra curricular responsibilities. Having both grown up

playing a variety of sports, we value and recognize the life skills that can develop through physical activity and sporting pursuits as well.

As co-researchers in a duoethnography we asked the question, *"how does school and department culture impact the experiences of two female HPE teachers, and how might these experiences lead to role confusion, advocacy fatigue, poor work-life balance, and/or burnout?"* We feel that HPE culture perpetuates an impractical image of what it means to be an HPE specialist in a Canadian high school setting. We have grappled with finding a personal identity as HPE specialists, within an already existing HPE culture. We have blended many roles, responsibilities, and obligations within our contexts, thus creating an unsustainable workload. We became specialists because we have a passion for movement, an interest in health, and a desire to provide core experiences for students through physical activity inside and outside of the classroom. But, balancing the dual role of teacher/coach (T/C) (Camiré et al., 2016; Pitney et al., 2008; Saffici, 2015), advocacy fatigue (Kell et al., 2020; Pennington et al., 2023; Richards et al., 2018; Washburn et al., 2020), and general feelings of marginalization (Laureano et al., 2014) has led us to discover that we are often not equipped with adequate support and resources to do the job well. These deficits are leading to job dissatisfaction, apathy, and burnout (Brouwers, et al., 2011; Gillet et al., 2018; Gunn & McRae, 2021; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020; Wang et al., 2019). The intent of this duoethnography is to shed light on our school and HPE teacher culture, the actual job demands, and the fatigue felt trying to balance it all. We follow up with recommendations that can help support HPE teachers experiencing similar challenges.

Literature Review

The complexity of our day-to-day challenges and the feeling of being pulled in multiple directions is something we have talked about at length. The topics that come up most frequently

in our conversations include the challenges of balancing teaching duties versus coaching and athletic director duties, advocating for HPE needs, feelings of marginalization from that advocacy, and how all of it impacts our energy levels to spend time with our families and on personal interests. Although we certainly aren't the first researchers to consider the implications of some of the challenges we face, many other studies have explored only the singular aspects of our more complex realities. In the sections below, we will review literature that lends support to the more complicated culture that we often encounter in our day-to-day work lives.

The Dual Role of Teacher/Coach

The connection between role conflict and increased workload challenges for HPE teachers has been indicated in the literature as far back as when Sage (1987) indicated that this phenomenon was fairly consistent throughout the teacher/coach in his study. The issue is still present in HPE settings throughout much of the developed world (Alsalhe et al., 2021; Richards, 2015). From a Canadian perspective, managing time for learning more about the sport one volunteers in, managing time for family obligations, and managing administrative duties for both roles were noted as being some of the biggest challenges when taking on the dual role (Camiré et al., 2016; Winchester et al., 2013). It is not surprising given the fact that most teachers in Canada don't receive any relief from their teaching load when taking on coaching duties (Camiré et al., 2016). Moreover, research from Sulz et al. (2021) revealed that the increased stress and demands from the dual role, and the fact that there is no monetary compensation to offset the time spent, has led to many athletics programs relying more on help from community coaches to sustain the workload. The use of community coaches impacts the need for someone, most likely an athletic director, to oversee the fulfillment of school-based philosophies around athletics, which often differ from community sport approaches (Camiré, 2014; Lacroix et al., 2008). Interestingly,

O'Connor and MacDonald (2002) argued that because the roles of teacher and coach are so often intertwined, "…teachers' work is better studied through the lens of identity rather than role theory and that, in doing so, attention should be paid to the continuous process of social interaction and the context in which it is embedded" (O'Connor & MacDonald, 2002, p. 51). This idea that HPE teachers can't easily separate one role from the other is foundational to our paper.

Advocacy Fatigue, Marginalization, and Perceived Mattering

Advocacy fatigue from an equity lens can be defined as "the increased strain on emotional, physical, material, social, and wellness resources that comes from continued exposure to system inequities and inequalities and the need to advocate for the preservation and advancement of one's rights and autonomy" (Basas, 2015, p. 53). The term is often associated with cultural narratives impacting race or ability inequality, which this study does not exclusively explore, however, we feel the term articulates well our feelings of exhaustion from advocating for HPE issues. Given the energy that HPE teachers are noted as being expected to put into advocating for HPE (Kell et al., 2020; Pennington et al., 2023), and applying the concept of advocacy fatigue from a professional lens more so than a personal one, it is understandable that the need to be alert to moments that require advocacy at any point in a work week would negatively impact job satisfaction (Richards et al., 2019; Washburn et al., 2020). Many Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) instructors come to understand that the biggest way to advocate for quality physical education (QPE) supports is to demonstrate the benefits of QPE in action through progressive pedagogy in classrooms (Kell, et al., 2020; Richards, 2015). However, this push for advocacy can lead to a sense of marginalization, lack of job satisfaction, and stress/anxiety (Laureano et al., 2014). Moreover, when HPE teachers have interactions with

students, colleagues, and/or administrators which lead them to perceive that their efforts and/or discipline does not matter, known as perceived mattering, this enhances the feelings of marginalization and advocacy fatigue (Gaudreault et al., 2018; Richards et al., 2018). Interestingly, to combat these challenges and feelings, some research does suggest that factors like cultivating organizational support, engaging often with the parent community, and engaging with like-minded colleagues can increase one's sense of belonging and feelings of perceived mattering (Gaudreault et al., 2018; Laureano et al., 2014; Lux & McCullick, 2011; Mitchell & Bott, 2012; Walters et al., 2024). However, there is also research that suggests that over time, HPE teachers can suffer from a "washout effect whereby teachers who no longer feel as if they are making meaningful contributions to children's education may compromise their teaching practice" (Richards et al., 2018, p. 446). We suggest that this type of washout effect may also be a symptom of burnout for HPE teachers.

Teacher Burnout in HPE

The term burnout is most closely related to the impacts of mismanaged chronic workplace stress (World Health Organization, 2024). Indicators include feelings of energy exhaustion, negative or cynical feelings about ones job, and decreased productivity. There is much evidence to support that due to the increases in workload and expectation for unpaid work across the educational landscape (Clandinin et al., 2015; Johnston-Gibbins, 2014; Whiteley & Richard, 2012), which creates less control in the day to day operations of classrooms (Apple, 1987; Jeong & Luschei, 2018; Paradis et al., 2019; Stenhouse, 1981) the impact can be seen in the increasing job dissatisfaction and burnout of teachers (Brouwers, et al., 2011; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020). From an HPE specific lens, in a study about burnout and job satisfaction, PE teachers were specifically chosen "because they have unique characteristics, which differentiate

them from other school-based teachers (e.g., the class structure, the dual role of PE teachers to teach and to coach)" (Koustelios & Tsigilis, 2005, p. 192). Moreover, Brouwers et al. (2011) recognized the more unique challenges facing HPE teachers and identified that the burnout literature often excludes them. The study revealed that as HPE teachers progress in their career they are at a greater risk for burnout. Lack of energy and emotional exhaustion from time pressures experienced by HPE teachers is a major burnout concern. Evidence from the results of Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2020) also linked the lack of feeling valued and a lack of student engagement to increased cynicism of HPE teachers. The authors also found that less autonomy led to a decreased perception of self-accomplishment. Ultimately, both scenarios were found to lead to an increased likelihood to quit, and to less effective teaching overall.

Schaefer et al. (2014) used narrative inquiry to examine the stories of five teachers who left the teaching profession early. They found that burnout was masked in cover stories that included examples such as long commutes, being a parent, going to graduate school etc. Lingli (2017) utilized collective narrative practice to research burnout in new teachers. By implementing a protocol for participants to share and reflect on their collective challenges as kindergarten teachers, the results indicated that the interpersonal group narrative sharing actually helped form a collaborative peer community for accessing resources and sharing ways to cope. An indication that participating in the process of collective narrative research has the potential to act as a coping mechanism for teachers as well. While there are separate studies on HPE culture (Richards et al., 2013; Sirna et al., 2010), teacher burnout/attrition (Brouwers, et al., 2011; Gillet et al., 2018; Gunn & McRae., 2021; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020; Wang et al., 2019), the dual roles of HPE specialists (Camiré et al., 2016; Pitney et al., 2008; Saffici, 2015), and the

emotional fatigue associated with teaching (Kendrick, 2022), it is difficult to specifically find narrative research that thoroughly explores HPE culture and burnout.

Narrative Research and Duoethnography in HPE

The concept of learning through experience and reflection was first started by John Dewey within his theory of experiential learning (Dewey, 1938). Since then, utilizing one's personal narratives and life stories as qualitative research has increased (Sparkes & Smith, 2014, Ellis et al., 2011). As a result, more inclusive views of knowledge and meaning can be derived that have the ability to understand and challenge current cultural narratives (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). Moreover, through the tenets of dialogic inquiry, dialogue between individuals has the ability to become the "site of an archeological examination of the formation of our beliefs, values, and ways of knowing" (Sawyer & Norris, 2015, p. 1). In our context, a dialogic inquiry approach, through narrative research, helps to emphasize the importance of honest and respectful dialogue between researchers. It places an importance on the co-construction of knowledge and developing a shared understanding of a particular socio-cultural context (Sawyer & Norris, 2013).

Within HPE, a number of researchers have successfully utilized storytelling and narrative sharing to construct knowledge. Fisette (2015) and Sparkes (1996) shared narratives of being physical educators in the midst of debilitating injuries, opening up conversations about the preconceived physical identities placed on HPE teachers. Moreover, Lambert et al. (2022) shared their feminist insights (in the form of poems) on the rise of Joe Wick, a fitness influencer, as a model for PE during the COVID-19 pandemic. In a Canadian context, Gleddie and Schaefer (2014) used autobiographical narrative inquiry to explore how their past experiences shaped their teaching practices as PETE educators. However, only one narrative style approach, a collective

autoethnography by Harding-Kuriger and Gleddie (2022) explored some of the factors that lead to burnout in HPE specialists such as role identity and the emphasis of school sport culture over pedagogy and instruction. Their study found that there is an inherent obligation, either self-prescribed or culturally expected, that HPE specialists coach sports, and this can lead to a perceived role conflict trying to balance the expectations of both teaching and coaching, but also of family and personal obligations (Harding-Kuriger & Gleddie, 2022).

Our duoethnography will add to the literature on burnout in the HPE culture through the sharing of narratives, artifacts, and critical incidents within similar contexts. Moreover, by examining our identities within the HPE culture itself, this research can contribute not only to the potential causes of HPE teacher burnout in particular, but also explore the narratives that do and do not contribute to meaningful professional experiences. Furthermore, our conversations began with trying to define the purpose of an HPE teacher's job and the exhaustion we have felt advocating for the importance of HPE as a valued discipline amongst colleagues, administration, and students. Our research would serve an important purpose in adding specific narrative examples of how these challenges play out in the daily lives of HPE teachers, and connect broad scoping studies to the day to day experiences of PE teachers. Moreover, we have discovered that the interpretation of the HPE culture is blurry, and the conflicts between the roles of teacher and coach are a large contributing factor (Brouwers, et al., 2011; Harding-Kuriger & Gleddie 2022). These blurred lines are potentially embedded in our school and HPE cultures as many HPE specialists find that, "coaching skills are more valued and motivated than teaching" (Konukman et al., 2010, p. 21). What further complicates this, is that many HPE teachers enjoy both of the roles, but balancing both roles in addition to your personal life and wellness is unattainable. In our experiences we lose quality and certified HPE specialists or coaches because the demand to

sustain extracurriculars, strong advocacy, and good pedagogy is too challenging. On the flip side, we also know schools need to hire educators that are willing to coach in order to support students in the whole-child development (e.g. sports teams, drama, clubs, etc.) amongst all teachers within the building. Ultimately, our duoethnography has the potential to look at the entirety of the experiences we face, all the hats that we wear, and will allow us to examine how the full complement of our daily routines and interactions defines our own identities within the culture of HPE. It is our belief that looking at the complexity of this culture in HPE in a Canadian context has not been done before.

Context

Each of us are nearing 15 years of experience teaching high school HPE. Over those years we have both strived to find balance between the dual roles of T/C, and have advocated for HPE to be seen as a valued discipline. As teachers, we have continued to further our education through professional development, academic committees, and continued graduate education. Table 1 shares an overview of who we are, what we do, and where we do it.

Table 1

Comparative Overview of Duoethnography Research Participants

Comparable Variables	Participants	
	Sarah Succee	**Jacqueline McDonald**
Teaching Experience	2009 - Current	2009 - Current
Province	Ontario	Manitoba
HPE High School Offerings	Grade 9-12 HPE (mandatory one year only, usually grade 9)	Grade 9-12 HPE (mandatory 9-12)
School Demographics	2000 students (varied demographics) and 130 faculty	1500 students (varied demographics) and 120 faculty
Teaching Assignment Breakdown	H&PE 100% individual teaching	PE is 60% team teaching, 40% individual teaching HE is 100% individual teaching
Personal HPE Teaching Model	Teaching Games for Understanding Model	Sport Based Pedagogy
Athletic Director Experience	2017 - present (titled – not compensated)	2009 - present (titled – compensated 2023 onward)
School Coaching Needs	30 teams, 45+ coaches, all school staff members, all 7 HPE teachers (most specialists), and 2 non-HPE teachers (with HPE specialist) are coaches	40 teams, 60+ coaches, 15 on staff with 8 of them HPE specialists (rest are community members)
Department Head Information	Department Head 2017 – present (titled - compensated)	Department Head (2011-2016) (titled - not compensated)
Average Coaching Duties (average school year)	Coach (1-3 teams depending on need)	Coach (3 teams and teacher contact for 7 teams)
Additional Roles – including volunteer and committee participation	- Regional HPE Heads Chair (not compensated) - Volunteer CPR/First Aid person	- Past acting administrator (compensated) - Past guidance counsellor (compensated)

	- Health and Wellness in School Committee (past member) - Healthy School's Champion - Assessment and Evaluation Committee (past member) - Graduation Committee	- Executive council member for athletic conference (not compensated)

Methods

Theoretical Framework

Our theoretical framework is found within ethnography (Sparkes & Smith, 2014; Ellis et al., 2011). Essential to any ethnographic approach is the qualitative focus on investigating and describing the culture sharing practices of grouped individuals (Sparkes & Smith, 2014; Creswell, 2007). Ethnographic approaches that include the sharing of life stories or personal narratives, like autoethnography, have the ability to provide insights and increase the understanding of factors that influence a particular social culture (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). Ethnographic approaches in the rise of postmodernism and social justice, also allow for "other ways of knowing, and the growing emphasis on the power of research to change the world, create a space for the sharing of unique, subjective, and evocative stories of experience that contribute to our understanding of the social world and allow us to reflect on what could be different because of what we have learned" (Wall, 2006, p. 3). As such, the researcher's subjective influence on the research process is accepted and embraced in many ethnographic approaches, such as autoethnography (Sparkes & Smith, 2014; Ellis et al., 2011).

Methodology

Duoethnography as an ethnographic approach is related to critical ethnography (Casey et al., 2018). "The major components of a critical ethnography include a value-laden orientation, empowering people by giving them more authority, challenging the status quo, and addressing concerns about power and control" (Creswell, 2007, p.70). In a HPE context, autoethnography

has been successful in bringing to light a variety of issues through the sharing of stories and experiences. Whether it is Morimoto (2008), revealing the issues faced as a self-proclaimed "fat" phys-ed teacher, Harding-Kuriger and Gleddie (2022) unpacking the intersecting cultural expectations of mom, teacher and coach, or Brooks and DinanThompson (2015) examining teacher professionalism through the eyes of an elementary PE specialist, autoethnography as a methodology has the ability to teach about cultural understanding, which can lead to more effective socio-cultural interactions in the future (Casey et al., 2018). Similar to autoethnography, duoethnography aims to produce analytical and accessible texts that contribute to general awareness and social justice goals (Sawyer & Norris, 2013).

We used duoethnography to simultaneously co-collaborate and participate in examining the juxtaposition of multiple experiences and perspectives of the same socio-cultural phenomena (Burleigh & Burm, 2022). In our context, duoethnography through a dialogic inquiry approach helped us emphasize the importance of honest and respectful dialogue between researchers. This placed a significant emphasis on the co-construction of knowledge and development of a shared understanding of a particular socio-cultural context (Sawyer & Norris, 2013). As such, we used the sharing of our stories and reflections through dialog to derive a deeper understanding about our values and beliefs and critically examined how they fit into the HPE culture more broadly. Essentially, this methodology allowed us to subjectively explore our experiences and assumptions within the culture of HPE educators, and examine through dialog how we perceive this culture influencing ourselves and our social realities.

Data Collection

We began with ongoing conversations aimed at establishing mutual respect, vulnerability and trust (Casey, et al., 2018; Sawyer & Norris, 2013). We then proceeded to collect teacher-

generated data in relation to our experiences as female HPE high school specialists at similar points in our careers over the course of six months, from September 2023 to February 2024. We believe this amount of time will lead to sufficient data saturation as 6 months represents one full semester of high school, two of three full athletics seasons, and a number of significant school year events. However, given the thematic analysis approach we plan to embark on, we also recognize that saturation itself "is an interpretative judgement related to the purpose and goals of the analysis" (Braun & Clarke, 2021, p. 210). For us, data collection occurred across: (a) personal journals (shared with each other) that narrated the observations from our daily routines and interactions with others within our workplaces, (b) informal dialogue between us about our daily experiences (often then placed into the journals), and (c) a collection of artifacts (e.g. email exchanges, lesson plans and schedules). The data were then analyzed to examine our collective experiences in relation to the study's question, and to corroborate or disconfirm current theories. Specifically, we sought out evidence and/or experiences related to aspects of school and HPE culture that have contributed to feelings of burnout and advocacy fatigue, while also gathering evidence that highlighted the many roles we take on. Students and student work were not directly involved in the study, but they were reflected upon through the perspective of the co-researchers/educators experiences, often in our journals and conversations. The artifacts were gathered by the co-researchers, and any identifiers that could be harmful to the schools or colleagues reputation were removed. The artifacts were then copied and stored electronically on a password-protected computer.

Data Analysis

Once the data was collected, we followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six steps to thematic analysis of qualitative research; familiarizing, generating, searching, reviewing, defining, and

producing. We felt this was best as "thematic analysis explicitly allows for social as well as psychological interpretations of data" (Sparkes & Smith, 2014, p. 124). We also followed the revised recommendations around thematic analysis in Braun and Clark (2019) by ensuring we considered patterns of shared meaning when establishing our themes. Then, we individually began reading the collected data several times to gain familiarity. Next, we utilized thematic analysis coding to identify themes, and group related themes into categories (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). Coding is the process of coding data that emerges from main concepts and themes (Braun & Clarke, 2019). More specifically we recognize that our approach was somewhat inline with "codebook thematic analysis" (Braun & Clarke, 2019) because we developed a predefined set of categories based on prior theories, literature, and questions. However, we still feel that we were ultimately utilizing reflexive thematic analysis to ensure that the emergence of new themes and patterns that we may not have considered at the outset were included for analysis. We made a conscious effort to center the dialog between the participant practitioners in the development of themes and results, as it was important to ensure that the power and meaning of our stories remained at the forefront. From this, a secondary focus will be to create new questions and theories around the topic. The trustworthiness of the results was strengthened through ongoing dialogue, clarification of ideas, and growing mutual respect, as well as by peer feedback and guidance.

Results

Dialogic inquiry and thematic analysis assisted us in revealing similarities and differences within our experiences and resulted in four major themes: (a) personal identity formation, (b) role conflict, (c) subject marginalization and (d) burnout/fatigue. Further, upon review of related autoethnography and duoethnography publications, we found a wide variety of

formats for sharing results. Given we were not experiencing the same events, in the same place, at the same time, there was a need to sift through the data to effectively pull out common themes. Therefore, we chose to share our results as an overarching summary that includes some more specific data examples, like journal entries, to convey the results.

Theme 1: Personal Identity Formation

"Is there a correlation between aligning our worth as HPE educators with coaching & athletics because there is a clearer level of learning, growth and assessment within a team versus an HPE class?" - Jacqueline, Personal Journal Entry #8

We both admitted we are not the same people or teachers we were when we entered the profession. The steep learning curve that comes from all of the positions we have held has led to numerous changes in perspectives that have impacted a sense of who we are and what we stand for as leaders in HPE. Throughout our journaling, it was clear that we both put pressure on ourselves to rise to the challenges and increased expectations of taking on leadership roles. This included extra time and effort on creating team budgets and finding enough coaches. Both of us articulated that we feel obligated to take on volunteer roles like athletic director and coaching, because we both innately see how, when done properly, it impacts a positive school culture. For example, Jacqueline expressed "[I] feel obligated to help find a coach and take over the [JVB] tryouts" (Personal Journal Entry #3), when a coach had left for a position at another school and she helped with tryouts. Moreover, throughout the subtext of our experiences it is clear that we are constantly questioning and redefining the role of high school sport. We often dialogue about the challenges of finding balance between winning and participation/development of life skills through sport, both in the teams we coach and the philosophies we believe in when leading athletics. The thoughts around philosophies reach into the school community as well. For

example, after some challenging conversations with parents, Jacqueline wrote "Would parent contracts assist in holding back opinionated and angry parents?" (Personal Journal Entry #14). Interestingly, during times of increased stress from our leadership and volunteer positions, we remind ourselves that we want to make a difference and leave an impression on our school culture and community as if we needed to convince ourselves the extra stress is worthwhile or at the very least, justified.

Clearly, we are similar in our drive to impact school culture through various avenues, but we also uncovered that this drive comes with some negative impacts. The word "guilt" was used often throughout our journaling of events. Unfortunately, we carry a lot of guilt that our roles as leaders in our departments and extracurricular sports bleed into personal and family time, take away from our teaching experiences and prep time, and impact our ability to support other colleagues and coaches as much as we would like to. Sarah recalled having to say no to an opportunity to co-lead a committee at school that would support the New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP), something she would really have enjoyed doing. While she ultimately knew it was ok to say no, she felt guilty about letting down the person who had asked, but also guilty that she prioritized other activities that she doesn't get as much fulfillment from as this new opportunity could have. Jacqueline often felt achieving the balance of being a good mom, colleague, teacher and coach was unattainable. This led to feelings of guilt for not giving her best to a person or situation. Additionally, like Sarah, Jacqueline would spend her time on matters that didn't provide her the same fulfillment as others, such as finding a coach versus creating a health lesson or finding scorekeepers for an athletic event over spending time with her children.

Given the above realities of how we see ourselves within our roles, there is evidence that, we have adapted to our realities by becoming more solution-focused and finding ways to be

more efficient. We believe this is to help manage the challenges that we often face. For example, Jacqueline took some time this school year (2023-2024) to create coaching clinics for senior students in hopes of having them assist in coaching teams and/or return after graduation to coach. While on one hand, this type of change might be considered innovative, on the other, it may have more to do with self-preservation down the road. In Sarah's case, there were times when she felt it was just more efficient to continue to take things on herself rather than ask others for help or reduce her role in any of her leadership positions. This idea of "[If you] want it done right, do it yourself" was actually written in her journal (Sarah, Personal Journal Entry #2). It reflects the deep thought put into the philosophies behind certain decisions but also the lack of time she feels she has to mentor someone else, or at least someone who doesn't already subscribe to similar philosophies.

We both consider ourselves hard working, something we attribute to our upbringing and participation in competitive sports, but we do question whether some of the tendencies to put pressure on ourselves to take on so much literally and figuratively comes from a sense of needing to prove ourselves to overcome the inherent bias of "just being a girls gym teacher". For example, Sarah recalled the number of times people have assumed that Sarah's older male colleague was the department head when arriving at the department office. While it is humorous when people find out, it contributes to the idea that she might be inclined to work harder to overcome some gender biases that are clearly present in the landscape of her HPE culture. In Jacqueline's journal, she wondered if the draw to do both HPE and Athletics roles (especially coaching) allowed people to see us as making more relevant or successful contributions to our school community. This stream of thought is interesting when we are simultaneously quick to

advocate for HPE needs and respect. Are we part of the problem in HPE culture if we unconsciously think athletics is celebrated more than quality HPE programming?

Theme 2: Role conflict

> *"I feel like I am doing the bare minimum on some days to be an effective HPE teacher in my own classes - yet hosted a Department Meeting encouraging and advocating for us to revamp some assessment practices."* - Sarah, Personal Journal Entry #6
>
> *"I feel obligated to help find a coach and take over the tryouts, feel stressed that I have done no work for my masters or my HPE classes and have spent most of my energy and time on finding coaches or doing tryouts"* - Jacqueline, Personal Journal Entry #3

Using preparation, lunch, and after school time to tackle activities associated with coaching or athletic director duties left us feeling like our HPE preparation duties were often pushed to the side. For example, Jacqueline wrote, "I had spent my prep time getting the boys indoor soccer team a coach, and [submitting] their registration" (Personal Journal Entry #5), instead of completing a particular health lesson for a Grade 11 class. Similarly, Sarah wrote, "I feel like I am doing the bare minimum on some days to be an effective HPE teacher in my own classes" (Personal Journal Entry #6) pertaining to a week in which a variety of athletic budgeting tasks and home game teacher supervision had consumed a significant portion of her time. While it's not an expectation from our administrators to prioritize our volunteer athletics roles over being an effective teacher, the success of our athletic programs rely heavily on this commitment. Ultimately, we know the results of the time and effort put in are very much appreciated but it doesn't reduce the guilt we often described when putting athletics before teaching.

We both have considered whether our experiences are, for some reason, uniquely ours, but evidence that strengthens the trustworthiness of our findings is that others feel the same way.

In Sarah's journals, she often noted comments from other individuals about the dual role of head and AD and/or coach. A teacher new to this dual role in another school had reached out to Sarah about the struggles she was encountering balancing both roles and how so many of the requests from her principal were around athletics. She was simply looking for guidance from someone who had been tackling both roles but upon reflection, Sarah noted that "90% of her problems were about Athletics, not HPE" (Personal Journal Entry #6). She also noted a conversation with a teacher new to her HPE department about the challenges of balancing teaching and coaching expectations. "She essentially apologizes she hasn't 'coached anything yet' - but might try to help with softball in the spring" (Personal Journal Entry #13). Their conversation uncovered an inherent obligation to coach as a member of the HPE department, even though this teacher was contributing to other committees and activities throughout the building. Moreover, in a separate conversation with a colleague from another school a few months later, Sarah recalled the other teacher suggesting that, if you aren't coaching, you aren't getting the opportunity to teach HPE courses, even if you are an effective teacher. Interestingly, as an AD, Jacqueline noted she also feels stuck within this narrative within her own school and department by asking colleagues what are you going to coach or how can I help you become a coach? We think this epitomizes the concept that this dual role is inextricably linked to our schools' culture, even when evidence suggests it makes us less effective as teachers.

One of the differences highlighted in our journals was that Jacqueline spends a lot more time supporting community coaches who are not teachers. The time it takes to find and train coaches on the procedures of her school's programming and philosophies is time-consuming. One impact of having community coaches is the reality that they have not been trained as teachers and may not approach school matters with the same perspective that teachers would. In

Jacqueline's experiences, more time was spent counseling coaches, setting expectations, and dealing with disciplinary matters. On the other hand, Sarah's school rarely utilizes community coaches. However, concerning Sarah's dual role, she cited many experiences where her time was consumed preparing for Regional Heads meetings, or supporting new department heads and/or athletic directors. These responsibilities often divert her time and focus away from her contractual teaching obligations. This was articulated in a journal entry in which Sarah wrote:

> *This week I signed a grant application for a student who made the field hockey team but could not afford the team fee. The majority of the paperwork like this a) takes time, and b) usually requires us (AD or HPE Head) to provide signatures. It is the same for transfer applications if they want to play sports here or elsewhere. People note our significance by being the signatory on paper, and yet the AD role is still considered a volunteer role. And all the time that is needed to talk to parents, gather information, call other schools ADs, send in paperwork etc., why is no time given in the regular school day?*- Personal Journal Entry #4

Jacqueline also noted taking time away from classes to attend athletic-related conferences or meetings. We both note that the time away from students and classes ultimately induces feelings of guilt and concern. To cope with, and adapt to, the extra time spent on non-contractual aspects of the dual role, Jacqueline mentioned altering classroom plans and schedules in advance to accommodate specific busy times in coaching and athletic director duties.

Theme 3: Subject marginalization

Perceptions of marginalization seemed to fall into two categories. The first were incidents where athletics was perceived to be more important than HPE or overall school wellness, and the second were HPE matters not tackled in the same way that other (more respected) subject areas are. Oftentimes, this linked more personally to the way we perceived whether our roles as HPE teachers and subject heads mattered or were respected in the broader culture of our schools and school boards. The frequency with which we are pointing out and advocating against these marginalizations often left us frustrated, tired, and feeling advocacy fatigue.

HPE vs Athletics

> *"I also had the thought this week that I get an athletic director prep yet our curriculum leader does not get one (nor compensation). It perpetuates what we value within our discipline. I am SO grateful for the time and don't want it taken away, but would all curricular subjects be strengthened if we had hired people doing curricular work as well?"* - Jacqueline - Personal Journal Entry #6

As much as we believe that HPE is more important than athletics in schools, we certainly don't think the time and energy put into sports should be forgotten. But, throughout our evidence gathering, seemingly small moments indicated that many people may have a bias towards athletics without realizing it. Whether it be Sarah's vice principal (VP) noticing her name isn't on the fall coaching list and asking why (spending more time on her masters was the reason), or the head guidance counselor asking Sarah to highlight the sports teams they have at Grade 8 Information Night, but not the HPE programming philosophy, we perceive that athletics is often a priority in our schools. Sarah has not been afforded any significant extra prep time in either of those roles, and this is consistent with what she heard from other practitioners across her school board. While the change that allowed Jacqueline to be given more time came at the school level, we feel long-term change likely has to come from the board level, which, not surprisingly, may have the same bias of placing athletics before other wellness priorities. For example, when returning from COVID lockdowns, Sarah's school board prioritized a procedure for returning to extracurricular interschool athletics, and this was done under the guise of a commitment to the health and wellness of young people. A policy/ procedure to get school intramurals back on track was also proposed and committed to but to her knowledge was never completed. It was hard to see a school board prioritize activities that benefit students who most likely already play outside

of school hours while not prioritizing activities that would have impacted the wellness of more young people during the school day.

HPE vs Other Subjects

> *"Sarah you aren't likely to change the minds of those grade 9's. They already come in with what they feel they need to know." - This was an administrator's response to me chatting about the vaping lesson I had just taught in grade 9.* - Sarah, Personal Journal Entry # 7

Many of the ways in which we feel HPE is marginalized comes from comments or actions present in our day-to-day experiences. Examples gathered included HPE marks not being included in honour roll averages at Jacqueline's school, comments like "You failed gym? All you have to do is show up!", or when Sarah heard the quote above from an administrator about a vaping lesson she had just taught and the fact that some students are being caught in the bathrooms still doing it. It was meant to be a joke, but this wasn't the first time this person was quick to poke fun at HPE topics or teachers. Ultimately, we don't see these same issues in other subject areas. Another marginalization example was when substitute teachers who were hired to cover HPE classes were pulled for other academic subjects. Sarah's class was collapsed into the cafeteria with other classes during a teacher shortage day. Her substitute teacher was placed in an English class where students were asked to silently read and write journals. Her students were supposed to play volleyball. When this happened to Jacqueline, she was attending an athletics meeting, and a colleague had to take on an extra 25 students in addition to their own. In both cases it looked as if other subject areas were taking priority over HPE. Another example of marginalization occurred when a colleague in Sarah's department was asked if a student could miss HPE class to finish up work for their class. The request ended with, "Is this ok with you?"

Of course, it isn't, and puts us between a rock and a hard place of advocacy and collegiality. Would they have asked this of a different subject area teacher?

Lastly, marginalization can come through the practices and procedures that govern our school board policies. For example, Sarah was viewing a mandatory professional development module of ways to support and engage Multi-Language Learners but HPE was not listed in one of the resources they were asked to explore. Timetabling is also an area where marginalization can be felt. We have both needed to advocate for our classroom spaces (the gyms) not to be taken from us for school-wide events, or at the very least, selecting times of day with the least impact and not timetabling too many classes in the gym at once. Although Sarah feels she is making strides in this area, Jacqueline is still advocating for changes that will avoid class sizes of 60 students in the same space or administration/guidance adjusting assessments with little to no communication after the HPE teacher has inputted the mark. Ultimately, we feel that learning environment integrity is much more protected in other subjects.

Perceived Mattering

> *"Because it feels no one values HPE assessment anyways. Comments are always - you failed gym? How? Just show up, gym is easy. And it isn't included in honour roll averages. So I also don't really feel it is valued. Is that our fault? Is that the system's fault?"* - Jacqueline, Personal Journal Entry #8

Many of the above examples of marginalization link directly to the concept of perceived mattering. The above quote from Jacqueline's journal explores how this concept plays on our psyche over time. When a person believes in something so much (HPE or Athletics), and others often belittle their contributions, it is hard to maintain the energy to continue putting in the effort. It turns out in Sarah's case that the administration can really have an impact on this feeling of

perceived mattering. Sarah has had interactions with an administrator in which they have made jokes about HPE teachers' proficiency, digs about trying so hard to make a difference, or when encountering challenges with athletics or HPE matters, is quick to say, "well, you're the one that wanted this", completely missing an opportunity to be supportive and recognize we are doing good things for kids. Generally, Sarah tried not to let it bug her until she recalled a time when she "felt seen" by a VP who simply was able to articulate and appreciate all the things she takes on and how well she does them all. Sarah realized at that moment how amazing and rare it was to feel that way. She realized she didn't always feel like her contributions and hard work mattered, and in response to that, she simply put her head down to work even harder. Adding to these confusing messages is the perception that unions only recognize teachers' hard work in extracurriculars during bargaining, and yet in the years in between, they seem a lot less supportive of us working outside of our contractual obligations. The data also revealed the impact of marginalization isn't just the feeling of not mattering, but also a tendency to be on guard for it and jump to advocating for changes. We also discussed that we are less likely to give others the benefit of the doubt when we think our subject or efforts are being marginalized. This wasn't the case earlier in our careers, suggesting our experiences with marginalization have definitely shaped our identity.

Theme 4: Burnout/fatigue

> *"The stress of athletics is not worth the 80-minute prep every second day."* - Jacqueline, Personal Journal Entry #16
>
> *"I feel overwhelmed and have anxiety, even though I am accomplishing a ton every day. But I feel like I'm learning to feel numb to it and simply persist. That feeling of being*

back to "numbing is normal" has me sad today. But what could I give up? I feel like any option on the table would let someone down…" - Sarah, Personal Journal Entry #2

Throughout the journals words such as guilt, tired, stress/stressed, and even chaos were mentioned often when referring to our complex duties. Both of us are aware there are inherently "busy times", but when those times are met with marginalizations or role conflicts, we are both quick to wonder if all that we are putting ourselves through is really "worth it". While neither of us has given into this and adjusted our effort accordingly, we are aware of colleagues who have. Sarah was even quoted as saying, "Maybe if I cared less, I'd be less stressed" (Personal Journal Entry #2). While both of us still push through these moments, it was clear we are often on the precipice of burning out, approximately once a month. There is evidence that this impacted our personal and family relationships as well. Jacqueline noted the fatigue felt from the job affected her patience and energy at home. With two active children, she often wonders why her students and athletes get the best of her, and she has next to nothing left in the tank to be active with her boys. This is then coupled with guilt, which perpetuates the feelings of fatigue.

Throughout the data the sense of fatigue, anxiety, and stress was coupled with each of the above themes already explored. The journals revealed that in the weeks after entries that noted impacts from all of the themes already explored, we were more likely to express concerns in our personal lives, utilize words like stress, anxiety, or guilt, or even describe becoming sick. The entirety of the experiences seems to push us towards burnout. Moreover, our leadership roles naturally led to increased concerns about others. Our concern for our colleagues and department members, led to us putting in more time and work to reduce the stress, marginalization, and impacts of the dual-role on them. This can be seen in Sarah's quote above about the guilt of letting others down if she were to carve out more time for herself.

While our journals noted moments and sources of joy, they were not mentioned as often as stressful times and were positioned as ways in which joyful tasks help us to cope during busy times. The biggest fear for both of us is whether there will come a time when the joyful moments are so few and far between that we actually burn out completely.

Discussion

The results of this research indicate that some of our initial concerns around role conflict, marginalization, advocacy fatigue, burnout, and perceived mattering were consistent with our journals, artifacts, and shared dialogs. Even though these challenges were clearly articulated, it is important to recognize that in our data, we both stated our passion, care, and enjoyment for both our contractual and non-contractual obligations. Our discussion will explore the next steps to prolong the quality of life and teaching span of current and future HPE teachers by suggesting ways in which to continue to provide quality HPE programming and extracurriculars but not at the expense of teacher well-being. We will explore the roles of departments, administration, and the recommendations within the Comprehensive School Health (CSH) (JCSH, 2008) framework, including the role of the Healthy School Champion (HSC), to address subject validation, coaching retention, and the issues we uncovered around personal identity and role conflict. Reframing the above roles can strengthen support for current and future HPE teachers and will encourage them to individually reflect and question the HPE culture, the dual role of T/C in their contexts, as well as the broader societal issues that contribute to our challenges.

Utilizing the Healthy School Champion and Comprehensive School Health Approach

While we recognize some of our findings might be unique to our experiences, simply sharing our results with administration, staff, and readers of this paper could foster support and empathy between HPE teachers, colleagues, and administration. However, one suggestion to foster support for the dual role, while reducing marginalization and burnout, would be the implementation or continued development of the Healthy Schools Champion (HSC) role and Comprehensive School Health (CSH) framework (JCSH, 2008). Given our literature review and results indicated marginalization and role conflict had negative impacts on well-being and thus contributed to burnout in HPE leaders, presenting the impact of these results through the CSH framework could allow for sharing our findings in a constructive manner. CSH is a framework for schools to follow that shares a vision of focusing on the whole child. The CSH framework encourages all stakeholders (staff, parents, and community members) to be on the same page in creating a positive school culture for all students. Additionally, there are components that support the well-being of staff. Integral to the role of the HSC's is to follow the CSH model which promotes health and wellness in the school community by identifying where additional support is needed and leading others in achieving the school's target goals. The role of the HSC within the CSH framework would provide leadership in critically reflecting on the current school culture and look at ways to continue providing opportunities for students, without the expense of teachers' well-being. As many staff meetings and advocacy conversations can become problem focused, we feel having this research-based framework and focused leadership role is necessary to remain solution focused, guide the sharing of these results, and offer concrete next steps.

Our results suggest that due to marginalization and advocacy fatigue, our wellness is being challenged, and these frameworks were created to address both the social, emotional, mental, and physical aspects of the school for both staff and students. Administrative support is

an integral component of these frameworks, as is administrative support being a key factor in assisting with teacher retention and success (Brouwers et al., 2011; Mäkelä et al, 2014; Schaefer et al., 2014). We suggest that the administration can assist in adopting the model and identifying (additional) HSC's. Schools may be at different junctions with implementation of the CSH model, but given our results around burnout it will be essential that the position of HSC not be looked at as an additional role for a member of the HPE team. Creating a committee that includes members from a variety of subjects and roles in the school ensures a whole-school approach, which the model is founded on, and would limit the heaviness of school health and extracurriculars landing on the shoulders of HPE departments. Moreover, by including champions from other marginalized subjects it will support the idea of kinship and be building a "stronger corner" (Lux & McCullick, 2011, p. 10) within the school. Staff in other subjects might resonate with our results within their own contexts. If so, we are hopeful there would be more urgency to make changes to better the culture of the school as a whole. The inclusion of teachers from a variety of subject areas would reaffirm that we are not only viewing this from an HPE lens, but rather focusing on the holistic health of all staff and students within the school.

We also recognize that providing extracurricular activities and coaching are essential within the philosophies of the CSH (2008) framework, and that coach recruiting and retention is becoming increasingly challenging. As such, building capacity to sustain school sport will be essential to help prevent the bulk of the load landing on HPE teachers shoulders (Camiré et al., 2016; Saffici, 2015; Sulz et al. 2021). Konukman et al. (2010) surveyed 3062 teachers about what the most common barriers to the T/C dual role are; managing time, family obligations and administrative duties were identified. The suggestions they provided on coach retention included onsite daycare, coaching education, decreased teaching load adjustments, and monetary

compensation. Is there a place for these ideas in our own school systems? If so, perhaps more teachers (beyond HPE) would be inclined to volunteer their time to coach and the responsibility for holistic student health through extracurricular sports will be a whole faculty responsibility. The HSC role and CSH framework would again help lead these professional and potentially sensitive conversations as these concerns fall within the components of what a healthy school should look and feel like.

Physical Education Department Considerations

Given the variety of challenges we face, including the dual role, role conflict, and advocacy fatigue, it isn't surprising that we are concerned with burning out. The culture we find ourselves in lacks clarity and parameters in our job description as HPE teachers. This lack of clarity results in a lack of identity and leads to feelings of inadequacy in our day-to-day work lives. O'Connor and MacDonald (2002) define the roles of the HPE educators as "sports coach, physical education teacher, camp convenor, sports official, and student counsellor" (p. 37). Consistent with our experiences, the authors determined that there is a lack of strong identity in HPE educators and described how that contributes to value, esteem, and job satisfaction. This resonates with our results and feelings on the current cultural definition of our jobs and demonstrates that perhaps not much has changed in this description over 20 years. O'Connor and MacDonald (2002) also discussed that there is a greater public interest in the success of coaching rather than pedagogy and instruction in HPE. Given our results around HPE marginalization and its connection to the expectation that we are coaching, perhaps we have uncovered an unconscious bias within our established school cultures, in which many people including colleagues, administration, and even our own HPE department members, may not even realize that they still subscribe to ideas that put athletics before pedagogy (Alsalhe et al., 2021; Harding-

Kuriger & Gleddie, 2022; Konukman et al., 2010; Lacroix et al., 2008; Mellor et al., 2020; Pitney et al., 2008). Interestingly, a number of papers have discussed that novice HPE teachers are socialized into the belief that the dual role should be a part of their identity (Mellor et al, 2020; Mellor et al, 2021; Richards et al., 2014). These socializations are contextual and continue throughout the career. Most similarly to our results, Mellor et al. (2020) uncovered that the novice teacher in their case study experienced internal conflict when managing the time constraints doing both roles, while the veteran teacher experienced parent/community interactions that suggested athletics was more valued than teaching. Interestingly for us, we find ourselves in the middle of our careers still battling these concerns, both internally and interpersonally.

Adding a collective departmental effort to value teaching and professional development to push the innovation and assessment practices in the classroom forward, may enhance personal perceptions of mattering as well (Collier, 2011; Gaudreault et al., 2018). Extending this outward into the school so that HPE teachers can engage "in advocacy by verbally communicating the purpose and value of PE could reduce feelings of marginality and lead to increased perceived mattering" (Gaudreault et al., 2018, p. 588). While the bulk of the above suggestions could help to prevent the washout effect in our teaching (Richards et al., 2018), how do we commit to this while simultaneously supporting athletics, as our results indicated that we still want to do? The challenge still lies in the ability to have the time to do both well. Unfortunately, it seems that those within the HPE culture have learned to accept a lower quality of teaching due to coaching, and frequently will use coaching as the means to justify why we have not adequately prepared for classes. To address this issue, the best way forward might be to once again leverage the CHS framework and the HSC to help in expressing the challenges encountered when balancing the T/C role to administration and colleagues. Ideally, these conversations may assist in cultivating

empathy, enlisting new voices (both HPE and non-HPE subjects) to the HSC role, and effectively implementing (and sustaining) a more collaborative and holistic approach to addressing well-being concerns stemming from workload among staff. Success of the implementation can in part be measured by the rates of burnout among HPE members decreasing and more non-HPE teachers being involved in extracurricular sports.

The Role of Administration

Beyond the cultivation of renewed practices within HPE departments, administration (i.e. principals and assistant principals) could further support and make impactful changes surrounding subject legitimacy, coaching retention, and teacher well-being. We have both witnessed the role that our administrators can have in supporting us in our dual roles, but it is the ongoing support from outside of the department that would also assist with the issues we uncovered. Administrative support of the implementation of the HSC and CSH (JSCH, 2008) framework would help establish a school culture that values, and then acts upon, the importance of both the teaching and learning and the social and physical environment of the school, both pillars of the CSH framework.

Administration could also encourage HPE teachers to be part of direction setting and pedagogy conversations in staff meetings, leadership team meetings, and on PD days. Providing HPE department members with the opportunity to contribute more to the professional development/culture of the school (Gaudreault et al., 2018) might garner HPE more respect from colleagues, begin to break down barriers, and allow us a greater sense of accomplishment. This also would show to other colleagues the confidence that administration have in our pedagogical practices. However, the reality remains that this would be another addition to the multiple roles we already take on, and can't really be possible until the time constraints of the dual role are

considered (consider Sarah's example of not being able to support NTIP in her building). For example, Konukman et al., (2010) stated that "effectively utilizing the services of teacher-coaches without sacrificing the quality of their educational programmes" (p. 22) was an important outcome to work towards to support T/C's. We agree with this statement, and recognize that many sources note the importance of administrator support in any sustainable changes to the culture of a school (Gaudreault et al., 2018; Konukman et al., 2010; Skaalvik & Skaalvik 2020; Walters et al., 2024).

Lux and McCullock (2011) presented strategies and tactics used to legitimize HPE within a school community and culture. The concept of agency was employed and consisted of establishing deep connections with students/parents, securing planning time, teaching spaces, and injecting expertise into academic matters within the school (Lux & McCullock, 2011). The study suggests that these intentful practices assist HPE (and other marginalized subject area teachers) to legitimize their subjects. If the culture of many schools is to lump athletics into the roles of HPE teachers anyway, then adding dual role concerns to moments of agency could have the desired impact on finding support to do both well. In our case, the terms agency and advocacy could be interchangeable here and this aligns with our feelings on advocacy fatigue from our results as a contributing factor towards burnout. The issue here though is that if our current advocacy efforts (e.g. teaching and learning space) are still producing the feelings of needing to do more in order to legitimize our subject area of HPE, then adding more to advocate for might present challenges. Administrative assistance in providing agency to HPE teachers, supporting the HSC model and CSH framework in addition to providing teaching spaces, acknowledgment of the two roles would increase the likelihood of changes occurring. Perhaps

more research is needed on how it is best to go about advocating so that it increases the likelihood of impactful changes occurring.

Conclusion

From the beginning of our conversations, we insisted on looking for ways forward to address role conflict, feelings of marginalization, advocacy fatigue, and burnout. However, it is clear that the impacts of fatigue and potential burnout in our contexts can be pervasive and lead to a variety of concerns. Alsalhe et al. (2021) explored the rates and determinants of occupational burnout in HPE teachers through a systematic review of the literature and stated, "Teacher burnout can affect teaching goals and educational environment, which may contribute to severe problems not only at individual level, but also at organizational context" (p.11). We have come to the conclusion that in order for some ways forward to happen, such as support of extracurriculars, release time for teachers in the dual role, and reducing actions of marginalization, we are dependent upon others such as PETE programming, administration, colleagues, unions, and divisional policy makers. Up until now, when we have placed control for changes in the hands of others it often has not yielded the results we want, and therefore we continue to feel defeated. We will continue to share our results to those stakeholders, as they have the most influence in making changes to address the issues yielded in our results, however, we need to shift our focus into what it is we can control within our own actions, narratives, boundaries, and advocacy in order to decrease fatigue and burnout. Through this realization and research, we have created some advice on ways forward to address role conflict, marginalization, and burnout:

1) The social and physical component of the CSH framework prioritizes support of the school community in building connectedness (JCSH, 2008). Therefore, we

suggest having open and continual communication within departments about what personal and collective definitions of an HPE teacher look like and also the department's roles/responsibilities within coaching and athletics. Use those department-created “cultural philosophies” to establish the department's duty list of contractual and non-contractual obligations/tasks. Establish which members are willing to take on which non-contractual roles (coaching, fees, transportation, jersey’s, etc.). Include a member from the administration into the conversation to provide support where necessary, and simultaneously allow them to hear and see the blurred lines of roles we take on.

2) Challenge and change the narratives used within the HPE discipline. Commit to talking about pedagogy and learning as often or more than extracurriculars and coaching. Hold yourself and each other accountable to delivering quality HPE programming despite any continued negative feelings of perceived mattering.
3) Currently, the dual role of teacher/coach is exceptionally challenging to separate. Set and maintain boundaries on how much someone is willing to give within a year to extracurriculars. Consider including these boundaries in yearly goals established in the type of yearly conversation suggested in recommendation 1. Remove guilt and animosity against each other if they are not filling non-contractual responsibilities. Frequently refer back to the definitions of an HPE teacher as discussed, and in a positive way support each other in maintaining any boundaries that were collectively set.

4) Build a culture of volunteerism within the student body. Find ways to utilize students as volunteers within the athletic programming (scorekeepers, lunch time activities, coach training).
5) Utilize the HSC and CSH frameworks to continue to establish well-being for all as a core component of the school culture. Come back to the principles of these frameworks if things begin to feel unbalanced.

We are hopeful that these next steps will resonate with fellow HPE teachers and they will use them as a starting point for their own advocacy. We recognize that these changes will not occur overnight, but with purposeful small steps on these recommendations within our control we believe we can claim HPE as a valued discipline, reduce feelings of marginalization, and find better balance within the dual role of T/C. Furthermore, through this work we also recognized the importance of looking OUTSIDE of our school communities to the bigger picture. For example:

1) Quality PETE programming can also contribute to finding the solutions to the challenges uncovered. Openly discussing topics around subject advocacy, the dual role, and how role socialization occurs once on the job could provide novice teachers with the awareness to first navigate and then change HPE culture. Moreover, providing novice teachers with the tools and processes to navigate the challenges might allow them to also improve the culture as they progress in their careers.
2) Given that the two roles of teacher and coach are inherently linked, rather than advocating to diversify them, school boards are positioned to review overarching strategies that may foster the dual role to ensure teachers are supported equally in both

areas. For example, trialing programs that provide release time as the athletic director might mitigate the workload challenges that come from taking on that role.

3) Apple (1987; 2022) explored the history and impact of patriarchy and sexism within the education system and explained how educators (mostly women) had to fight for the respect of the teaching profession. Over time, the constant changing of curricular and occupational circumstances and the assumption that teachers will keep up with these changes outside the school day, has set the foundation for a culture of unpaid work. Now, unpaid work (e.g. prepping and marking at home, coaching, committee work) is so deeply rooted and accepted within the profession, educational contracts, and societal norms that changing any narratives at the highest levels is exceptionally challenging, further perpetuating our advocacy fatigue. Governments play an essential role in educational policy and should consider next steps for a future in which unpaid work is no longer the norm.

Given our results, it is important to recognize that the existing research is most reflective of looking at individual aspects of our current circumstances, rather than a sum of challenges we face. Moving forward we would encourage researchers in this field to consider the dynamic nature of our current cultures so that idea generation for solutions is more encompassing of the full array of issues. We are also hopeful future research, especially in a Canadian context, will explore some of our suggestions to validate or find further ways to address role conflict, marginalization, and burnout of HPE teachers and leaders. Ultimately, we became HPE teachers to enhance the physical, emotional, and mental well-being of students and we enjoy both the contractual and non-contractual aspects of our jobs to do this. There will be hard work ahead, but we aspire for a future in which we can do both areas justice, but not at the expense of our own

well-being.

Throughout the duoethnography there were also frequent reflections around workload concerns and the emotional impact of participating in practitioner research. This provided an immense opportunity to consider the benefits and drawbacks of leading research while working a full time teaching schedule in HPE. In Chapter 3, I will wade through the messiness that presented itself, examine the experience more closely, and consider how we can effectively leverage practitioner research to move the field of HPE forward, while not contributing to the burnout of its amazing practitioners.

Chapter 3

A Deep Thinkers Guide to Practitioner Research: Exploring the challenges and importance of practitioner generated research

My Introduction to being a Practitioner Researcher

Not long ago I embarked on an educational journey at the University of Alberta in the Masters of Education in Health and Physical Education program. After 12 years in the teaching profession, I was looking to deepen my thinking, broaden leadership opportunities in my future, and ultimately, hoping to meet like-minded individuals who have a passion for geeking out about all things Health and Physical Education (HPE) like I do. I loved my time and learning in the program, and was able to connect with like-minded individuals, who like me, were the very definition of reflective practitioners (Brookfield, 2017). As part of my thesis, I completed a duoethnographic study (Chapter 2) with Jaqueline MacDonald, another student in the program. Our collaborative work focused on the challenging culture of HPE in two Canadian high schools.

Unfortunately, that duoethnography forced me to recognize the magnitude of the challenging realities that HPE educators face as professionals. These include subject marginalization, advocacy fatigue, dual role teacher-coach challenges, and burnout. However, for the first time in my career, instead of facing these challenges one day at a time, I was reflecting on these realities all at once, while still managing a very busy work schedule. Ethnographic and narrative approaches to qualitative research require a significant amount of time and introspection, but the deep thinking and reflection I encountered during the research often made facing my reality as an HPE teacher very challenging or at the very least confusing. At the outset, I envisioned writing this follow up piece on all the benefits of teachers taking the time to utilize personal/professional research to support their professional development. Although I don't disagree with that statement, my mindset has shifted. Little did I realize when I

started this journey that I would be wondering, how much reflection is too much reflection? In this chapter I am going to explore and reflect on the question: *How can we respectfully consider the challenges around time, workload, and negative emotional outcomes, while still honouring the importance of practitioner generated research and reflection?*

I would say that I am the very definition of a reflective practitioner (Brookfield, 2017). I am always looking for ways to tweak and fortify my practices. I do this within the HPE subject as the department head in a high school as well as within the school board as a regional leader. I put so much time, energy, effort, and thinking into my HPE practices, and leadership position, but after reflecting on the results of the duoethnography I felt all that energy I had been expending didn't matter, or at the very least hadn't contributed to moving the HPE field toward being more respected as much as I previously thought it would. The results of the study weren't exactly surprising either. I embarked on the research knowing there were some serious challenges worth exploring around subject marginalization and the dual role of teacher-coach in HPE culture.

While the challenges left more questions than answers on a way forward, there were definitely some good "ah-ha" type moments. However, it felt hypocritical to ask other reflective practitioners like myself to potentially head down the same path I did, without first recognizing the challenges in doing so. As such, this chapter aims to explore the benefits of engaging in practitioner research, but also unpacks the reality of how little time teachers have to meaningfully engage in it. I will also explore the idea of being cautious when conducting certain types of research because of how you might be mentally or emotionally impacted by what you might find, or triggered by the things that you already knew. In my opinion, deep-thinking reflective practitioners are likely already in tune with certain realities in their classrooms and

schools, and despite the benefits to the deep thinking that practitioner research can provide, there are definitely challenges to consider as well.

Even with these issues, I do feel embarking on a research journey is reasonable to move one's practice forward. To honour the value of practitioner research, in the next number of pages I will: (a) provide an overview of the literature/background of practitioner research, (b) contemplate my own experience of practitioner research through critical reflection, and (c) provide some next steps based on my experience. More specifically I'll unpack and explore some scaffolded methods of action-based research, such as Teaching Sprints (Breakspear, 2021), to explore ways forward. For teachers who want to explore reflective inquiries around personal/professional experiences within their working environment, I'll review a tool that some may not consider to be authentic research, but it would still help in cultivating reflective practices. Ideally, I hope my reflections support teachers and the broader HPE field in knowing that engaging in both quantitative and qualitative research methods that examine the culture of your working environment or classroom has the opportunity to support your growth. Additionally, I hope I can support practitioners who feel bogged down by the lack of time and still encourage them to explore and embrace the potential messiness they might also be faced with when engaging in deep reflection.

Literature Review - So You Are Thinking About Moving from Practitioner to Practitioner Researcher?

The term "reflective practitioner" and the idea that teachers would serve themselves best to assume the role of researcher, was first popularized for professionals by Schön (1983). Since that time, research on the use of reflection in practice has found that effective teachers make adjustments and improvements to the way they teach when utilizing reflective practices

(Berghoff et al., 2011; Blintz & Dillard, 2007; Carracelas-Juncal et al., 2009). Additionally, educators who care about their effectiveness are more likely to embrace reflective practices (Giovannelli, 2003). Brookfield (2017) defines critical reflection as "quite simply, the sustained and intentional process of identifying and checking the accuracy and validity of our teaching assumptions" (p. 3). Furthermore, these assumptions can be looked at through four "lenses" (p.7), which include through a student's perspective, a colleague's perspective, personal experiences, and educational theory and research (Brookfield, 2017). Uncovering assumptions in critical ways usually takes the form of revealing where power structures are influential in schools or classrooms, and/or will uncover practices that are contradictory to the outcomes that practitioners' desire.

Moving beyond reflection, there is a body of research that suggests it would serve teachers best to not only be reflective in their practice, but also embark on actual practitioner research (Casey, 2013; Kemmis et al., 2014; Schön, 1983; Stenhouse, 1981). This is because teachers are uniquely situated in the research environment, can have a direct impact on the classroom, and also understand the intricacies of the job. Given the complexity of the modern Canadian classroom, utilizing reflective practice is noted in the literature as being an excellent mitigating process to help teachers succeed in these conditions (Cole et al., 2022; Miulescu & Tacea, 2023). Currently across Canada, educators are tasked with teaching 21st-century skills, providing individualized opportunities, scaffolding feedback, maximizing skills associated with the development of technology, and considering the interests and motivations of their students when creating learning opportunities (Butville et al., 2021; Miulescu & Tacea, 2023). However, to hone and share the best practices they have carved out when navigating the above considerations, teachers need to be part of the decisions on what to research. When they are not,

practitioner research may feel contrived and inauthentic. Having limited autonomy as a research practitioner is comparable to attending professional development sessions that feel top-down and out of touch with the realities of classrooms. Conversely, professional development practices that focus on allowing teachers to find autonomy, voice, and agency in their professional learning, allows teachers to effectively make stronger links between theory and practice (Casey, 2013; Schnellert & Butler, 2021). This in turn allows them to apply their learning more specifically in their contexts. Effective professional development strategies parallel effective research practitioner strategies.

Although research is essential to quality teaching, one of the biggest barriers for teachers to value and perceive themselves as researchers is workload and time (Bullo et al., 2021; Casey, 2013; Kutlay, 2013; Stenhouse, 1981; Tindowen et al., 2019). Findings in a study by Aguilar-de Borja (2018) showed that while teachers felt completing action research was positive for their professional development and led to increased outcomes for students, ultimately the time spent on the research was a huge hindrance for teachers to consider doing it again or more often. For many, the daily grind of being a teacher, and the added layers of extracurricular and volunteer positions many take on, barely leaves time for personal and familial wellness (Clandinin et al., 2015; Harding-Kuriger & Gleddie 2022; Johnston-Gibbins, 2014; Whiteley & Richard, 2012). Moreover, the adequate development of communities of practice, where groups of teachers can work together towards similar goals and support the research practitioner process, is essential for the longevity of changes in practice that may occur from completing research (Goodyear & Casey, 2015). Having systems in place that provide teachers with the time to establish and maintain practitioner-research communities in their schools is simply not something often encountered.

Beyond just the time and workload constraints that hinder the ability for teachers to engage with research, there is a gap (Broekkamp & van Hout-Wolters, 2007) between what research is produced versus what is used. This can be attributed to a variety of concerns such as: a perceived lack of relevance in the topics researchers choose and issues around the practicality of implementing theory-based suggestions, including a lack of concrete suggestions to changes in best practices that will directly help practitioners (Broekkamp & van Hout-Wolters, 2007; Cain, 2015). More recently some scholars have suggested that the above challenges can be overcome by establishing a more collaborative approach, called research-practice partnerships (RPP), between researchers and teachers (McGeown et al., 2023; Newman & Leggett, 2018; Opstoel et al., 2024). The aim of these partnerships is to bridge the gap between theory (researcher expertise) and practice (teacher expertise) during the research process itself. The benefit of partnerships like these is that it increases teacher efficacy and belonging, as well as the chances that the research remains connected to practices that teachers will resonate with (Cooper et al., 2021; McGeown et al., 2023; Newman & Leggett, 2018; Ross & Bruce, 2012). However, the challenge here is that many teachers do not have the scholarly background to conduct research on their own nor the access to experienced researchers. Although these feelings are valid, some research suggests that studies conducted by teachers yield better participant (student) feedback. Smith et al. (2021) completed a study about teacher versus researcher administered student affirmation exercises (caring to get to know the student better), which concluded that the data extracted from students was more abundant when collected by teachers compared to when researchers were the main point of interactions with students. Students also felt more cared for when the research was conducted by their teachers. In this way, it can be seen that a benefit of being part of the process is that student generated data might be more accurate. However, one

challenge is that when compared to academic research, teacher generated research is noted as rarely moving beyond informal qualitative reflections on best practices and is noted as missing out on opportunities for broader implications in different contexts, populations, or places (Admiraal et al., 2016). Clearly, teachers have important knowledge essential to the research process, but without more learning or support on how to conduct research in the first place, opportunities to have greater impact may be missed.

Participating in ethnographic research in which the researcher is also simultaneously the subject, can have some emotional wellness implications due to the vulnerability asked of its participants (Steadman, 2023). While some studies have indicated that this is not abnormal to experience, the researchers impacted are mostly researching topics around death or dying (Six, 2020; Woodby et al., 2011), or are conducting autoethnographic research about topics such as anorexia that can be extremely triggering (Chatham-Carpenter, 2010), rather than teaching or education. While teaching itself can have emotional implications (Kendrick, 2022), there is very little educational research that has looked at the impact of (auto)ethnography on the teachers who are conducting it. However, from a validity perspective, when done properly, autoethnography "needs to have heightened self-awareness in the research process and create personal and social transformation" (Creswell, 2007, p.112). Furthermore, "This "high-quality awareness" enables the researcher to understand his or her psychological and emotional states before, during, and after the research experience" (Creswell, 2007, p.112). Therefore, when an ethnographer embraces the research process for what it is and the research speaks to the vulnerability of the human experience it is more widely accepted as a methodology in the literature (Steadman, 2023). This is likely an indication that individuals who are truly able to immerse themselves in

their experiences may encounter mental and emotional wellness challenges similar to my participation in practitioner research.

Reflecting On My Experience as a Researcher-Practitioner

As a reflective practitioner, I will unpack the impact of participating in a duoethnography in the following ways. First, I'll explore the immediate challenges I faced by truly immersing myself in the research. Second, I'll explore my learning around whether or not I felt the process/ benefits were worth experiencing the challenges. Third, I'll dive into whether I feel I came out with any deeper understanding of both my circumstances and the importance/efficacy of practitioner research.

Challenges

As a proud HPE teacher and department leader, I already knew the feelings of marginalization and the impacts of burnout from the dual-role of teacher-coach (Harding-Kuriger & Gleddie, 2022) were present in my day to day. It was what made me utilize duoethnography as a methodology in the first place. At the outset of the research, I figured I would just be putting my thoughts down into journals, gathering some other pieces of evidence, and continuing to dialog with someone who was experiencing similar things. Ultimately, it wasn't until the results were being coded that I really came face to face with the abundance of evidence all at once. Unfortunately, that evidence affected me negatively and resulted in sad, sometimes angry, feelings; overall, I felt jaded that this had been my work environment for 13 years, and only now did I truly look at the weight of the sum of my experiences. Add to this the fact that someone a plane ride away in another province was also experiencing these challenges, it left me re-considering the profession, but specifically the HPE specialists around the country that would likely be facing the same bleak realities.

In the weeks that followed the coding experience, I found it difficult not to analyse and pick apart events happening in my work environment. As a result, I often felt a strain on my professional relationships with administrators and colleagues. I was hyper focused on advocating for change and ensuring rigour was an expectation throughout my department. I would leave work everyday thinking I hadn't done enough, or others needed to do more to somehow fix things overnight. Not only was this unrealistic, but I was also putting considerable pressure on myself to look for ways to change my circumstances. The mental toll it was taking was only hindered further by the busy schedule of extracurriculars and mentally taxing Masters work that I was also balancing.

Worthwhile?

For the most part, my first major contribution to academic research was worth the challenges. The goal was to build knowledge through emotional reflection (Ellis et al., 2011), and I do believe that was accomplished. Ellis et al., (2011) wrote that in an autoethnography "validity means that a work seeks verisimilitude; it evokes in readers a feeling that the experience described is lifelike, believable, and possible, a feeling that what has been represented could be true" (p. 282). Despite the challenges, I do take some solace in knowing my feelings were likely a product of having done the research process correctly because from a validity perspective, vulnerability is needed to effectively engage in a thick description of the culture of the subject being researched (Creswell, 2007). Similar to my experience, it is not uncommon that there can be a mental impact of conducting research which can make researchers feel emotionally vulnerable (Bashir, 2020; Jafari et al., 2013; Micanovic et al., 2020). There are also some researchers that have noted their worry around simply being vulnerable in their writing and

diverging from traditional takes on what research should sound like or what professionalism should look like (Jafari et al., 2013; Micanovic et al., 2020).

Linking this back to my own experiences, I do have concerns that writing this follow-up in a way that conveys my vulnerability to re-experiencing my own lived story, could have some academics questioning my fit for future academic research pursuits. Moreover, I am also considering that if teacher/practitioner based (auto)ethnographic research has the potential to demand emotional vulnerability (as it did for me), it might be a risk to ask for this commitment from HPE educators, a group of individuals already facing burnout (Brouwers, et al., 2011; Gillet et al., 2018; Gunn & McRae, 2021; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2020; Wang et al., 2019). While the actual occurrence of emotional vulnerability can be difficult to predict (Downey et al, 2007), I'd recommend it should definitely be a consideration for deep thinking reflective practitioners looking to take on a narrative style research approach that connects deeply to their practice.

Learnings

Given the weight felt while deeply immersing myself and reflecting on the challenges I was facing in the HPE culture, I became more conscious of how I might go about completing this type of research again in my future. First, I'd need to make a plan to reduce my voluntary roles at work to allow for more time to not only complete the research but also process its implications. This revelation is somewhat ironic given that the impact of the voluntary roles I was taking on were part of the exploration through duoethnography in the first place. It would not be easy, but one solution might be garnering support from administrators and colleagues to find other volunteers to take over some of my roles. By leveraging the learning from research that could support school improvement, others may help me in finding ways to carve out time to complete research. This would also allow me to feel that by focusing more of my energy on research, I

wouldn't be letting anyone down, especially the students. I also believe that this piece of learning reiterates the need for teachers to be given both the time and support to engage in research in a meaningful way that doesn't add more to their overflowing plates (Clandinin et al., 2015; Stenhouse, 1981; Tindowen et al., 2019).

Second, I did find that being part of a community of practice in my Masters cohort, and having a supportive partner in the duoethnography was essential to my success and ability to overcome the challenges. Similar to the structure of a RPP (Newman & Leggett, 2018; Opstoel et al., 2024), I also think that having my professors and mentors from the University of Alberta was essential when I had questions about ensuring the process was scientifically appropriate. Establishing a community of practice around practitioner research and finding support through a RPP is where I feel the literature is accurately echoed in my experiences. Having said this, we still need to consider that communities of practice and RPP's are only part of a broader solution to bring more teachers into research. A recent study that explored a co-research approach for implementing learning changes within secondary music students concluded, "teachers should be provided with increased support, encouragement and time to dedicate towards research activity, where conflicting pressures and priorities could be alleviated, for a co-research approach to truly flourish" (Mariguddi, 2021, p. 97). Until we can effectively manage the culture of teachers' work, we may continue to miss out on the collective benefits of practitioner research.

Next Steps, Ideas, and Suggestions for Ways Forward

When I consider the kinds of people who seek out scholarly research and opinion articles on education, much like this one, I believe they are seeking out these sources because they are likely already reflective thinkers and practitioners. They may also be the type of practitioners who would be more willing to participate in research on their own or part of a RPP, but only *if*

they had the proper support. Fundamentally, I believe that we need to continue to bridge the research gap that exists between teachers and researchers, and we need to push forward to produce meaningful work that more adequately brings theory and practice together for the benefit of the students in our classrooms. Ultimately, however, teacher workload and time are still major barriers. To overcome these barriers, something has to change in teachers' daily timetables to free up the time for them to engage in the work in authentic ways (Mariguddi, 2021). How we get relevant stakeholders, such as administrators, school boards, students and parents, to see that this would be time (and money) well spent, is likely the bigger question.

Perhaps one solution is for veteran researchers to partner with teachers in RPP's to alleviate some of the challenges of workload and serve as a sounding board if/when the vulnerability of the process becomes overwhelming or the scientific process presents challenges. In my area, for example, the Physical and Health Education Canada Research Council (Role of the Research Council, 2024) whose mandate is to advance knowledge in HPE through research and facilitate connections, might have the scope to pilot a program that more effectively connects researchers to local teachers looking to engage in practitioner research. As a guide, Sjölund et al., (2022) mapped and identified the different roles that researchers and teacher practitioners can take when they work together, and felt that the results of their review could be used to help form collaborative partnerships that support the circumstances of the teacher. Not only could this help teachers move more confidently into the field of practitioner generated research, but it may also inadvertently provide opportunities for more research about the ways practitioner researchers might process their emotions when it comes to the challenges they face in their classrooms and workplaces.

Based on the challenges I was exposed to when participating in the duoethnography, as a deep thinker and feeler, facing the challenges one day at a time in smaller, more manageable chunks would have helped in mitigating the wellness challenges. To do this, utilizing an RPP may have been able to alleviate some of the emotional toll from reviewing and coding the results. While partnerships like these between researchers and practitioners are beginning to close the gap, realistically it isn't likely that the combined concerns around the emotional toll (of some types) of research, and time/workload/burnout are to be addressed and overcome within public education overnight. That is likely a much longer struggle that I would encourage the research field to continue to seek answers to so that teachers like myself will not shy away from ethnography as a methodology for concerns around the emotional toll it has the potential to evoke. In the meantime, when conducting practitioner research, I would encourage teachers to limit their volunteer extracurricular roles, consider completing it with other colleagues, and/or be sure to have a support system in place if embarking on self-reflective forms of research.

For practitioners that would appreciate the opportunity to complete research/reflection that is scaffolded and time conscious, there are some other paths worth considering. For example, *Teaching Sprints* (Breakspear, 2021) is founded on the concept that teachers do not have a lot of time to conduct research that is directly focused on improving their practice, so ideas are brainstormed in teams, small changes implemented, and then group feedback and reflection occurs all within a 6-8 week cycle. It is felt that "these little evidence-informed changes can add up to significant improvement over time" (Breakspear, 2021, p.5). What's more, these *Sprints* are designed to be completely collaborative, are driven by the needs teachers see in their current practice, and are considerably adaptable for a variety of circumstances. While the original idea for "sprints" came from the business world, this guiding book utilizes scholarly

research on educational best practices and outcomes throughout the process to anchor the book in sound pedagogical research practices.

As well, if a teacher is looking to explore and learn from more qualitative introspective research on the cultural experiences that have shaped your personal or professional self, Leesa Renée Hall's "Inner Field Trip" might be a place to start (2020). Her process was designed for individuals who often care and process deeply, especially about social justice. The transformative process is about finding and understanding your "inner oppressor" (What is Inner Field Trip?, para. 2) and confronting any biases that you might carry with you. The process can be accomplished by completing an individual workbook (for 30 days), joining an online class/challenge, or joining an online community. While this process is most definitely geared toward a personal experience rather than a professional one, if used with the workplace in mind, abundant learning and reflection are likely still possible. Moreover, it is meant to be a 30 day challenge of reflection, and might be something a practitioner can add to their summer reading list.

Conclusion

Based on my experiences, there exists a dichotomy between the efficacy of practitioner research and its demands. While the inclusion of more practitioner research into the literature will be essential to closing the gap between theory and practice, the current workload of teachers needs to be a major consideration in the process. Given this current workload and the possibility for practitioner research to have an emotional toll, finding solutions for teachers to manage their contractual obligations, volunteer roles, and practitioner research is an important next step. Moving forward, it is important for educators to stay engaged in the research process whether it be through self-driven approaches, action research, within an RPP, or through modified means

like the methods suggested above. However, the biggest concern with quick one-and-done approaches is the concern that the learning and changes in practice may not stick for the long term (Goodyear & Casey, 2015). This is why I'd also recommend that teachers not go in alone on these pursuits and focus on creating communities of practice in their schools or departments where like-minded individuals can support each other throughout the process.

Finally, I hope that this chapter has provided some points of consideration that teachers can ponder before they choose the path that is right for them. I believe in the power of knowledge and its ability to improve our practice. Those who know better, can do better. While my reflections may lead me to a different path, the next time I want to contemplate the effectiveness of my practice or analyse the culture of my school, department, or classroom, I will not shy away from the opportunities practitioner research provides. However, I will take some time to consider how best to reach the answers I am seeking while continuing to consider how others may benefit from coming along on the journey with me.

Chapter 4 - Conclusion

Two questions were explored across the thesis. First of all, the culture of HPE within two high schools in Canada was featured through a duoethnography by asking the question: *"how does school and department culture impact the experiences of two female health and physical education (HPE) teachers, and how might these experiences lead to role confusion, advocacy fatigue, poor work-life balance, and/or burnout?"* Next, stemming from the impact of completing Chapter 2, I then considered: *"how can we respectfully consider the challenges around time, workload, and negative emotional outcomes, while still honouring the importance of practitioner generated research and reflection?"* The findings of both chapters have clear implications for HPE teachers and leaders, both within schools and the broader field of education.

The culture of HPE in the schools that we explored through the duoethnography revealed that moments of subject marginalization, confusing messages around the dual role of teacher/coach, and advocacy fatigue, are contributing factors in the lack of a clear identity formation as well as the burnout of HPE specialists. Over a six month period, through the exploration of journal entries, artifacts, emails and correspondence between two HPE teachers and department leaders, it was clear that while our experiences were not identical, we both faced barriers in our workplaces that led us to question our place as HPE educators in our schools. These feelings of marginalization not only of our subject, but also our contributions to our broader school culture, impacted identity formation and contributed to a blurring of responsibilities of the many roles that we take on. Evidence in the data also indicated that we were often on the precipice of burnout likely from the combination of the many roles that we take on. The expectations and demands placed on our jobs, both real and perceived, via the

culture within our schools and departments ultimately contributed to role confusion, poor work-life balance, and general burnout. Moving forward, it will be hard to separate the dual role that HPE teachers often embrace, and to a certain extent enjoy, but pragmatic solutions that support teachers will be essential. Solutions can be found not only in the conscious and systematic review of these overarching themes by HPE teachers and departments themselves, but the roles of various stakeholders including administrators, PETE programs, and even government agencies should be considered in finding meaningful solutions.

Much of the existing research on the factors we explored, such as the dual role, subject marginalization, perceived mattering, and burnout in teaching, had mostly been researched individually without considering the cumulative impact of these factors on HPE educators. The combination of how these factors manifest in HPE culture was an important consideration in the design of the research, and for this reason is an important contribution to the field as a whole. While for us the results of the duoethnography were not exactly surprising, it does shed light on the ways in which HPE educators navigate, internalize, and adapt to their circumstances on a daily basis, which also lends a more personalized voice to the current body of research. Moreover, the fact that the research was completed as a duoethnography in which both participants not only teach in different school boards, but also different provinces, provides an interesting perspective when considering the potential to apply these findings more broadly, potentially across the country. Most importantly, this research is about giving voice to the HPE educators who attend their workplaces daily, do amazing things in their classrooms for students, and often end up being the backbone of extracurricular activities in their schools. It is for them that the next step in this research should aim to strategically implement changes, monitor the

impact, and provide both theoretical and practical approaches to alleviate some of the more concerning results discovered. Specific suggestions for next steps will be discussed below.

The duoethnographic findings ultimately led to some moments of introspection and learning, as completing the duoethnography was my first time participating in practitioner research. It is important that practitioners like myself contribute to the meaningful research in the field of HPE as it has the ability to close the gap between theories produced and practices implemented. However, throughout the process it became clear that the time and amount of work teachers put in on a regular basis can make it difficult to commit to being a research practitioner and to produce research that will be accessible to a larger audience. Exploring ways to decrease teacher workload so they may participate more meaningfully in research, as well as exploring RPP's (McGeown et al., 2023) are considerations that might support teachers in unlocking their knowledge and leadership in the research process. One surprising result of participating in the duoethnography was that it impacted me much more deeply than anticipated. Although not uncommon in (auto)ethnographic research methodologies, I was definitely impacted mentally and emotionally by examining the sum of my experiences within the HPE culture. That overload also contributed to challenges at work which ironically linked back to the challenges of functioning within the culture of HPE at my school. Seeking out opportunities for RPP's, carving out more time for impact and reflection, and/or considering smaller more scaffolded approaches were some solutions considered.

It is my hope that Chapter 3, "A Deep Thinkers Guide to Practitioner Research" will support teachers in navigating some of the key considerations when deciding to embark on practitioner research. The goal of my open and honest personal account is not to deter teachers from participating but rather explain the importance and commitment required to embark on

practitioner research. The chapter highlights that dedicated practitioners already recognize that the exploration and sharing of best practices is essential to the education field as a whole, but that supporting practitioner wellness before, during, and after the process needs to be a consideration. Since HPE teachers who seek out or participate in educational research are also more likely to be the same practitioners who are invested in reflective practice, they are already putting a large amount of time and energy into their classroom practices and school extracurriculars. Likely, this is the same target audience for increased participation in practitioner research. So, it is essential that if these teachers are to become partners in research, they must believe it will benefit their overall practice, and that they would have autonomy in both what is being researched and how it is done. I believe that my honest account of my experience of practitioner research will allow teachers who are considering it to both be more prepared and also engage more effectively.

As with all research, there are some limitations to consider. While there is research to suggest that HPE practitioners in elementary spaces have similar experiences within the culture of HPE in their settings, the results of the duoethnography are likely only representative of high school settings. Also, autoethnography and duoethnography methodologies limit the scope of the research to only one or two individuals. While some of this concern is mitigated given the geographical and circumstantial differences between the subjects of the duoethnography, it does limit the transferability and generalizability of the results to larger populations. Having said that, it is important to remember that the purpose of duoethnography is not to be generalizable but rather to offer a more in-depth and contextual account of individual experiences to help us understand the diverse perspectives possible within a culture. Lastly, the issues I encountered around time and workload when participating in practitioner research, require some clarification. I joined the Master of Education program understanding there would be an increased workload.

While I couldn't have anticipated the extent of the emotional challenges that stemmed from completing the duoethnography, I did willingly and excitedly embark on the experience. Others like me who complete practitioner research may be more successful in carving out the time and mental space needed to manage all of the challenges of balancing work, school, and personal endeavours. For example, while my duoethnography partner (Jacqueline) would agree that there were challenges from a time and workload perspective, she did not experience the same emotional implications that I did. In contrast to my experience, she has a renewed sense of purpose and clarity on her next steps as a leader in HPE, while I am still unpacking the impact and next steps of mine.

Moving forward, I believe there are some opportunities to explore new research in ways that will produce practical solutions for teachers, especially ones that recognize the time constraints due to the current workload that teachers face. As discussed throughout Chapters 2 and 3, a lot of research has been conducted that confirms the experiences of HPE teachers (marginalization, dual role, burnout) and the benefits of practitioner research, however little research has been conducted on the efficacy of actual practical solutions. Next steps might include exploring the implementation of new strategies or policies that can be accomplished on a small scale (within an HPE department), or larger scale (within a school board), that will lead to more time being available for HPE educators to coach, plan, conduct research, or in general balance all that they take on. Moreover, reviewing the strategies and philosophies that can support administrators in fostering a culture and community of practice that carves out time for implementing collaborative practitioner research would benefit the educational field as a whole. Lastly, reviewing the current body of research for examples in which working teachers have successfully completed practitioner research or participated in RPP's, implementing changes,

and then tracking the changes as part of a case study, might allow the field to identify the most ideal conditions that support teachers' participation. I do believe many of us are eager to participate in our schools in a variety of ways (coaching, research etc.), but when considering the workplace culture we are already facing in our schools, and its current tendency to lead us toward burnout, ensuring new opportunities won't contribute to burnout will more adequately support the well-being of practitioners.

This thesis contributes to the field of educational research in one key way. Both chapters revealed that the most essential concept that needs to be considered moving forward revolves around the topic of burnout in the teaching profession and the cumulative factors that contribute to it. In both chapters, burnout was either an outcome (Chapter 2), or a potential barrier to research participation (Chapter 3). In Chapter 2 the daily challenges present in the culture of HPE added a personalized perspective to existing research that suggests a variety of factors are leading to role confusion, lack of perceived mattering, and ultimately burnout for HPE specialists. Chapter 3 advocates for the importance of practitioner research among HPE teachers, while addressing the need to support practitioner wellness throughout the process so as not to contribute to burnout or prevent educators from participating fully. Moving forward it will be extremely important to address the factors that are leading to burnout in HPE teachers, while also supporting those educators who might be interested in completing practitioner research.

Together, these chapters provide excellent considerations and next steps for practitioner research. However, they also serve as examples of the challenges ahead for meaningful research in HPE by teachers, unless the concerns around burnout in the profession can be managed. When I embarked on this Master of Education journey, I simply thought I would be learning more about the teaching profession and HPE. What I ultimately realize now is that the majority of my

learning has come from critically analyzing structures, philosophies, and practices that have guided the first half of my career, and seeing how my interaction with them has changed and shaped me. It's not necessarily that my foundational philosophies on teaching have changed, but rather that I am understanding myself and my contribution to the field of HPE in a new way. That fact gives me hope that I can continue to question what I know, encourage others to do the same, and continue to lead with a passion that will uphold the importance of high quality HPE in public schools across Canada.

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