Teaching with the Flesh:
Examining Discourses of the Body and their Implication in Teachers’
Professional and Personal Lives

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines how teachers understand and use their own bodies in their everyday practice of teaching. Using a poststructural theoretical framework and an ethnographic and arts-based research methodology, I demonstrate how discourses of the body shape experiences of teaching and teachers’ lives. This work is significant not only because it has direct implications for teachers but also because teachers’ bodies are rich and complex sites for theorizing and thinking critically about contemporary practices and discursive understandings that shape our lives. I call the research methodology that I used in this study “embedded performed ethnography”. This methodology involved in-depth ethnographic interviews, creative writing, and dramatic performance with twelve teachers in Ontario.

By drawing on three distinct but interrelated fields: critical physical education, feminist and queer curriculum theory and Fat Studies, my research demonstrates the richness and complexity of teachers’ professional lives and the impact that dominant discourses of the body have on educational spaces. I use three key concepts to analyze the experiences and writing of the
research participants. First, I use the concept of ‘biopedagogy’ to examine the ways in which teachers’ bodies are subject to regulation and policing in schools. Next, I use the concept of ‘performance’ to examine how participants use their bodies to construct and reproduce dominant notions of health in the classroom. Lastly, I use ‘affect’ as a concept to address the complex and complicated moments that occur on and through a teacher’s body in the classroom.

I work with the everyday experiences of teachers in the classroom to explore how particular teaching moments illustrate and connect to the broader discourses and practices of the body that shape our lives.
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INTRODUCTION:
CONTEXTUALIZING THE TEACHER'S BODY

This is a story about teaching. In 2006, I was hired as a Teaching Assistant (T.A.) for Women and Gender Studies at the University of Toronto Mississauga (UTM). The UTM campus, a satellite campus of the University of Toronto, is much smaller than the main campus. It sits atop a fairly densely forested hill in Mississauga.

I sit staring out the window on the shuttle bus that transports students and TAs from the main campus to UTM passing tree-lined streets with names like Otami, Shawanaga and Chippewa. The streets have large, palatial houses along them, marking this neighbourhood as a place of affluence and prosperity. Once we reach the campus, I step off the shuttle bus and a wave of nervous excitement ripples through me. I am so happy to begin T.A.-ing for my first Women and Gender Studies class. The campus reminds me a lot of the university where I did my undergraduate degree, and I feel “at home” in this space, despite my nervousness. UTM has a diverse student body, with large Muslim and South Asian populations. As a white woman, I wonder how my racial privilege will seep into my teaching and shape the politics of the classroom.

I enter the well-kept two-storey brick building and notice a poster on the door. It is a warning from the campus police regarding incidents of a Peeping Tom on campus. The poster encourages students and faculty -- especially women -- to be aware of their surroundings, and whenever possible, to travel in groups. These warnings are also familiar to me. I have internalized this fear as part of what it means to be a woman.

The main doors of the building where I will be teaching open into a foyer-like area that has several cushioned chairs grouped around a small table. A few people, whom I assume to be
students, sit here looking over notebooks, two of them leaning over a text and quietly talking with each other. There are glass display cases on either side of the room. One case is full of books written by faculty members and the other displays a poster with the schedule of plays being put on at the Erindale Theatre that year (I learn later that this theatre is located on UTM campus). There is a mural on the other wall, which prominently features a naked woman, who appears to be floating in water. It is a strange image.

I make my way down the hallway, which is small, more in keeping with the size of hallways in elementary schools than those of university institutions. I report in at the main desk and pick up the keys to my office. The administrative assistant is friendly and efficient. She has gone through this routine before. It is not difficult to find my office as the building is so small. I will share this room with the two other TAs for the class, as well as a sessional instructor. Even though it is not particularly fancy (minus the Apple computer that sits on the desk), having the keys to my own office makes me feel like I have “arrived.” It is within this space that I start to understand myself in my new role as a Teaching Assistant. Alone in the office, I sit down and put my feet on the desk with my arms bent behind my head, assuming a position that for some reason I always associate with professors. It is a silly gesture, but I do it anyway, to test out how this new role of “Teaching Assistant” fits with me.

It is soon time to go to the tutorial. The tutorial room is small and windowless. The walls are bare except for a blackboard on one side and the fire safety rules posted by the door. Already, a few students are sitting at the desks, which are formed into a U-shape. I am starting the term two weeks into class, so most of the students are already familiar with one another. This makes me feel slightly disadvantaged. One woman sits in a desk against the wall, away from the rest of the class. I wait, attempting to look cool and nonchalant, for the rest of the group to file
into the room. Despite my attempts at outward aloofness, I am much more nervous now that I see the students. I feel my stomach tensing and armpits sweating. Subtly, I take a deep breath.

Feeling a bit calmer, I invite the student sitting by the wall to join the group. She informs me that she is good where she is sitting. This is not the best way to start the class; already I feel like my power in the classroom has been taken down a notch.

I have been given a lot of advice by fellow TAs on how to behave in your first tutorial. They all tell me that this first tutorial is crucial to setting the tone for the rest of the year. I am to be forceful and clear about the rules of the class and my expectations of them. Also, I have to make sure the students know that I am not someone to mess around with and that I am not here to be their friend. I do my best to give this impression through my voice and physical presence in the room – at one point I even stand at the front of the class, assuming the traditional teaching position of power. I am unconvinced as to whether or not my performance as someone “not to be messed with” is successful. Most of the students appear pleasantly apathetic to me. My first tutorial ends somewhat anti-climatically. Checking my shirt for sweat stains and attempting to ignore my feelings of disappointment, I move to the next room for another tutorial. I will give the same performance three more times that day. And that is just the beginning...

My experience of being a Teaching Assistant -- the fulfillment of a long-time dream -- also brought with it a whole new set of questions, concerns and problems. In a teaching role, classrooms seemed both remarkably familiar, and yet entirely different. Similar to Alice in Wonderland, who went through the looking glass, things got “curiouser and curiouser” for me as I looked out from the other side of the podium. Once teaching, I began to experience a whole gamut of exciting, challenging and confusing moments in the space of the classroom.
In particular, I was struck by how physical the experience of teaching was; how “fleshy” it was. School, for me, had always been a particularly “heady” experience but teaching, for me, seemed to intensify how I related to my body. To start with, there is the sheer exhaustion that comes from teaching for a full day. Then there is the sleeplessness that comes, for me, both the night before a lecture as I plot out what I should say, as well as the night after, when I toss and turn fretting over whether or not what I meant was actually conveyed to the students. There is the nervous feeling in my stomach and bowels before every tutorial or lecture; the dryness in my mouth when I cannot remember the point I was trying to make or the moment when my mind goes completely blank in response to my students’ questions, and the inevitable dampness under my arms, regardless of how well or how poorly my teaching seems to be going that day. In addition to my own experiences of my body in the moment of teaching, my students seemed to take particular liberties of commenting on my body as freely as if it was just another resource at their disposal.

In 2005, just prior to negotiating my own experiences of my body as teacher in the classroom, teachers in Ontario were dealing with the Daily Physical Activity (DPA) requirement, a new school-based health initiative whose aim was to include 20 to 30 minutes of physical activity daily within the classroom. Physical activities were to be embedded within other lessons. For example, teachers were to use activities like jumping jacks to reinforce a math lesson. The teacher’s role in implementing the DPA requirement in Ontario is outlined in the “Foundations for a Healthy School” document; a set of recommendations developed through collaboration between the Ontario Ministry of Education and the Ontario Ministry of Health Promotion. Teachers were advised of the importance of improving their own health education through: attending a healthy eating conference; undergoing training on a physical activity during a
professional development day; receiving in-service training on how to identify signs of drug use in students; and creating committees at the school level to discuss teaching methods for encouraging healthy growth and development in students (“Foundations for a Healthy School” 2009, online). As these recommendations demonstrate, teachers were positioned in this document as able to disseminate “healthy habits” related to their students’ bodies, yet no attention was being given to the bodies of teachers or to teachers’ own experiences of their bodies in schools.

I was fascinated with this initiative and designed my project to interrogate the implications of these understandings for teachers. I was particularly interested in examining how such initiatives might affect the professional and personal lives of teachers. However, as I began discussing these experiences with teachers, our conversations about bodies involved much more than just notions of health and fitness. The participants described many moments that resonated with my own experience of the fleshiness of teaching that I have described above. Therefore, rather than being the focus of my research, teachers’ experiences in relation to the implementation of the DPA requirement became the starting place to examine the complex and often contradictory experiences teachers have in and of their bodies at the moment of teaching. Conversations, thoughts and feelings around the DPA requirement served as a means of highlighting this phenomenon, and enabled a wealth of surprising, fascinating and confounding experiences to be revealed and shared about the teacher’s body.

To examine these moments, I use the term “discourses of the body” to refer to the distinct but interrelated notions that shape how we know and understand our bodies. Such notions include, but are not limited to concepts such as health, fitness, wellness and fatness. These discourses of the body also connect with other identity discourses such as gender, race, class and
sexuality. Hence, I begin, in Chapter One, slightly unconventionally, by discussing my methodology. I start here in order to highlight my research experiences and to demonstrate how the knowledge that I gained “in the field” shapes the theoretical frameworks and concepts that I use to analyze the data. In this chapter, I outline the two approaches that shaped my research design: ethnography and arts-based research. I then describe “embedded performed ethnography,” an exploratory methodology that I developed for this project.

In Chapter Two, I outline the theoretical framework for this project and discuss three key concepts I used to analyze the experiences of the teachers that I interviewed. Specifically, I outline poststructural theories of the body and how educational theorists apply poststructuralist notions to interrogate educational institutions and schooling practices. Then, I describe the three theoretical concepts that form the basis for my analysis. These concepts are biopedagogy, performativity and affect.

In Chapter Three, I analyze teachers and their understandings of their bodies by applying the concept of biopedagogy. In this chapter, I begin my study by interrogating notions of health and fitness in relation to how teachers understand and make sense of their bodies in the moment of teaching. I pay particular attention to how these experiences and concepts interlock with dominant notions of race, class and nationalism. Specifically, I respond to the questions: How do teachers understand notions of fitness and health? How do they understand themselves in relation to discourses of body size and shape? How do they understand themselves in relation to fatness and obesity discourses? Do teachers understand having a “fit” body as related to being a “good” teacher? Do teachers understand part of their role as a teacher to promote a “healthy lifestyle” to students? If so, how did they develop this understanding?
In Chapter Four, I apply the concept of performativity to examine how teachers use their bodies in the moment of teaching. In this chapter, I respond to the following questions: Do teachers use their own bodies as a pedagogical tool? If so, how? What types of pedagogical practices do teachers use, if any, that reflect dominant notions of fitness and health? And are there any pedagogical practices that teachers use to challenge dominant understandings of fitness and health? I define and discuss the notion of “health passing” by drawing on the experiences of teachers. This chapter also explores the importance of acting enthusiastic among teaching peers regarding health and fitness-related subjects and initiatives, such as but not limited to, the DPA initiative. The chapter then moves beyond health and fitness to a discussion of how teachers are expected to uphold standards of morality, what this means in the everyday lives of teachers, and how these concerns are often manifested in and through the teacher’s body.

I turn to the notion of affect in Chapter Five, to respond to questions such as: Does the curriculum ever seem to be at odds with teachers’ own bodies/experience of their bodies? If so, how do teachers negotiate this disjunction while teaching? How often have teachers had their body referenced by students, other teachers or parents when teaching or when performing a teaching role? If this happened, was it a negative or positive experience? Why? In this chapter, I explore in greater depth how teachers’ bodies take on multiple meanings in the classroom, and how teachers have to negotiate these meanings as part of their everyday experiences in the classroom. I examine how teachers address shame - both being shamed and shaming students - as well as how teachers’ bodies are sexualized in particular ways by students, colleagues, and larger social discourses that shape the classroom. I focus specifically on how these experiences relate to how teachers are gendered and sexualized in the classroom.
I conclude my project by reflecting on how insights for this dissertation can provide useful ways of understanding the complexities of teachers’ experiences in the classroom and offer a means of examining how society calls upon teachers’ bodies, in particular, to do work well beyond what we typically understand as educating. I explain and outline the methodology that led me to these conclusions in the following chapter.
CHAPTER ONE:
EMBEDDED PERFORMED ETHNOGRAPHY: AN EXPLORATORY METHODOLOGY

Approaching the Research

One of the key challenges of this research was attempting to study and learn from the lived experience teachers have of their bodies in the classroom. How do they negotiate their own understandings of their bodies? Do these understandings shape their teaching? If so, then how? And how does what they teach impact how they use their bodies in the classroom? Studying the body is a challenging prospect, as particular methodologies for how to actually use the body during the research process are still being developed. The body is not neutral; questions about the body inevitably bring up questions of identity, such as gender, race, sexuality, ability and class. These identities carry with them various intersections of power and privilege, as well as oppression and marginalization. Therefore, teachers’ experiences with their bodies in the classroom are shaped and influenced by various discourses related to teaching and health and to gender, race, sexuality, class and ability.

This chapter outlines the development of an exploratory method for inquiry and research about the body that I call “embedded performed ethnography.” This method draws on both ethnographic as well as arts-based research techniques. I begin by locating my project within the literature on ethnography and arts-based research methods. In the second section, I describe in detail who participated in the research and how the research project was designed. Next, I describe the specific techniques that were used (and that emerged) during the research process. Lastly, I reflect on the process of undertaking an embedded performed ethnography as a researcher.
Ethnography

Buch and Staller define the practice of ethnography as the “study [of] the lived experiences, daily activities, and social context of the everyday life from the perspectives of those being studied to gain an understanding of their life world” (2007: 187-188). Furthermore, they claim that ethnographies seek to “provide holistic understandings of people’s everyday lives” whereby ethnographers examine “systemic connections between domains of social life” (Buch and Staller, 2007: 188). Similarly, Hesse-Biber and Leavy claim that the purpose of ethnographic research is to develop an in-depth understanding of how individuals make sense of their lived realities (2006: 230). These are indeed appealing qualities of ethnographic research.

Deborah Britzman highlights specific qualities associated with ethnography. These qualities are outlined as follows: 1) ethnography is both a process and a product, 2) good ethnographic texts tell stories that embody the qualities of a novel and implicitly promise pleasure or new information to the reader and 3) an ethnography takes the reader into an actual world to reveal the cultural knowledge working in a particular place and time as it is lived through the subjectivities of its inhabitants (Britzman 2002: 27). These qualities demonstrate why ethnographies are appealing to readers and why ethnographers should be concerned about the power that the ethnographic stories carry.

The ethnographic researcher must be wary of the possibility that her or his research could be interpreted as the ultimate Truth about a given community, profession or population. Ethnographies need to be seen as a subjective telling of life stories by a researcher who has been shaped by multiple influences, both personal and professional. The qualities outlined by Britzman have direct implications for how I approached my work. I take Britzman’s warning to mean that ethnography exists through the performance of the researcher, and that ethnographies do not reflect an objective truth of the lives of the participants, but rather serve as a
representation of the performance of the research. Furthermore, Britzman’s warning addresses
the story-telling component of ethnography, which underscores that the intention of ethnography
is to provide a captivating narrative for readers. This desire to provide a “good story” impacts the
choices ethnographers make as they write up their research. I do not find it problematic to want
to tell good stories. However, I do believe that we, as ethnographers, must always be aware of
(and perhaps make explicit in our ethnographic writings) the truth-making power of our method.
Lastly, Britzman’s warning demonstrates the potential for ethnographies to reveal the need to
work towards understanding the constructedness of our social understandings and of research
itself. I take this warning to mean that through ethnographic writing, researchers can explore how
both they and their participants create and give meaning to their social experiences. For me, this
resulted in asking questions about the everyday experiences my research participants had as
teachers and in being aware of how I position these experiences in my research.

As Linda Tuhiwai Smith argues, ethnography is linked most directly with the field of
anthropology and the study of “other” people and cultures (Tuhiwai Smith 1999: 67). The extent
to which this method has been used to exploit cultures and peoples deemed exotic has continuing
ramifications for ethnographers. Smith notes that:

the ethnographic ‘gaze’ of anthropology has collected, classified and represented other
cultures to the extent that anthropologists are often the academics popularly perceived by
the Indigenous world as the epitome of all that it is bad with academics. (1999: 68)

As a researcher intending to draw on ethnographic techniques, it is crucial for me not to forget or
ignore this history in favour of the enticing possibilities that ethnography purports to offer.
Feminist researchers often use ethnography as it is understood as a method that offers a more
authentic, reciprocal and inter-subjective approach to research than that of more conventional
forms (Buch and Staller 2007: 190). It is understandable why feminist researchers would turn to
this methodology given these traits. It is important, however, to interrogate both the desire for authenticity, and the presumption of reciprocity in ethnographic research.

Feminist poststructural theorists challenge the desire for ‘authenticity’ in ethnography. Erica McWilliam interprets the quest for authenticity in ethnographic research as an aspect of redemptive research, which positions the researcher as the hero, and is conducted with the hopes of saving or rescuing individuals (McWilliam 2003: 58). This approach allows researchers to assume that there is a knowable and identifiable field in which the research will take place, and that the people within it that can be turned into a “case” (McWilliam 2003: 58). The quest for authenticity renders the process of knowing the field, the people and the practices within it as innocent, neutral and uncomplicated (McWilliam 2003: 58). To claim that research is ‘authentic’ is to make a claim that a researcher has the ability to access all knowledges. This position requires the researcher to be able to know herself as a coherent subject who is able to decipher the absolute Truth about the lives of her research subjects (McWilliam 2003: 59). In this thesis, I make use of a poststructuralist theoretical framework, which is outlined in detail in the following chapter. Through the use of a poststructural framework, this type of positioning within research becomes deeply problematic as this framework challenges notions of absolute truths and the concept of the coherent subject.

It is also important not to presume the inherent reciprocity of ethnography, as the method’s history is fraught with colonial and racist exploitation. Linda Tuhiwai Smith argues that colonialism exploited “ideas, images and experiences about the Other [which] helped to shape and delineate the essential differences between Europe and the rest” (1999: 60). Ethnography was an important means used to foster this colonial exploitation and was used to gather knowledge of the “primitive” peoples of the Africa, South and East Asia and the
Americas. Therefore, to practice ethnography requires a constant vigilance around the desire to possess particular forms of knowledge, as well as an awareness of how this knowledge gets constructed, represented and disseminated.

Ethnography generally involves “going into the field” to conduct interviews and to engage in participant observation, whereby the researcher observes and participates in the everyday life of the research subjects. However, Britzman argues that ethnographers must then assume that there is both a “there” and “beings” who are there (2002: 28). She goes on to state that poststructuralist theories enable us to question the ground upon which ethnography is built as contested and fictive geography (2002: 28). Ethnographies should not be read as providing the definitive truth on participants’ lives and experiences, but should be engaged as narratives that have been shaped, analyzed and interpreted by the ethnographer. The ability to mould such texts is directly related the position of power assumed by the researcher.

While it is important to be aware of the well-founded critiques and criticisms of ethnography, I continue to believe that it offers an exciting and useful methodology for inquiring into the everyday lives of individuals. The key advantage of using ethnography to examine the lived experiences of teachers was that it allowed a space for participants to discuss the commonplace moments in teaching. During the research, participants shared many moments of teaching that I call the “seemingly innocent ones” because at first, in the workshops, these moments seemed to be too mundane and everyday to carry any significance. However, once the participants describe the moment, they often revealed complex and complicated negotiations of the teacher’s body in the classroom.

While interviewing participants, I encouraged them to reflect on moments in the classroom that they might have written off as mundane or insignificant. These moments reveal
many interlocking understandings and contradictions related to the body. For example, one participant described her complicated feelings related to being one of her students calling her pretty because she is thin. Another participant described feeling anxious about how she presents herself when she is out in the community where her students live, but felt that it was her own individual problem, that she is probably “just being paranoid.” However, she was relieved when I shared with her that her experience was echoed by other teachers.

Teachers’ experiences of having their bodies commented on by students and teachers’ assumptions that their own anxieties about these experiences were individual faults rather than a part of a common experience of teaching were shared through ethnographic interviewing. This method gave the participants a space to describe experiences that make up their everyday lives in the classroom which might not have been addressed through other research methods.

Arts-based Methodology

There are numerous terms used to describe the application of arts to research methodology, including general terms such as ‘arts inquiry’ and more specific terms, such as ‘arts- informed methodology’ (Knowles and Cole 2008). I have found the term arts-based methodology from the work of Patricia Leavy, specifically in her work Method Meets Art: Arts-Based Research Practice (2008), to be the most inclusive and reflective of my own research goals, concerns and approaches.

According to Leavy, “arts-based research practices are a set of methodological tools used by qualitative researchers across the disciplines during all phases of social research” (2008: 2). Arts-based methods apply various applications of the arts, such as the use of short narratives, experimental writing forms, theatre performances, paintings, dance and song (Leavy 2008: 3). A body of arts-based research known as A/r/tographical work is an application of arts-based methodological approaches to education research. This approach was developed at the Faculty of
Education at the University of British Columbia (for examples, see Lea, G. W., Belliveau, G., Wager, A., and Beck, J. L. 2011; Springgay, S. Irwin, R. and Kind, S.W. 2005). The term a/r/t is used to represent artist-researcher-teacher as an attempt to blur the boundaries of these three roles/identities (Leavy 2008: 3).

Arts-based methodology is used in my project as a means of getting at the rich and nuanced experiences teachers have in relation to their bodies. No methodology can enable a researcher to “get the full story.” With this in mind, I apply an arts-based methodology to ethnographic interviewing and utilize techniques such as creative writing and performance during my research to allow for multiple means of speaking/thinking with the body, knowing that a complete story is not possible.

Increasingly, scholars are applying arts-based research methodologies to explore issues related to education (Goldstein 2001; 2003; 2008; 2012; Gallagher 2007; Pelias 2008; Sedgwick 2003; Chapman, Swedberg and Sykes 2003). I use arts-based methodology as a way of opening up spaces often ignored and silenced through more traditional research methods. I use this methodology because it allows for inclusions of the body, as well as offering a space through which to interrogate lines of inquiry beyond the body. Specifically, this methodology has enabled me to develop a wider and deeper understanding not only of the complexity of teachers’ bodies in school spaces, but also to consider teachers’ subjectivities, experiences, memories and relationships. Ron Pelias’ Methodology of the Heart: Evoking Academic and Daily Life (2004) is an excellent example of applying arts-based methodology to examine teaching spaces. In this book, Pelias works with performative writing, or “writing that is emotionally vulnerable, linguistically evocative and sensuously poetic” (2004: 1) to examine the everyday experiences,
both personal and professional, of an academic. Discussing teaching an Introduction to Graduate Studies class that he taught, Pelias writes:

> Today I told them that to be in the academy meant that they would always be behind, never able to read everything that they should, never able to even keep up with the new books in their specialization, never able to stop working. (...) Today I told them that no matter how skilled they become, reviewers and editors will find something problematic in every single thing they will write. “Revise and resubmit” is cause for celebration. Today I told them that finding the exact word, crafting the elegant sentence, and constructing the intricate paragraph is a pleasure unlike any other. (2004: 130)

What strikes me about this example is the tone and emotion in the writing that Pelias uses to discuss the expectations of academic life to his students. I was struck with the possibility of how powerful it might be to offer teachers the opportunity to describe their teaching practice in this way.

As demonstrated by Pelias’ writing, art-based methodologies can offer participants multiple means of expression which, in turn, may allow participants opportunities to recall and/or examine an experience in more detail, thereby enabling a richer and more complex narrative of teaching. Perhaps most importantly, Leavy claims that arts-based research offers social researchers “an alternative to traditional research methods that may fail to “get at” the particular issues they are interested in, or may fail to represent them effectively” (Leavy 2008: 3-4). It is the potential for arts-based research to reveal and/or re-approach particular issues that draws me to this methodological approach. Though I do not believe that any methodology can uncover the complete truth, I do believe that it is possible for arts-based research to represent experiences in different ways than traditional qualitative research methods.

**Creative Writing and Performance as Research Methods**

These multiple ways of knowing do not enable the construction of a unified truth, but rather reveal the contradictions and complexities of lived experiences. My research project uses
creative writing and performance, as these activities may offer innovative ways for participants to discuss, describe and “be” in their bodies during the research. Experiences with our bodies do not always allow for descriptions within the conventions of traditional interviews or group conversation, and as such, these experiences cannot always be represented through these means. For example, I would often ask participants to “direct” me as I attempted to perform their creative writing with my body. With their direction on how best to represent their experience, I would interpret their narrative and would use my body to depict my understanding of what they had described.

Sometimes, my performance would be deemed accurate by a participant, whereas at other times, it was very different from their experiences. Through performance, we were able to come to a mutual understanding of what they described in their creative writing. It was through the performance that I was able to have my understanding enhanced by additional participant feedback. By using arts-based research techniques, I have been able to provide richer and more complex representations of my participants’ lives. It was her own concerns about effectively representing her research participants’ lives and experiences that initially led educational researcher and playwright, Tara Goldstein (2001; 2003; 2012) to use arts-based methodology, in the form of performed ethnography, to disseminate her critical ethnographic research on language practices in Canadian multilingual schools. My methodology enabled my research participants and me to engage directly with the concept that identities are performative, and these performative acts of identity were acknowledged and addressed consciously and explicitly, rather than treated as normal or natural.

In his essay, “Performative Inquiry: Embodiment and its Challenges”, Ron Pelias (2008) argues that performance is a useful means with which to examine our social world as it exists on
a physical level. Performance also enables the construction of a knowing, participatory, empathic and political body. Pelias outlines three reasons for using performance to study the social (2008: 185): the first is that performance is a cultural and artistic object that functions within specific historical and cultural contexts that are worthy of investigation. For example, performance can be used to examine whether or not and how teachers might enact particular contemporary concerns about fitness and healthy bodies. Secondly, performance offers a vocabulary for understanding human behaviour. Over the course of my research, the language of performance was often used explicitly by participants who understood teaching to be a performative act. One of the participants in my study described teaching as learning how to be a good actor. Lastly, performance itself is a way of knowing. The most striking example of how performance offers a way of knowing occurred for me during my research when a participant and I acted out different forms of touch in order to explore the riskiness of the action in the classroom.

Pelias argues that the body can be used as an “exploratory instrument that probes and ponders what it encounters,” but he warns that “not all bodies move through the world in a similar manner” (2008: 186). He notes that bodily performances can allow for a “slippage between what the body knows and what it can say, and between what the body says and what an audience can interpret” (2008: 190). Pelias’ work demonstrates the important interaction between performance and the physical body. His work will be used in this research to explore how the performative aspects of both teaching and fitness get mapped onto the physical body of the teacher, and how the teachers participating in my study as research informants used opportunities to perform in order to think through questions raised during the research process.

I was particularly interested in a series of creative writing prompts that Pelias has developed (Appendix I). I used these creative writing prompts in creative writing activities
during my research to help me and my research participants to explore particular teaching moments from various perspectives. The use of writing prompts reflects my own interest in exploring the possibilities of creative writing to express ideas that might be censored during a conversation. I have taken part in creative writing classes and workshops throughout my time as a PhD student, and have been struck by the writing I have seen produced when people allow themselves to ‘free write’. In my own experience during the free write, I found that I would express things differently than I would have in conversation, and that given the chance to reflect on what I wrote, I would gain a different insight into a topic. I was really drawn to richness of this process and therefore decided to explore it more in my own research study.

**Embedded Performed Ethnography – An Exploratory Method**

By applying an ethnographic and arts-based research methodology, I have been able to uncover the discursive practices that shape participants’ lives and their experiences of teaching in particular bodies, spaces and times. This methodological approach utilizes the in-depth experiential knowledge captured in ethnographic interviews and reflects upon it using the imaginative techniques of arts-based research. For my research, I drew on creative writing and performance in order to capture the rich and complex experiences that teachers have to their bodies. This research uses a hybrid methodological approach, which I have called embedded performed ethnography.

This research approach was inspired by the performed ethnographies of Tara Goldstein and Heather Sykes; specifically Goldstein’s plays *Hong Kong, Canada* (2001) and *Snakes and Ladders* (2003) and Chapman, Swedberg & Sykes’ play *Wearing the Secret Out* (2003). I was particularly inspired by how both researchers used their ethnographic research to develop a creative project. Both Goldstein and Sykes use their critical ethnographic research data to
develop plays and performance pieces. *Embedded performed ethnography* seeks to use creative techniques *during* the research process, and asks the participants to be directly involved with the creative research process.

This approach differs from Goldstein’s and Sykes’ previous works in that the creative aspects of their performed ethnographies occurred *after* the initial ethnographic research took place. For the purposes of this research project, embedded performed ethnography took the form of a research workshop which involved a combination of ethnographic interviewing, creative writing, and performance exercises in order to facilitate reflection and discussion on teaching as a means of normalizing practices of fitness and health. I use the term “workshop” to describe my interactions with my research participants as it reflects both the innovative approach of this method, as well as the active involvement that the participants have had in the process. Furthermore, I prefer to use the term “workshopping” which emphasizes the process more so than the more traditional research terminology of “data collection.” Through this research methodology, I demonstrate the richness and complexity of my participants’ lives. The specifics of the research workshop process are outlined in the following section.

*Research Workshop Design*

Using my professional networks at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, I recruited twelve (12) elementary and secondary school teachers to participate in my research. Potential research participants were recruited primarily over email. I also promoted my research project in an Arts and Education class for Master of Education students at OISE. Once contacted by potential participants, I asked if they knew of other teachers that would be willing to participate. This approach, known as ‘the snowball technique,’ proved to be a very effective way
of recruiting participants into the study. Two of the workshops, consisting of half of the sample size, were formed by accessing existing peer groups of teachers.

Initially, I planned only to recruit participants who taught in elementary schools, as these appeared to be the teaching spaces where concerns about health and fitness were the most pronounced. However, after my initial research workshop, I quickly learned that many teachers often have experiences in a variety of grade levels and that when reflecting on these experiences, they tend to relate experiences they have had in one grade level to those they have had in another. The distinction I was making between elementary and secondary school did not reflect the career experiences of teachers. Therefore, I extended my call for participants to include elementary and secondary school teachers who were currently teaching or had taught in public schools within the last five (5) years.

I had also planned on limiting my call for participants to Ontario teachers. Again, after my first workshop, wherein one of the participants revealed that she had also taught in British Columbia, I realized how this limitation did not necessarily reflect the experiences of teaching. I did continue to recruit based on the Ontario criterion due to the fact that the research workshops would take place in Ontario. However, when two participants came forward expressing their interest in participating in the project - one who had taught in British Columbia and the United Kingdom, and one who had taught solely in the United Kingdom - I decided that their participation might serve as an interesting counterpoint to the experiences of the Ontario teachers. Both of the participants who had teaching experience in the United Kingdom took part in the same research workshop. I wanted both participants to take part in the same workshop in order for them to have an opportunity to speak to each other’s experiences directly. While initially, I had assumed that their participation would serve as a counterpoint to the experience of
teachers who taught solely in Canada, ultimately, their experiences spoke to the pervasiveness of the discourses on the body that shape teachers’ professional and personal lives across provincial and national borders.

One important criterion was that potential participants were not required to be using or to be in support of health initiatives such as the Daily Physical Activity (DPA) requirement in their own classrooms to be considered for the research project. This criterion was included as result of several conversations I had had with teachers prior to beginning my research. These conversations suggested that there was a range of ways in which the DPA was being implemented in their classrooms, schools and school boards. Furthermore, I thought that this criterion might give space for teachers who, despite their school or school boards enthusiasm for the DPA, might have been actively resisting implementing the initiatives.

Participants took part in one of five research workshops that were held from December 2010 until July 2011. The workshops were held in Oshawa, Toronto and Barrie, Ontario. The workshop in Oshawa and one of the Toronto workshops were held in a participant’s home, and both of these workshops involved participants who knew one another. Two workshops were held in a meeting room at OISE; and the Barrie workshop was held in an office meeting room to which I had access in Barrie.

Research Participants

The participants represented a diverse range of identities and teaching experiences. All participants chose the names by which they wanted to be referred to in this research. I asked participants to fill out an optional biography. The participant biographies were inspired by Kate McKenna’s (1997) use of participant biographies in her PhD dissertation. The following is a summary, organized by workshop, of participants’ biographies:
Workshop 1 was with Alice, Jen and Louise. Alice and Jen have been teaching for fourteen years and Louise twenty years. All three identified during the workshop as mothers. Both Alice and Jen identify as Canadian middle-class women. Alice identifies as heterosexual and Jen identifies as straight. Alice identifies as Caucasian. Alice has taught grades six to twelve, in addition to teaching in adult education, as well as having taught in a pre-service education faculty. Jen teaches in the primary level (which encompasses Junior Kindergarten to grade six). Jen is currently not working in a school and indicated during the workshop that she specializes in Special Education. Alice has taught in both British Columbia and Ontario in small to medium-sized urban schools. Louise chose not to complete a participant biography.

Workshop 2 was with Serena, Rebecca and Darcy. Both Darcy and Serena have taught in the United Kingdom. Darcy has also taught in British Columbia. At present, Rebecca teaches in the Toronto District School Board (TDSB). All have taught in urban school settings. Serena described her current school as large, and Rebecca described hers as a small, urban school. Darcy also had teaching experience in a suburban school setting. Serena taught grades seven to OAC\(^1\). Rebecca taught grade six and also taught Visual Art to grades seven to twelve. Darcy taught kindergarten to grade twelve, with the majority of her teaching experiences being in grades three to six. Their years of teaching experience ranged from six to ten years. All three are women in their thirties. Rebecca and Darcy identify as heterosexual and Serena identifies as mostly straight. Serena and Rebecca identified as middle-class. All three women are Canadian. Rebecca identifies as Caucasian and Serena identifies as South Asian. Darcy chose not to identify her racial/ethnic or class identities.

Workshop 3 was with Jeffery and Anthony. Both teach in the TDSB. Jeffery has taught in grades seven to OAC, and was a substitute teacher for grades seven to eight. Anthony teaches grade five. Both worked in mid-to-large-sized urban schools. Anthony has 23 years of teaching experience. Jeffery recently retired after 30 years of teaching, the last ten years of which he was burned out and hated the job. Both men are in their fifties. Jeffery identifies as heterosexual, and

\(^{1}\) OAC is an acronym for Ontario Academic Credit. OAC classes were designed for university preparation and were offered as a fifth year of secondary school. As of 2003, OAC is no longer offered.
Anthony identifies as homosexual. Both identify as middle-class Canadians. Jeffery identifies as Jewish, and Anthony identifies as Italian/French-Canadian.

**Workshop 4** was with Elena* who taught grades nine through twelve in the Simcoe County District School Board (SCDSB), in a large suburban school setting. She has five years teaching experience. Elena’s initial teaching training was in an elementary school (kindergarten through grade eight). She has now left the teaching profession and is pursuing a career change. Elena identifies as a heterosexual woman. She is in her twenties. She identifies as a Canadian and as Hispanic/Caucasian.

**Workshop 5** was with Ashlee, Jean and Elizabeth. Ashlee has taught grades four through twelve, as well as some courses in a post-secondary institution. Jean teaches grades two and three, as well as grades seven and eight. She also has taught at the high school level (grades nine through twelve). Elizabeth teaches Junior and Senior Kindergarten, grades two, three and seven. Ashlee and Elizabeth teach in large, urban school settings. Jean did not identify her school setting. Ashlee has five years of teaching experience, and Jean and Elizabeth each have three years. All three identify as women and as Canadian. Ashlee and Elizabeth identify as heterosexual and as middle-class. Ashlee identifies as having Guyanese ancestry and as South Asian. Elizabeth identifies as Caucasian. Jean chose not to identify her sexuality, class and racial/ethnic identities.

In addition to the participants recruited into my study, my colleague and fellow graduate student, Hartley Jafine, joined me for all of the research workshops, except for Workshop 4. Hartley’s area of research interest is drama and education, and therefore he was able to help me facilitate the creative writing and performance exercises. Hartley teaches Drama to Health Science undergraduates at McMaster University. He is also involved in the Initial Teacher Education Program at York University. In addition to his university teaching experience, he supply teaches for high school Drama and English classes on occasion. Hartley and I met during

* I will address why this workshop only had one participant in the following section.
a graduate course at OISE, where we shared a common interest in the relationship between health and drama. After the course we continued to have conversations about our work, and during one of our discussions, I invited Hartley to help me to co-facilitate one of my research workshops. Both of us were very pleased with this experience and decided that, if possible, Hartley would join me for the subsequent workshops.

Hartley’s expertise in drama and education enhanced what we were able to do in the workshops, and his insights often offered new directions with which to explore the work. For example, during one workshop, Serena described in her narrative the uncomfortable experience of having to pull down the screen mounted on the blackboard in front of the class. While I thought I had understood her experience just from her descriptions, Hartley asked if she would be willing to demonstrate what she meant. She agreed to demonstrate what she had meant, and as she performed the action, additional thoughts and feelings regarding the seemingly commonplace action were able to be explored and discussed further.

While I encouraged Hartley to ask questions of participants and to participate throughout the workshop, his role was limited to the workshop itself. He did not assist me during the initial theoretical development of the embedded performed ethnography methodology. Furthermore, while we discussed what occurred during each workshop after each one was completed, I determined the analytical themes that I would examine and I wrote up my findings.

Collaborating with Hartley during the research workshops was an extremely positive experience for me as a researcher. Working with Hartley enabled me to have access to another researcher’s interpretations regarding what was being discussed and performed in the workshop space. Given his experience with drama, Hartley was able to understand the participants’ narratives through a dramatic lens, and this offered new ways to interpret and understand what
the participants were discussing. While working with Hartley has been a very positive experience, I would stress that this type of collaboration would not have been possible had trust not been established between us before we began the research workshops. We had numerous discussions about his role and mine in the research, and about my expectations of what the collaboration would look like before we began.

Hartley identifies as a Caucasian Canadian Jewish man in his twenties. He also identifies as heterosexual and middle-class. We were both keenly aware of the positions of power and privilege that he has access to as a result of his racial, sexual and class identities. Regardless of his experience with drama and education, I would not have invited him to collaborate in the research if I believed he did not have a solid understanding of feminist and equity issues. During the workshops, Hartley also was keenly aware not to take up too much “air time,” especially when working in women-dominated spaces.

In addition to our conversations, Hartley signed a Mutual Non-Disclosure Agreement. Originally, I had intended this agreement to be used to clearly outline his role in the research workshop and the expectations of his labour. In this way, I thought it would be similar to the confidentiality agreements that I had drafted for participants. However, the University of Toronto Research Ethics Board suggested that I get a contract drawn up by the Research Contract Officer in the Innovations and Partnerships Office. Initially, I was very happy to learn that such a service existed and that it was free of charge to graduate students at the University of Toronto. Ultimately, however, the contract I received had all but removed me from the document, and required Hartley and my supervisor to sign the agreement. I quickly learned that this contract is used to protect the University of Toronto, and did little to protect either Hartley’s rights or my
own. I believe that this type of contract speaks to the type of collaborative work that occurs in the sciences, and does not reflect how collaboration is used in the Arts and Humanities.²

**Research Challenges**

Initially, I recruited fifteen (15) participants for my workshops however, on the day of Workshop 2, one potential participant could not participate due to illness. Workshop 2 continued on as planned, with three participants instead of four. Two other potential participants did not attend their scheduled workshop, and did not send on a reason for their absence. I was surprised that these participants did not attend the workshops, especially as both had expressed a keen interest in being involved in the project. While I do not know the reasons for their decision not to attend, it is possible that being aware that the research was being conducted in a group could have swayed their decision not to participate. The fact that the research was being conducted with more than one person might have given them the impression that their removal from the research would not hinder the project. This is a possibility, despite my best efforts of stressing the importance of their contribution in email contact prior to the workshop. Alternatively, perhaps the idea of sharing personal stories with a small group of strangers became threatening and/or intimidating. Unfortunately, I will never know the reasons why they chose to not attend, as my emails were left unanswered. Their decision not to attend did affect Workshops 3 and 4 (the workshops they were scheduled to attend).

The remaining participants for Workshop 3 were both men. The participants for the other four workshops were all women. I had not intended to divide the workshops by gender. However, when the third participant for Workshop 3 did not attend, gender segregation of the

² Hartley and I are currently developing a paper together discussing graduate student collaborations and negotiating university policies related to student research.
workshops happened by accident. Though unplanned, I believe that dividing the workshops this way made gender differences in teaching and in classroom politics much more apparent to me. I will discuss these differences in detail in Chapter Five.

The result of a participant not showing up for Workshop 4 meant that there was only one participant for this workshop. It was also the only workshop that Hartley could not attend. Though initially, I considered cancelling the workshop when only one participant arrived to participate, I decided instead to go forward with it. This proved to be a good decision not only because of the experiences and insights Elena was able to share with me, but also because this workshop serves as a contrast to the others. Elena confided in me towards the end of the workshop that she was glad we had worked one-to-one as she was very concerned about discussing her experiences in front of others, particularly if she thought they would not understand her point of view. While the conversations between participants in the focus groups were very fruitful, in this case, a one-to-one workshop was a good way to work with Elena in order for her to feel safe sharing the kinds of stories that she did. Given this insight, in the future, if I were going to use a similar method, I would consider asking participants their preference of either meeting with me one-to-one or meeting in a group.

Finding the available space to hold the workshop was an unanticipated problem. Two workshops were held in participants’ homes. Two workshops were held at OISE. The Barrie workshop was held in an office space to which I had access from a family connection. All of these spaces were used free of charge, though I did give a small thank you gift to the participants whose homes were used. If these spaces had not been made available to me, finding a space large enough for a group of approximately five people at a reasonable cost could have been very difficult, especially in cities with which I was less familiar. The availability and cost of booking
space was an element that I had not significantly planned for when designing this project. In the future, if I were to undertake another research study involving working with groups of participants, I would have to budget for and research appropriate spaces for the research to take place, especially if the participants lived outside of the city where I was based.

**Research Workshop Process**

Prior to the workshop, participants were emailed copies of the workshop agenda, the interview questions and the writing prompts. Once at the workshop, each participant was given a workbook containing hard copies of the workshop agenda, the interview questions, the writing prompts, the informed consent forms, and an optional participant biography form. The notebooks also contained lined paper for the creative writing exercises. Several participants commented that they liked having the notebooks to refer to during the workshop. The workbooks served to help prepare participants for the types of questions they would be asked and to allow them to review the types of writing prompts they could choose from during the workshop. If I were to do a similar workshop in the future, I would also add another component to the workbooks: examples of potential performance exercises that might be used, so that participants would be aware of what this component would involve. All participants returned their workbooks to me at the end of the workshop.

The workshops were divided into three sections. Each section is detailed below:

**Section One – Ethnographic Interviewing**

Participants began the workshop by taking part in a focus group facilitated by me (or in the case of Workshop 4, a one-to-one interview) in which they discussed their experiences of negotiating understandings and expectations of teachers’ bodies in the classroom. I began the research workshop with ethnographic interviewing as I thought it would serve as a means of
getting the participants familiar with the types of inquiries I was making, as well serving as an opportunity to talk to one another before participating in performances exercises.

The focus group was semi-structured and guided by the following research questions: Do you believe that having a “fit” body is necessary for being a “good” teacher? Why or why not? How does your body get used in your teaching, if at all? Do you understand your job as, in part, being responsible for “fixing” children’s’ bodies? Why or why not? If so, what effects does your understanding of this role have on your approaches to pedagogy and curriculum? What, if any, do you think are the professional implications of this role? What, if any, do you think are the implications of this role for you outside of the classroom/school?

One of the major advantages of using focus groups was that the structure allowed participants to engage directly with one another. For example, often participants would ask each other for further clarification and/or follow up on each others’ statements. The participants’ questions would often reveal new insights or probe in directions that I might not have thought to pursue on my own. This type of interaction was particularly useful when some participants were confused about what was being asked of them, or when they believed they did not have anything to share in response to a particular question or line of inquiry. The interviews were recorded and transcribed by me.

Section Two- Creative Writing Exercises

After the interview section, participants chose one writing prompt from writing exercises developed by Ron Pelias (2009) as a way “in” to teachers’ narratives about their bodies. I modified these prompts slightly to reflect more specifically the situation of the participants in the workshop. For example, one of the original writing prompts makes reference to “beginning students in your field”; I modified this prompt to read “beginning teachers or student teachers”.
Pelias’ series of writing prompts, referred to as performative writing exercises (2009) are structured around five major types of writing: evocative, reflexive, embodied, partial/partisan and material. The complete list of writing prompts and the interview questions were provided to participants prior to the workshop so that participants had the option of reading them over in advance (Appendix I).

I prefaced this section with the caveat that I was not expecting polished writing. Indeed, for the purposes of this research, free writing (i.e. writing without worrying about what the final product would look like) was used because of the emphasis on the process rather than the final product. We used the writing as a means of exploring particular topics rather than as a means to creating a polished narrative. Workshop participants chose one writing prompt and used it to write a response for approximately thirty minutes. I encouraged participants to focus on their own experiences in the classroom rather than writing about their concern about their students. While I guided the exercises by focusing on notions of fitness and health in schools, I also encouraged participants to interpret the themes themselves and not to feel limited by how I envisioned them to be used.

The multiple perspectives reflected in the prompts enabled discussion about how teachers’ bodies are understood and experienced in educational spaces, as well as illuminating when bodies are silenced or ignored. For example, in Workshop 1, participants chose to write about their concern for students rather than focusing on their own experiences in the classroom. Their student-focused writing compelled me to add additional prompts (discussed below) as well as to suggest in the following four workshops that participants focus on themselves rather than on their concerns about their students. The reflexive self-removal of the teacher’s body from the writing exercises undertaken by participants in Workshop 1 can be interpreted as a form of self-
silencing and/or ignoring of the role of the teacher’s body during discussions about teaching. The absence of participant discussion about teachers’ bodies demonstrates a preference to reorient the discussion around the topic of students rather than around the subject of teachers. This observation is discussed further in Chapter Three.

After Workshop 1, I added three additional themes to the writing prompts:

Contradictions

Describe a teaching moment when your body contradicted your lesson or your message (e.g.: Your message is “Learning is fun,” but your body language revealed you to be bored). Emphasize how your body language and/or movements revealed your internal dialogue.

Complications

Describe a moment during your teaching when you felt your body was “on display”. How did it feel? How did these emotions/feelings/sensations get mapped onto your body?

Identities

Write a brief piece describing how you used identities that are mapped onto your body (e.g.: gender, race, ability etc.) during a teaching moment. Describe how this use of your body felt.

Write a brief piece describing how identities that are mapped onto your body (e.g.: gender, race, ability etc.) were used by students to interrupt a lesson or teaching moment. Describe how this use of your body felt.

While I was happy with how the writing prompts were being used in the workshop, I added the three additional prompts to help participants to write more directly about their experiences of their bodies in the classroom. These new prompts served as an extension of the existing prompts, and encouraged more focused types of writing about the body. They were added to help give participants more ways of thinking and writing about their own bodies and their experiences in the classroom. Several participants opted to use a writing prompt that I added in combination
with an original writing prompt. The inclusion of these additional prompts, coupled with more explicit instructions from me that encouraged participants to focus on their own experiences in the classroom rather than students’ experiences resulted in participants writing that provides unique perspectives on teachers’ everyday lives both within and beyond the confines of the classroom.

During the workshops, Hartley and I both wrote and shared our responses to the creative writing exercises. I stressed that I would not ask participants to do anything during the workshop that I would not be willing to do myself. I participated throughout the workshop as one means of addressing the hierarchy of power between researcher and research participant. By doing so, I was not a passive observer of participants’ stories, but rather an active member of the research workshop. Of course, this does not mean that I relinquished power or ceased to have power as a researcher. Instead, it was a symbolic act that demonstrated to participants that I was aware that I was asking them to “put themselves out there” and to take risks. By participating in the workshop directly, I attempted to demonstrate sensitivity and compassion for the research participants. I acknowledged that participating in the workshop put them in a vulnerable position.

Interestingly, I learned quickly that this technique mimicked many of the participants’ approaches to negotiating power dynamics in the classroom. I discuss this negotiation of power and how it relates to participants’ understandings of health and fitness in the classroom in Chapter Three. At the end of the workshop, participants were asked to turn in their writing for me to use in my dissertation. They were given the option of deleting sections using a permanent marker before turning the narratives over to me. None of the participants deleted anything that they wrote with permanent marker. This section of the workshop was not audio-recorded.
Section Three – Performance Exercises

Following the creative writing, participants were invited to share their written narratives with the group. Again, both Hartley and I shared what we had written with the group as well. The participants were encouraged to ask for clarification of each others’ writing, to share similar or contrasting experiences with one another and/or to probe further into the experiences that fellow participants shared. This approach is similar to how Tara Goldstein uses her performed ethnographies in the Bachelor of Education and undergraduate classes that she teaches at the University of Toronto. After reading their narratives aloud, participants were given the option of performing their own narrative; of directing another participant in the performance of their narrative, or of having another participant use their narrative to direct them. We created tableaux in which we would use our bodies to represent a participant’s narrative from her or his creative writing. In several of the workshops, Hartley discussed how once a story was shared, it became ‘our’ story, meaning that participants other than the author could contribute and make suggestions regarding the performance of a piece of creative writing.

Many opted for Hartley and me to perform their narratives rather than performing them themselves. Participants’ preference for Hartley and me to perform their narratives may have been a form of resistance to this component of the workshop, perhaps because the drama exercise required participants’ bodies to be implicated directly in their stories. Implicating their own bodies in their stories may have been too risky an act to engage in with the group. Or, perhaps participants chose not to perform their stories as they were uncomfortable with the idea of

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3 The approach that Tara Goldstein uses in classes begins with the reading of her play by the students in the class, followed by a discussion based on the reading. Students are asked to discuss sections of the play or characters that evoked emotional reactions and/or moments of learning.
performance and drama exercises in general. Unlike talking and writing, acting may not have been a mode of expression that participants felt at ease doing.

While it was an option, none of the participants chose Hartley’s or my writing to be performed. Initially, I was disappointed that this section was not embraced as I had anticipated that it would be by participants. However, as I co-facilitated more workshops, I realized how the reading of the narratives themselves also had performative elements. For example, when Anthony shared his narrative which outlined his passionate feelings towards understanding health as related directly to community involvement and to environmental awareness, his voice became very emotive and expressive. As a researcher, I was able to have a richer perspective on his writing and how he interpreted health and wellness through the performance of his writing. Several months later when I was writing up Anthony’s creative exercise, I could still hear him give his own voice to his words.

This section was audio-recorded using a digital recorder. I also asked participants if I or other participants could take their photos as they performed, using a digital camera. Photos were taken throughout the process of making the tableau. I showed participants each image that was taken and asked if they would allow me to use it in my dissertation. If the participant was uncomfortable, I deleted the photo immediately. If they allowed the use of their photo, I explained that I anticipated the photos to be used primarily as a memory prompt for me as I wrote up my research. If the photo was used my dissertation, I would email to confirm their permission for the use of their image.

I struggled with my decision to make a visual record of this section of the workshop. I considered recording this section using a digital video recorder. The presence of a device that would make a visual and audio recording seemed to me to be too invasive, as I am concerned
about appearing in these recordings, and I believed that other participants might also share this concern. Given my apprehension, I decided that the presence of a digital video recorder would negatively impact the dynamics in the workshop. Several participants expressed to me that they were glad I did not use a digital video recorder during the workshop as they do not like seeing themselves on video (and presumably do not want others to see video of them). However, I decided that it might be helpful to have a visual record. The digital camera was a good compromise, as it allowed me to take photos during the workshop. The still image in a photo allowed for greater control over the image for the participant compared to the moving image of a video recording. Ultimately, I decided not include the photos in my dissertation.

The struggles I had in deciding whether or not to make a visual record during the workshops illustrate my broader concerns with the researcher’s potential power to create a visual archive. Who has the authority to take a picture? What spaces and histories permit this authority to exist? Who is contained in the frame, and who decides what the frame contains? And perhaps, most importantly, who is the object of the gaze? Spectatorship as a practice can reinforce and reproduce sexist, racist, colonial systems of power. Therefore, bell hooks claims:

fierce critical interrogation is sometimes the only practice that can pierce the wall of denial consumers of images construct so as not to face that the real world of image-making is political – that politics of domination inform the way the vast majority of images we consume are constructed and marketed. (1992:5)

While not typically viewed as being in the image-making business, ethnographers specifically and social science researchers more generally, must be aware of the politics of their power to create, display and disseminate the images they may collect or create during their research. We must also take into account the importance of such archives in allowing readers of our work to witness particular moments, particularly if our participants are oppressed or marginalized. For myself and any future researchers that turn to embedded performed ethnography as a research
method, engagement critiques and challenges related to recording and disseminating a visual record of the research is needed. As researchers we need to assess what is being risked when we create a visual record of our research as well as what is lost when we do not.

I concluded the workshops by thanking participants and asking if there were any questions or concerns regarding what we had discussed or about my research project in general. For the most part, participants did not have any additional remarks, but occasionally, participants noted that they had enjoyed discussing their experiences in the classroom and had appreciated the opportunity to reflect on moments that affected them. Several participants remarked that it was a cathartic experience for them to be able to spend some time thinking about moments that happen to them every day at school, but quickly get pushed out of their minds or brushed off as insignificant. Many participants were appreciative of the opportunity to reflect on these “seemingly innocent” experiences.

**Researcher Reflections on Embedded Performed Ethnography**

During the research workshops, it became apparent that I could identify with many of the experiences shared by the teachers as a result of my own experiences as a Teaching Assistant in undergraduate courses and in Initial Teacher Education classes. However, it also became clear that I was incredibly naive about the teaching profession. For example, as discussed above, I was very surprised to learn about the wide variety of grade levels in which the participants teach. Though grades are grouped into three levels - primary, junior/intermediate and senior - many participants have experiences teaching in all three. I went into the research believing that teachers train and teach in the same level throughout their careers. This belief was continuously disproven throughout the workshops. Another example was learning about the high moral expectations placed on teachers, and how such expectations get taken up and understood by
those in the profession, which I examine in the following chapter. I had no idea that there were such explicit rules and laws specific to teachers’ behaviour outside of school. Even though this was discussed in all the workshops, I would continue to be shocked when another participant mentioned this expectation. I imagine the look on my face: eyes wide, eyebrows lifted and a slight “o” formed by my lips followed by a furrowed brow and a slight smile as I inquired further. Often participants would laugh at my response and commiserate with one another. Occasionally, they would pause and acknowledge how strange these expectations are, or inversely, they would declare that these expectations did not really affect them at all.

Throughout the research workshops (and indeed throughout the research process as a whole) I continued to occupy a space of knowing and not knowing, of understanding the complexity of a teaching life and of being at a complete loss when confronting the social expectations that teachers face. These moments of confusion and shock were both awkward (had I not prepared properly for this research project?) and exciting (could this be one of my research contributions?). I came to understand my position as standing between understanding the complicated experience of teaching and being unaware of the intricacies of teaching in the public school system. Therefore, I was able to share my experiences of teaching, while relying on my participants to be the experts on the profession.

Similarly, given the way I chose to participate in the research workshops, I was clearly performing the researcher role during the focus group interview questions. However, this role got blurred when I participated in the writing and drama exercises. Particularly, during the writing exercises, once I chose my prompt and started to write, I would temporarily forget that I was facilitating the workshop. While this moment was fleeting, after I finished writing, I quickly began to worry about whether or not this was “rigorous research”. Indeed, grappling with this
feeling was a major challenge of this method. The creative writing and drama exercises require you to be in the moment in a different way than interviewing does. During the writing and performance exercises, there just was not time to plot the next move or consciously probe in the same way that I do during the interviews, so at times, I felt that I might be missing opportunities to push discussions further. Again, I was glad to have Hartley to collaborate with during these moments, as he was able to find ways into the discussion when my attention was directed to an activity at hand. My participation enriched the data collection process by allowing me to experience (at least in part) what my participants were doing in the workshops. My participation may have also limited the data collection process as often, I would step out of the research role to write or perform, which in turn may have prevented me from observing a comment or a moment that may have been useful to the research. Including Hartley in the research workshops mitigated the limitations of this method.

While this loss of control was unsettling, I understand it as one of the major strengths of applying this research method. Not only did embedded performed ethnography enable participants to have multiple means of discussing their experiences in the classroom, it also enabled me to take on different roles during the research workshops. The roles of the researcher and facilitator were familiar to me while taking on the role of participant in the research process by sharing my own writing and performing was new and challenging. It was risky at times to share my own experiences of teaching. I felt vulnerable and anxious that somehow, my writing would reveal feelings and thoughts that would compromise how I was viewed by the study participants. As other theorists have already concluded (Behar 1996; Haug 1987) this vulnerability is both important for researchers to experience and a useful site of theorizing. Ultimately, I think that participating was more important than the risks associated with being
vulnerable. Similarly, using my own body to gain different understandings of participants’ narratives was often uncomfortable, but at the same time, it offered another way of interpreting teachers’ complex and complicated experiences with their bodies in schools.

Participating in the creative writing and performance exercises was risky, but also very advantageous for understanding participants’ hesitations about taking part in the creative writing and performance exercises. My participation enhanced my ability to understand and hear the participants in different ways. Furthermore, the shifting of my role from the researcher to participant and back may have allowed for some interactions, discussions and experiences in the workshop that might not otherwise have been possible. The workshops could be intense and stressful, embedding myself within the workshop process enabled a very rich understanding of my participants’ lives as teachers. Through our work together in the workshops, particularly when we performed one another’s narratives, the participants, along with Hartley and me were able to engage in collective meaning-making. As Hartley explained in several of the workshops, once we share a story in the workshop space, that story effectively becomes “our story” insomuch as we were all allowed to take ownership – to challenge, change or redirect the narrative during the performance.

In the following chapter, I examine these experiences using poststructuralism as a theoretical framework. I analyze the participants’ experiences using three key theoretical concepts: biopedagogy, performativity and affect.
CHAPTER TWO:
UNDERSTANDING THE FLESH: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR STUDYING
THE TEACHER’S BODY

Why Study Teachers? Why Study Teachers Now?

Schools are pivotal institutions for regulating and disciplining bodies and for constructing and perpetuating dominant discourses of corporeal control and regulation. For example, contemporary concerns regarding the “Obesity Epidemic” and fears of an increasingly unhealthy population in North America often locate schools as pivotal sites for responding to this perceived health crisis. As Chris Shilling argues, all education involves physical education of the body (2003: xxi). It is important to examine how teachers understand and experience this contemporary concern in schools, as they are often positioned to be on the front line of this “war against weight” and are understood to be able to perform a key role in “fixing” the problem of unhealthy and inactive children.

My research project began by examining how schools and curriculum are important sites for the promotion and proliferation of physical fitness through monitoring, surveillance and regulation of students’ bodies. While much attention in the existing literature is focused on the perceived benefits of such practices for students, I was interested in learning how teachers and their bodies are implicated in practices aimed at increasing individual physical fitness in schooling environments. As I gained insights from my research participants’ experiences, this project expanded to address broader implications of discourses of the body.

Locating the Study of Bodies

Endeavouring to study teachers’ bodies in schools has brought me to pursuing several different but related fields of study. Hence, my research is located at the intersection of several
distinct areas of study: critical physical education; feminist and queer curriculum theories; and Fat Studies. These fields of study inform and shape my research analysis.

Physical education scholar David Kirk argues that bodies matter in schooling. His pivotal study explored the emergence and interrelationships of three schooling practices that served to control and regulate bodies: physical training, medical inspection, and school sports (Kirk 2004: 117). Kirk’s work, which focused on schooling practices in physical education from the 1880s to the 1950s in Australia and Britain, suggests that there were two key features of such practices. The first was that children were treated as a mass, rather than as individuals. The second corporeal regulation and normalization relied primarily on students’ compliant participation. This participation was directed by teachers, using precise and specific instructions and measurements of drilling and medical inspection (Kirk 1997: 44). Furthermore, teachers were required to memorize a precise series of exercises and to deliver instructions using specific commands (Kirk 1997: 45).

Kirk goes on to argue that contemporary physical education schooling practices frame physical fitness in terms of liberal humanist philosophy which emphasises “enjoyment, choice and lifelong participation” (1997: 52). Physical education in the 1990s saw a widespread trend of physical education teachers taking up the notion of “active lifestyle” as a key goal in their classrooms and programs (Kirk 1997: 52). However, he goes on to argue that the dominant discourse of the body as malleable and as an unfinished project has served to diffuse, internalize and individualize corporeal power well beyond the bounds of physical education (Kirk 1997: 53). This observation is further complicated by physical education theorists, John Evans and Brian Davies, who ask:

What potential damage is done to pupils’ sense of confidence, competence and embodied self when subjected to pedagogical and discursive practices which consider ‘health’ to be
an individual responsibility while regarding the ‘ability’ to achieve it by engaging in appropriate health-promoting physical activities as both fixed and unevenly distributed amongst individuals and social groups? (2004: 6)

Evans and Davies speak to the paradox of health discourses which place the individual as solely responsible for her or his health, while simultaneously reinforcing the notion that only a particular few individuals will actually possess the ability to engage in “healthy activities” as a result of their own natural talents and/or their location in society. Put another way, Evans and Davies are arguing that despite the individualizing emphasis on our notions of physical health, the majority of individuals ostensibly lack the “natural” ability to achieve healthy ideals. This failure to achieve health is then understood to be an individual failure rather than a reflection of the elite position that the notion of health carries for most individuals in society.

Such notions of individuality of the body and its fitness can be seen in the majority of proposed solutions to the obesity epidemic. As Australian physical education researchers, Michael Gard and Jan Wright illustrate, the scientific community has been lobbying Western governments for compulsory fitness training and testing in schools; the development of national fitness benchmarks against which all children can be measured; teacher monitoring of the contents of children’s lunch boxes; [and] the placement of ‘healthy diet’ posters and messages by parents around the home (2005:187).

In the majority of these calls to action, the schools position teachers as playing the most significant role in the implementation of the program and reporting of results. In their examination of the connections between body-based harassment and girls’ practices of body modification, feminist researchers June Larkin and Carla Rice found that the emphasis within elementary schools on healthy eating and healthy weights often resulted paradoxically in problematic eating practices and body dissatisfaction among students (2005: 228). Similarly, education and Fat Studies researchers, Heather Sykes and Deborah McPhail
argue that educational contexts often serve to reproduce and perpetuate fat-phobic attitudes and assumptions. They argue that physical education is particularly fat-phobic and oppressive, and that it makes it particularly difficult to develop positive fat subjectivities (2008: 65).

Contemporary concerns about obesity and fear of children becoming fat have served to legitimate various practices of body regulation and governance within schools. In Biopolitics and the ‘Obesity Epidemic’: Governing Bodies (2009) critical health and physical education scholars such as Jan Wright, Valerie Harwood, Deana Leahy, Genevieve Rail, Natalie Beausoleil and Laura Azzarito explore how perceived truths relating to the ‘obesity epidemic’ are produced within schools and disseminated through broader education-based public health campaigns. Their work highlights the importance of critically interrogating how biopower functions within education (I discuss the concept of biopower in the following section). Specifically, their essays examine how potentially problematic assumptions about health and fitness are reproduced and normalized within schools.

Critical physical education scholar, Richard Tinning, argues that physical educators, both teachers in schools and teacher-educators in universities, understand physical education for all as if it were a kind of universal “good” and consequently, beneficial for everybody (1997: 105). His essay analyzes the roots of professional identity of human movement as a field in order to understand the problematic practices it reproduces and perpetuates (Tinning 1997: 105). Tinning argues that the profession of health and physical education understands the body almost exclusively within discourses of science, which conceptualize the body as a machine. This approach is both reductive and mechanistic (Tinning 1997: 107). He goes on to argue that teaching as a professional activity is considered less important than scientific inquiry. Therefore,
the content of physical education curriculum is centered on the sub-discipline of human movement, with particular focus on performance and exercise science (Tinning 1997: 107).

**Feminist and Queer Curriculum Theorists**

Feminist and queer curriculum theorists offer a means of examining power by providing an analysis of the intersection of gender, sexuality, race and class within the politics of the classroom. In particular, the work of feminist curriculum theorists such as Elizabeth Ellsworth (1989), Patti Lather (1992), Jennifer Gore (1993), Carmen Luke (1992) offer important critiques about what is at stake in pedagogical practices that seek to liberate students for oppressive ideologies. Their work demonstrates the complexities of relations of power within the classroom. These relationships are explored throughout my analysis of teachers’ understandings and experiences of the body in the classroom.

I also draw on the work of Michelle Fine (1988) and Deborah Britzman (1998) whose work examines how sexuality and queerness function in the classroom through normalizing practices. While not necessarily focused solely on the body, I draw on their work because studying the body in schools, and considering the “fleshiness of teaching” requires an engagement with the desirability of the teacher’s body and sexuality. The works of Fine and Britzman examine theories of sexuality in the classroom, and by doing so, provided insight more broadly into how normalizing practices related to the body function in schools. Their work offers important conceptual language to express the complexity of teachers’ fleshy experiences in schools.

**Feminist Critiques of Critical Pedagogy**

Many educators and educational researchers turn towards critical pedagogy as a means of addressing the problematic power differential between teachers and students. Critical pedagogy
is also understood as able to speak back to and challenge broader systems of oppression and domination that occur within schools. As defined by Henry Giroux, critical pedagogy is “the educational movement, guided by passion and principle, to help students develop consciousness of freedom, recognize authoritarian tendencies, and to connect knowledge to power and authority and the ability to take constructive action” (“Lessons From Paulo Freire” 2010: online).

Seemingly, critical pedagogy is an ideal approach for addressing many issues, such as racism, sexism, colonialism, and homophobia that continue to shape students’ and teachers’ experiences within schools. Furthermore, many participants in my study understood that teaching particular notions of health and fitness to their students would help empower them to make better decisions about their bodies and lives. Several feminist scholars have identified ways in which critical pedagogy approaches that are based on notions of empowerment fail to address issues of oppression within the classroom, and suggest that critical pedagogy itself may serve to reproduce and re-inscribe systems of power in the classroom.

In her influential article, “Why Doesn’t This Feel Empowering?: Working through the Repressive Myths of Critical Pedagogy,” Elizabeth Ellsworth (1989) argues that assumptions and teaching practices of critical pedagogy, such as empowerment, student voice and dialogue, are based on myths that re-inscribe relationships of domination in the classroom (298). Ellsworth’s assertions can be used to interrogate the ways in which teachers, often unintentionally, reinforce and reproduce systems of power and oppression with their students. She argues that critical pedagogy has failed to launch any meaningful analysis of or program for reformulating the institutionalized power imbalances between themselves and their students, or of the essentially paternalistic project of education itself (Ellsworth 1989: 306). Ellsworth argues that white teachers cannot unproblematically “help” a student of colour to find her/his authentic voice.
Her critiques highlight power structures and racial hierarchies embedded within schools and within teaching practice.⁴

Referring to Ellsworth’s critique, Pattie Lather offers further challenges to critical pedagogy, arguing that:

In raising such issues, postmodernism positions emancipatory reason as vulnerable to interrogation. It traces the collusion of oppositional intellectuals with the very cultural dominants they are opposing via the interception of liberatory intentions and the “will to power” that underscores the privileged positions of knowing and changing. Hence, the discourses of emancipation are located as much within Foucault’s “regimes of truth” as not. (1992: 125)

Lather places Ellsworth’s critiques within a broader theoretical framework of postmodernism, specially the theories of French philosopher Michel Foucault (which I explain in the following section). Like Ellsworth’s, Lather’s claims challenge the possibilities of educators being able to liberate their students from oppression and domination, as this very position serves to reinforce the position of the educator as the possessor of knowledge and authority. I explore the complexity of power and authority in the classroom throughout the analysis chapters.

The arguments of Carmen Luke (1992) and Jennifer Gore (1993) further complicate the notion of empowerment and teaching practice. Luke argues that “from a feminist position, the discourse of critical pedagogy constructs a masculinist subject which renders its emancipatory agenda for “gender” theoretically and practically problematic” (1992: 25). Luke’s argument identifies that both the teacher who will be teaching through a critical pedagogy framework and the student who will be affected by the emancipatory potential of such teaching practices are imagined without attention to various social identities, such as gender. This lack of specificity

⁴ Furthermore, the response by Giroux and other male colleagues to Ellsworth’s critique of critical pedagogy is a particularly telling example of institutionalized power in the academy.
constructs a universalizing student subject separate from the specificity of gender, race, class, sexuality and ability. Luke goes on to suggest that this lack of engagement with gender serves to perpetuate and reinstate patriarchal metanarratives (1992: 25). Such metanarratives perpetuate and reinforce gendered and oppressive systems of power and privilege. Luke’s critiques raise important points to consider when interrogating equitable teaching practices. Specifically, by drawing on Luke, it is important to understand teaching practices related to empowering students through the dissemination of health and fitness in relation to notions of identity, such as gender, race, class and sexuality.

Referring to feminist approaches to critical pedagogy, Jennifer Gore refers to critical and feminist teaching practices that are thought to be empowering for students. Gore argues that such teaching practices constitute a “regime of truth” (1993: 57). She interrogates the practice, believed to be empowering, of having students sit in a circle rather than in rows in a classroom (Gore 1993: 57). Gore argues that this spatial configuration is often employed in feminist classrooms because it is seen to be a challenge to the traditional use of rows, which reinforce the power and authority of the teacher. The circle is understood as enabling all students to be able to voice their opinions. Furthermore, as the students often sit on the floor or in moveable chairs in a circle formation, they are believed to be free from the constrictions of a desk (Gore 1993: 57). Gore argues that there is nothing inherently liberating or empowering about sitting in a circle, nor is there anything innately oppressive about sitting in a row (1993: 57). Gore’s critiques of popular classroom practices that are seen to be empowering is particularly useful for my examination of how teachers understand and use their bodies within the classroom.
Feminist and Queer Interrogations of Desire and Sexuality in Schools

In *Sexuality, Schooling, and Adolescent Females: The Missing Discourse of Desire*, Michelle Fine states that “public schools have historically been the site for identifying, civilizing, and containing that which is considered uncontrollable” (1988: 31). Fine argues that while evidence of sexuality is everywhere in schools, education about sexuality is officially relegated to biology and sex education classes (that latter, generally a sub-component of physical education classes) (1988: 31). Fine draws on French feminists who have argued that expressions of female voice, body, and sexuality are essentially inaudible when the dominant language and ways of viewing are male (1988: 34). She suggests that including female voices, bodies and sexualities into discourses of sex education can offer an important means of counter-discourse to hegemonic thinking related to women’s bodies.

She refers to this counter-discourse as a “discourse of desire” (Fine 1988: 34). The discourse of desire attempts to acknowledge the silences and differences related to the gendered body within education, and emphasizes an understanding of the self as it relates to socially-constructed meanings of sexuality (Fine 1988: 34). The discourse of desire - particularly the acknowledgement of the silencing of women’s sexuality in the classroom, is discussed in relation to teachers’ sexuality in Chapter Five.

Lastly, the work of Deborah Britzman offers a useful means of re-conceptualizing how understandings of the body are taught in schools. In her essay “Queer Pedagogy and Its Strange Techniques” Britzman suggests that it is important to critique education’s persistent narrative that life is “something to be overcome and mastered with as little disturbance as possible” (1998: 79-80). Britzman’s point can be applied to how bodies are understood and treated in schools.
Formal education maintains a dominant discourse of the body wherein a body can be mastered and perfected and that an ideal physical form is attainable.

Britzman argues that queer theory, psychoanalytic reading practices and pedagogy are means by which the problem of dominant knowledge can be interrogated (1998: 80). Pedagogy that emphasizes the performativity of the subject can be used to question the presumption of normativity within schools (Britzman 1998: 81). This approach to pedagogy can serve as a way to make explicit the discourses that construct how we understand teachers’ bodies. Britzman asks: “what makes normalcy so thinkable in education? How might pedagogy think the unthought of normalcy?” (1998: 80). Her questions can be applied to the understanding of bodies in education, particularly to the construction of the teacher’s body. Using Britzman’s theoretical approach, I use the teacher’s body as a site to question how practices and understandings of normalcy function in schools. The teacher’s body is also a site from which to critique and challenge dominant discourses.

While I will refer to specific works by feminist and queer curriculum theorists throughout my analysis, their critiques of power and the construction of normalcy has provided a crucial lens with which I approached my research project.

**Fat Studies’ Critiques of Health and Fitness**

The field of Fat Studies challenges dominant notions of health, fitness and fatness in relation to race, gender, class and nation, and it is therefore important to engage with Fat Studies for this project. The fit body is constructed in relation to bodies that are deemed unfit. While notions of fitness and lack of fitness are fluid and unstable, this contemporary moment places fat bodies as unfit and unhealthy. Fat Studies theorists argue that notions of health and fitness serve to represent particular white, middle-class values that are dominant in North America and that
construct fat bodies as problems in need of fixing and/or threats to the health of the nation. Hence, fatness becomes a “crisis” when it threatens the bodies of “good” white citizens.

Kathleen LeBesco claims that fat, white bodies in the West provoke racist anxieties, as they demonstrate how the privileged white body can “slip” into degeneracy (2004: 56).

Bodies that are already constructed as “other” in relation to ideals of national identity, and socially marginal due to race, culture and class positions reinforce the assumption that people are socially marginalized because they are fundamentally incapable of taking care of themselves. Concerns regarding the health of racialized individuals are further marginalized by fatness and these individuals are often understood as a drain or threat to the health care system. April Herndon argues that the politics of fatness and fat bodies operate as a nexus of power where we can observe national angst and new forms of racism and sexism being played out within individual lives (2005: 136). Indeed, fatness is used to further extend racial and colonial systems of oppression against these bodies.

Both Kathleen LeBesco (2004) and April Herndon (2005) use the particularly poignant example of Annamarie Regino to stress how fatness, racism and colonialism interlock. Using Herndon and Lebesco’s writings about Regino, I have briefly summarized the case below:

Regino, a four year-old Mexican American girl weighing just over 110 pounds was removed from her parents as her weight was interpreted as parental negligence. Regino also stood four and-a-half feet tall, so while she weighed three times the average for her age, she was also fifty percent taller than the average four year-old. Several months after the removal of her child from her care, Adela Martinez-Regino, a second-generation American, stated that the social workers involved in the case would frequently speak to her in Spanish, even though her first language was English. Martinez-Regino also stated that the social workers would repeatedly ask for the phone numbers of family “back home” referring to Mexico. The official documents of the case suggested that the Reginos did not fully understand the health risk to their daughter due to language and cultural barriers. Annamarie Regino was eventually returned to her family under much public scrutiny, which eventually resulted in an anonymous tip to Children, Youth and Family
Services by a concerned citizen who claimed to have seen the Reginos feeding their daughter ice cream in public (see Herndon 2005: 130; LeBesco 2005: 63-64).

The Regino case demonstrates how fatness can be used to rationalize racist, colonial and class-based systems of oppression. The child’s fatness was seen as a fundamental lack of understanding by her parents who were assumed to be Mexican immigrants. Annamarie Regino’s fatness was used to legitimate the racist assumptions of the social workers on her case.

The fat body becomes directly linked with the racist assumptions directed at the diets of those understood as proximal to or outside of the West. As demonstrated by the case study above, the diets of Mexican immigrants to the U.S. are thought to be high in fat and consisting of “bad foods”. Maria Chamberlain outlines the history of regulation of Mexican immigrants’ diets and bodies in the United States as follows:

Not only is obesity a sickness, it reflects on one’s citizenship. The right kinds of food in the right portions are the key to sound national identities. To promote better health, Americanization programs taught Mexican American mothers to substitute white bread for tortillas, green lettuce for frijoles, and boiled meat for fried meat. But they also warned immigrants to choose “white” foods because … eating “un-American foods [i.e. spicy, exotic foods] could be interpreted as a protest. Mainstream foods were less threatening as well as supposedly less fattening. Of course, the historian George Sanchez correctly points out that these “patriotic” American foods were also more expensive” (2001: 101).

Similar assumptions are made regarding the diets of Indigenous peoples of North America, which are depicted in the dominant discourse as being high in sugar and low in nutritional value. This assumption, along with belief that Indigenous people over-consume alcohol, serves to construct an image of the “fat, lazy, Indian.” Fatness is used in this stereotype to add further clout to these racist claims made against the bodies and diets of marginalized groups within North America. Conceptualizing bodies marked by race in this way enables the myth of the
good, healthy white body to be constructed and perpetuated. In this sense, the notion of being able to attain a healthy body must be understood in relationship to whiteness.

Jennifer Poudrier and Janice Kennedy (2008) argue that the concept of the “healthy body” for First Nations women is quite different from how the concept is understood in the dominant white society of the West. Poudrier and Kennedy, who work with women from Indigenous communities in Saskatchewan, reveal that women in First Nations communities in Canada have a broader approach to understanding their bodies and health (2008: 19). Through consultation with their participants, the researchers identified three themes that shaped how the women understood their bodies and health: the importance of Elder knowledge and traditional values related to community wellness; the role of family history and the role of women; and the practical aspects of choosing and preparing healthy foods (Poudrier & Kennedy 2008: 19). Participants in their study saw the healthy body as deeply connected to culture, gender and history, and explained how their understandings of healthy bodies were shaped by their family contexts. Several participants stated that in their families, fat bodies were considered normal and healthy (Poudrier & Kennedy 2008: 20). This example illustrates how the perceived problems of fatness and the construction of health and fitness must be understood in relation to socio-cultural factors and suggests that the understanding of fatness as problematic and unhealthy is based on whiteness as a system of dominance.

Furthermore, the work that must be enacted on the body in order to appear to be striving towards an optimal state is deeply rooted in class value systems. One must have access to “good” quality fresh foods, one must be able to afford gym memberships and/or join sports organizations and one must have the necessary leisure time to dedicate to these pursuits. Using a Bourdieuan approach, Michael Gard and Jan Wright argue that the wealthy members of society are “the
group most influential in setting social values around health, it is these values that are promoted as the appropriate values for all in relation to health and the body” (2005: 76). The fat bodies of the working class and the poor, particularly the bodies of those who use the welfare system are used to justify class-based stereotypes. For example, the fat “welfare mama” is seen as a body living off the backs of “good,” tax-paying, gainfully-employed citizens. Her fatness is read as gluttony, laziness, and her refusal to get a job. Fatness becomes a means of reading her as not deserving of social assistance. Indeed, her fatness proves that she is a drain to “good” society.

Fat bodies are also used to construct and perpetuate hegemonic ideals of femininity and masculinity which are linked to the notion of citizenship. Women’s bodies and the precarious spaces they take up in Western society have been the focus of much academic theorizing and social concern since the Women’s Movements of the 1970s. The work of many feminist scholars, such as Kim Chernin (1981), Sandra Lee Bartky (1998), and Susan Bordo (1993) addresses how women’s bodies are expected to be slender. The social pressures for women to be thin prompted Susie Orbach, in 1978, to declare “fat as a feminist issue.” The thin female body is the Western ideal, and therefore, failure to maintain a slender body reflects a failure to achieve hegemonic femininity. The bodies of females suffering from anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa have come to represent women’s problematic relationship with their bodies. Both anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa are commonly understood as primarily suffered by young, middle-class white women. Anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa are marked by hyper-vigilance around eating and food; a desire to control the body and a fear of weight gain. Although the anorexic and bulimic body are pathologized, Susan Bordo argues that these bodies reflect the “crystallization of culture” (1993: 139) which encourages individuals to constantly strive towards perfecting their physical bodies. For women, this form of perfection or
Nikolas Rose’s (2007) term - this “optimal state of being” is reflected through achieving and maintaining a slender body.

Fat women of colour must negotiate gender and race-based oppressions, as well as fat phobia. As Andrea Shaw argues, the quintessential image of the “fat black Mammy”, plays an important role in the construction of black femininity in relation to whiteness (2005: 146). Although fat, the body of the Mammy figure is acceptable within the dominant discourse, as she literally and metaphorically serves whiteness. Her fatness indicates a maternal, unthreatening presence to white bodies. She represents a place where both male and female white bodies can be nurtured, cared for and loved. The fat, black woman’s body is important to the construction of white femininity and as such her fatness is not viewed as a threat to the social order. Indeed, white women’s femininity and beauty is contrasted against the maternal body of the Mammy figure (Shaw 2005: 146). Furthermore, the cultural acceptance of black women to be fat is, in part, centred on the commonly-held notion that black women’s fatness is sexually desirable to men within African and Caribbean communities. While the truth of such claims could be disputed, the assumption that fatness is unproblematic for black women relies primarily on their bodies being viewed as sexually desirable to heterosexual black men. Hence, this perceived acceptability of black women’s bodies as fat demonstrates the power associated with male heterosexual desire. It is male heterosexual desire that deems the fat black woman acceptable, not her own desires or actions. The fat black woman must negotiate between race-based oppressions represented by the figure of the Mammy, and gender-based oppressions, wherein her body is deemed to be acceptable as long as she is desired by heterosexual males.

There is considerably less academic work related to masculinity and fatness. Though men are socially encouraged to have bodies that are large and take up space, a fat man’s body is seen
as slipping into effeminacy. Jerry Mosher argues that “the fat male body became a recognizable symbol of insecure male performativity, its phallic potential buried under folds of flesh” (2001: 171). The male body is validated in the public sphere, specifically through its relation to physical labour.

It is also necessary to understand how fatness is utilized in relation to masculinity and race. Sander Gilman discusses how some races, in part through fatness, are understood as effeminate (2004: 81). Although Gilman’s argument is focused primarily on the fat bodies of Jewish men, I argue that for men of colour, fatness can be used to regulate their bodies, as well. For men of colour, fatness is viewed both as a form of failed masculinity, and as a means of perpetuating racist assumptions of non-white bodies as weak and lazy. For fat men of colour, their perceived failed masculinity and laziness enable the worthiness of their citizenship or place within society to be questioned. Though I have attempted to address some concerns related to the complexity of fatness, masculinity and race, I believe this is an area that needs further and more sustained academic inquiry and theorizing which is outside of the scope of my present research.

The social assumptions of fatness, seen as a choice by individuals, deny understandings of fat bodies as reflective of racist, colonial, gendered and class-based systems of oppression. Under these systems, it is comforting to assume that fatness is an individual fault, and that the so-called “Obesity Epidemic” will only be solved by individuals conducting themselves and “taking care” of themselves better. This bodily care is measured in relation to the achievement of an ideal, optimal body that reflects white, middle-class values. Placing the focus of the “obesity epidemic” on the individual enables larger social systems of race, class and gender based oppression to continue to function unchallenged. The critiques raised through Fat Studies shape my interrogation and analysis of how teachers negotiate discourses of the body in schools, and
how fears of fat enable social assumptions and systems of oppression to operate through privileging the white, male, middle-classed body and the social, cultural and moral values that it represents.

My research project is situated within the fields of Fat Studies, Critical Physical Education and Feminist and Queer curriculum studies. Engaging with these three fields of inquiry will enable multiple means of understanding how notions of fitness and health get normalized in schools, and the implications of these normalized practices on teachers.

**Theoretical Framework**

This research project applies a poststructuralist theoretical approach, drawing primarily on the work of Michel Foucault and feminist poststructural theorists. This approach is used in order to examine how teachers understand and negotiate their own bodies in teaching; how these understandings and negotiations influence their teaching about health and fitness in this particular contemporary moment; and how teachers are positioned in discourses of the body.

Poststructural theory ultimately raises questions about truth. It enables us to ask *how* something comes to be understood as true. This is a very different concern then seeking to determine *if* something is true. Underscoring this theoretical approach is the episteme that a truth comes into being or emerges. Truth is not a given, but rather, comes to be taken as such through repeated acts and utterances. Therefore, the “taken-for–grantedness” of a belief or the common sense assumption requires constant repetition to ensure their perpetuation. For example, with disturbing regularity, upon describing my research project to others both within and outside of scholarly circles, I encounter statements such as “but you must think the DPA is a good thing?!” or “I think it is great that teachers are doing this” and my personal favourite “you can’t be suggesting that we stop teaching kids how to be healthy?!” All of these statements are laden with beliefs about the truth of a particular Western, hegemonic view of health, teaching and the body.
Unfortunately, these conversations were not appropriate places for me to ask the questions that would ultimately underpin my research: how do we come to understand fitness in schools as positive? And how do these beliefs about the role of the teacher and teaching practices come to be presumed as good? By using a poststructural framework, I examine the role that the teacher’s body plays in discourses of health and fitness within schools, and the implications of these practices on teachers. Ultimately, this research explores how individuals negotiate discourses within institutions.

The research is organized around three general themes: understandings about bodies; teaching practices related to the body; and negotiating teaching bodies in schools. The research is guided by the following set of questions:

1. **Biopedagogy and the Politics of (a) Teaching Life**
   a. How do teachers understand notions of fitness and health? Notions of healthy body size? Fatness and obesity discourses?
   b. Do teachers understand having a “fit” body as being part of being a “good” teacher?
   c. Do teachers understand part of their role as a teacher to be to promote a “healthy lifestyle” to students? If so, how did they develop this understanding?

2. **Passing as Healthy and Other Performances: The Performative Practice of Teaching**
   a. Do teachers use their own bodies as a pedagogical tool? If so, how?
   b. What types of pedagogical practices do teachers use, if any, that reflect notions of fitness and health?
   c. Are there any pedagogical practices that teachers use to challenge dominant understandings of fitness and health?

3. **Risky Relations, Affective Teaching and the Pedagogical Moment**
   a. Do school curricula ever seem to be at odds with teachers own bodies and/or their experiences of their own bodies? If so, how do teachers negotiate this disjunction while teaching?
   b. Have teachers ever had their own body referenced by students, other teachers or parents when teaching/ or when in a teaching role? If so, was this a negative or positive experience? Why?
Foucault, Discourse and Disciplining the Body

Drawing on the experiences of teachers in the classroom, I examine how dominant discourses related to the body are enmeshed in educational practices and institutions. The term discourse, as used by Foucault, differs from how the term is generally used within linguistics. For Foucault, discourse relates to the relationship between academic disciplines and institutions which construct bodies of knowledge and disciplinary practices. These bodies of knowledge and their disciplinary practices can be both expressions of social control and social change (McHoul and Grace 1993: 26).

Coupland and Gywn describe the Foucauldian approach to the study of the body as consisting of two interrelated elements: the preoccupation with institutions that govern the body and the epistemological view that the body is produced by and exists in discourse (2003: 3). When I employ the term “discourses of the body,” I am referring to the multiple meanings, understandings, practices that we ascribe to the body and the power these meanings, understandings and practices have in our society. For example, when bodies are understood as fit and healthy, these notions carry with them particular forms of power. Alternatively, notions such as fatness or obesity evoke different understandings of the body and different associations to power. The experiences of the participants in my research are used to demonstrate how discourses about the body shape our understandings of the teacher’s body, and how teachers construct discourses of the body in their classrooms.

Discourses of the body consist of many, often contradictory, understandings of the body. However, these understandings exist within a hierarchy of value and power. The understandings that serve as the most pervasive and powerful are known as the dominant understandings. In Canada, medical understandings of the body are expressed in the dominant discourses of the
body. These understandings are related to medical expertise and specialized knowledges. Medical understandings of the body are valued more than other understandings, such as holistic understandings, aesthetic understandings and fat activist understandings, to name but a few. While these understandings may differ, a medical understanding of the body can absorb other, seemingly contradictory understandings of health and the body into the dominant discourse. For example, aesthetic understandings of the body or contemporary understandings of which bodies are considered to be beautiful also come to be understood as bodies that reflect ideals of fitness and health. Discourses of the body are not contained solely to notions of health and fitness; they are also evoked, for example, in relation to emotions and sexual desirability.

Discourses of the body evoke many types of practices related to the body. As Coupland and Gwyn state: “the body has new work to do, symbolic and social as well as physical (2003: 4). These practices are most clearly expressed in terms of health, wherein each individual is expected to engage in regular physical activity; to eat “properly” (which involves not only the types of foods to include or exclude in one’s diet, but also how the foods are prepared and consumed); to get adequate sleep and to avoid or limit the use of alcohol and drugs. It is imperative to understand that these practices are not inherently healthy, but rather have come to be understood and accepted as such through repeated utterances and practices related to the body. Furthermore, we are also expected to control our emotions and our sexual desires, both of which exist by and through discourses of the body. Therefore, teachers are expected to explain and enforce a whole range of proper conduct for students, including conduct that relates to proper health practices; instruction as to correct emotional responses; and instruction regarding appropriate displays of sexual desires and affections.
The work of Michel Foucault has been particularly helpful for conceptualizing the practices of power enacted on and through bodies within institutions. Foucault’s philosophy regarding how discourse functions to construct knowledge of our social worlds and ourselves is useful for social theorists and researchers. Furthermore, his philosophy is useful for educators and curriculum theorists not only because it seeks to explain the social basis for knowledge construction, but also because it demonstrates how such knowledge impacts our understandings of ourselves and our teaching. Educational institutions have become key sites through which the discourses of the “politics of life,” or “the growing capacities to control, manage, engineer, reshape and modulate the very vital capacities of human beings as living creatures” (Rose 2007: 3) can be played out. It is fascinating how particular practices of self-regulation and monitoring have come to be understood as natural or commonsense, and how a particular kind of surveillance in relation to our bodies has come to be seen as something that defines a good student, a good teacher and ultimately, a good person/citizen.

As demonstrated in the previous section, the ideas of who is (and who is not) considered to be a desirable Canadian citizen is intricately linked with racist, sexist and colonial assumptions and practices (Razack 1998; Mohanram 1999; Gilman 2004). It is, therefore, important to acknowledge that there are different consequences and histories related to the regulation and surveillance of particular bodies, and to remember that bodies cannot be separated from the various subject positions related to race, gender, sexuality and class (Gilman 2004; Rose 2007).

Foucault (1977) argues that, beginning in the sixteenth century, power in Western societies was centred in the regulation, control and discipline of bodies. These practices effectively produce what he terms “docile bodies.” He argues that the “docile body” is one which
“may be subjected, used, transformed and improved” (Foucault 1977: 136). Building on Foucault’s philosophy, Nikolas Rose argues that contemporary life is “concerned with our growing capacities to control, manage, engineer, reshape and modulate the very vital capacities of human beings as living creatures” (2007: 3) and that the modifications, rationalities and technologies of government increase the responsibility of individuals to manage their own affairs (2007: 4). Rose claims that there is an emergence of what he calls the “biological citizen” that seeks to highlight the ways in which citizenship has been shaped by conceptions of the specific vital characteristics of human beings (2007: 4).

Foucault argues that during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the body entered into “a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it” (1977: 138). For Foucault, this time marked a notable change in how power was manifested. Specifically, power shifted from being held by a sole sovereign, with the right to control, who lived and died, to power, existing through whole systems of institutions and apparatuses whose main concern is to regulate, monitor and police daily life.

Subjects are produced through particular methods, referred to by Foucault as disciplines. Disciplines control operations of the body, and in turn, produce what Foucault calls “docile bodies,” which are bodies “that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved” (1977: 136-137). Furthermore, discipline simultaneously increases the forces of the body and diminishes these same forces. Alec McHoul and Wendy Grace argue that disciplinary techniques reflect rational procedures for producing certain bodily effects (1993: 68).

Foucault outlines four means through which bodies become disciplined (1977: 141-145). The first is through the organization of space. For Foucault, this organization operates through enclosure, or physically separating some members of society from the rest of the population. For
example, schools confine students (and teachers) to a particular place. However, the organization of space is not constant or rigid, but rather, is fluid and flexible.

The second disciplinary technique referred to by Foucault is partitioning. Foucault argues that within what he calls the “disciplinary machinery”, “each individual has his own place; and each place its individual” (1977: 143). Referring back to the example of the school, once physically enclosed from the general public, schools are then further divided into spaces into which only particular individuals may enter. For example, the teacher’s lounge, or the boys’ change room and further still, into individual spaces such as desks and lockers. It is through the regulation of these spaces that “one ‘knows one’s place’ in the general economy of space associated with disciplinary power” (McHoul and Grace 1993: 69).

Individuals are disciplined not only spatially but temporally as well. Discipline breaks down a set period of time in order to intensify the use of every available moment (McHoul & Grace 1993: 69). The clearest example of this technique in education is the use of a timetable and the bell used within schools to mark time and labour on the body. The bell rings at 9:00 a.m. and students enter the classroom along with the teacher. The first lesson of the day concludes when the bell rings again, signalling that it is time to begin the next subject. As Foucault argues, the aim of these disciplinary means is to be able to “establish presences and absences, to know where and how to locate individuals, ... [and] to supervise the conduct of each individual, to assess it, to judge it, to calculate its qualities or merits” (1977: 143). It is through the regulation of spaces and activity that disciplines construct a particular type of body. For example, the body of the student is defined by the spaces and activities that are inhabited and engaged with throughout the day.

The third technique of disciplinary power is division and articulation of activities. Once separated from the population and organized by time and activity, this third technique of
disciplinary power seeks to mark individuals clearly within a hierarchy. Activities are organized by stages, as well as by individuals. This form of disciplinary power is particularly evident in the organization of schools into grade levels. Each grade represents the individual’s stage level, such as grade three. Grades (or students’ marks) also represent an individual’s abilities, as determined by the quality of work they produce and by how they perform compared to others in the same grade level. These divisions serve to mark the place of particular individuals clearly within the hierarchy.

Lastly, Foucault argues that “discipline is an art of rank,” it is a “technique for the transformation of arrangements” (1977: 146). The techniques of disciplinary power are brought into coordination with each other. It is through this structure that the disciplinary power of education serves as a seemingly natural extension of other disciplinary functions. As a result, it becomes sensible that schools are called upon to be concerned with the monitoring of the health and well-being, the hygiene and the moral character of students. Ultimately, as Foucault argues, discipline “individualizes bodies by a location that does not give them a fixed position, but distributes them and circulates them in a network of relations” (1977: 146).

In feminist poststructural theory, the body is not treated as neutral, but as deeply embedded within everyday life practices and interlocked with relations of gender, race, class, and sexuality. For example, feminist scholar Chris Weedon explains how a new mother negotiating the discourse of motherhood for the first time may feel like an unnatural or bad mother (1997: 33). She goes on to argue that the current organization of childcare in Western culture is a result of social and historical developments in the organization of work, and that contemporary understandings of mothering conflict with other subject positions which women are encouraged to assume (1997: 33). Similar to Chris Weedon’s example of individuals negotiating discourses
of motherhood, teachers must negotiate the discourses of teaching and education. Therefore, the belief that one is a “good teacher” or an “unfit teacher” must take into account larger social expectations of teaching and must consider the particular roles that teachers are expected to play within education. Furthermore, feminist poststructural educational theorists argue that the bodies of teachers are never neutral, and are directly implicated in the construction of knowledge and power (Davies 1992; Gore 1992). A feminist poststructural approach extends Foucault’s theoretical framework and enables me to focus on the materiality and specificity of teachers’ bodies in schools.

In her analysis of power relations across different pedagogical sites, Jennifer Gore argues that the range of teaching practices and relationships available to teachers, regardless of where they take place, is limited (1998: 232). She argues that “the institutions of schooling might produce its own ‘regime of pedagogy,’ a set of power-knowledge relations, of discourses and practices, which constrains the most radical of educational agendas” (Gore 1998: 232). Gore’s argument broadens the approach to researching education, as she uses particular moments in teaching to raise larger questions of power relations within the institution and the state. Similarly, my research, while located in teachers’ experiences across a range of classroom experiences, demonstrates the pervasiveness of discourses of the body, particularly those related to health, fitness and wellness and how such discourses relate to broader concerns about population, conduct and governance.

Foucault argues that “we live in the era of ‘governmentality’” (1991: 103). Foucault employed the term governmentality through three interrelated definitions:

1. The collection of institutions, procedures and tactics that enable power directed towards the population to exist;
2. The formation in the West, over time, of specific governmental structures and practices, along with the development of specialized knowledge that functions through and simultaneously enables these structures and practices;

3. The result of the process of transformation from the Middle Age to the state that emerged during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. (Foucault 1991: 102-3)

The notion of governmentality is examined by Foucault with particular reference to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and argues that questions related to government became of particular importance in sixteenth century. One such line of questioning related to the government of children and the great problematic of pedagogy (Foucault 1991: 87). Foucault argues that the “art of government” is to establish continuity in both upwards and downwards directions. Upward continuity or “the pedagogies of the prince” means that a person will only be good at governing the state if he can first govern himself. Whereas downward continuity occurs when individuals only behave as they should when the state is well-run first (Foucault 1991: 91-2). Foucault goes on to conclude that “the prince’s pedagogical formation ensures the upwards continuity of the forms of government, and polices the downwards one” (1991: 92). While much of Foucault’s attention was directed towards the specific power shifts that occurred during the sixteenth century, this historical moment would come to shape contemporary forms and practices of governance. Indeed, Foucault’s art of government can be acutely observed in contemporary schooling practices wherein attention is given both to teaching students how to properly govern themselves and to policing particular behaviours and actions of individuals who do not behave or act in a way that reflects a well-run state.

This project in particular takes up the role of governmentality as it relates to how power is directed towards the population by examining the institution of education and the pedagogical
practices associated with it. Judith Rabak Wagener argues that teaching practices enable increasing scrutiny and management of students’ “lives, thoughts, actions, and behaviours” (1998: 145). Drawing on Foucault, Rabak Wagener argues “that school subjects contain multiple and interweaving discourses, which, in their modern and technical construction, make possible a continual micro-management of individual behaviour” (1998: 145). The figure of the schoolchild presents an interesting subject through which educational researchers can examine the disciplinary practices and procedures described by Foucault.

What about the classroom teacher? Are they merely conceptualized as guards of the state, who ensure the scrutiny and management of students’ bodies and minds? Perhaps in some ways, this is so, but their experiences in the classroom demonstrate that they are also subject to scrutinizing and managing practices. Stephen Ball’s work demonstrates how teachers are themselves subject to performing particular management practices. Ball argues that contemporary teachers “are represented and encouraged to think about themselves as individuals who calculate about themselves, ‘add value’ to themselves, improve their productivity, live an existence of calculation” (2004: 153). Ball demonstrates how teachers are called upon to manage themselves and their careers through very particular practices.

Sheila Cavanagh demonstrates how white female teachers in the early 20th century were viewed with increasing suspicion and were subject to both regulations with respect to both their gender identifications and their sexual orientations. Cavanagh argues that:

so-called experts in medicine, education, psychology, and mental health were interested in female teachers and their departures from traditionally assigned, normative feminine social scripts. Many lifelong teachers were thought to be masculine, feminist ‘unwholesome’, and concerns were raised about the impact such women had on school-aged children. (2006: 424-5)
Cavanagh demonstrates how historically, female teachers’ bodies and lives have been subject to particular scrutiny and surveillance.

Although diverse in their subject matter and historical moment, the practices that Ball and Cavanagh address in their works can be seen in how we conceptualize the role of a teacher and how teachers understand both the work that they do and what the profession requires of them. For my research, I analyze particular moments of teaching as described to me by teachers wherein the teacher’s body becomes the nexus for understanding the contradictions and complexity of contemporary power and governance.

I have approached analyzing teaching moments through three key concepts: biopedagogy; performativity and affect. Each concept is given an individual chapter and outline in the following section. However, I would like to note that this organizational structure is employed in an attempt to be as clear and concise to the reader as possible. Unfortunately, this structure suggests that these concepts are theoretically isolated and distinct from one another. This is not my intention, and I would ask the reader to understand these concepts as constituting a theoretical web of understanding. When pulling one line of inquiry into focus in a particular chapter, the others are always present as well.

**Biopedagogy and the Politics of (a) Teaching Life**

Biopower, or the power over life, is manifested in the performances of the body and attends to the processes of life. The related concepts of biopower and biopedagogy are of particular use for this project as they allow for an analysis of how power is manifested through the body in the moment of teaching. An analysis applying these concepts can reveal the complex and contradictory ways through which the teacher’s body is understood as a nexus of power in the classroom, and the implications of these understandings for teaching. Foucault argues that the era of biopower resulted in “numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugation of
bodies and the control of populations” (Foucault 1977: 140). A Foucauldian approach to power understands it not only as existing in top-down hierarchies of domination that are negative, censoring and policing but rather as circling through systems of knowledge. Therefore, Foucault also posits power as a positive and productive force. Biopower is expressed through the contemporary practices that regulate and govern our lives as demonstrated in the example above. It is through these practices that biopower produces particular types of subjects.

Foucault proposes that the power over life functions through two interrelated poles: the anatamo-politics of the individual body and the biopolitics of the species body. Anatamo-politics of the individual body are evident in attempts to extract our bodies’ potential by maximizing its efficiency and longevity. Anatamo-politics are manifested in techniques of self-enhancement such as physical fitness and dietary regimes. The biopolitics of the species body is concerned with populations of individuals. This pole functions through the measurement and recording of life process, such as birth and death rates and the reproductive capacities of a population, as well as through the monitoring and surveillance of disease.

The contemporary concern about obesity, for example, illustrates how these two poles are interconnected. Obesity is located in/on individual bodies and therefore the means of controlling weight is understood to be occurring at an individual level. In other words, each individual is expected to engage in physical activity and to monitor his or her daily food intake in order to achieve and maintain optimum weight and to avoid becoming obese. Simultaneously, the concerns about a so-called “obesity epidemic” function through the biopolitics of the species body, as obesity is understood to weaken entire populations and reduce the life expectancy of the next generation. Therefore, warnings to Canadians to be vigilant about their weight through
particular diet and exercise regimes are bolstered by implicit claims that if body weight is left unchecked, the Canadian population will be weakened and potentially cease to exist.

Paul Rabinow and Nikolas Rose (2006) propose a set of operational tools for critical inquiry using the concept of biopower. They claim that as an analytical tool, the concept of biopower must utilize three key elements. While I am generally suspicious of any claims made on the correct or proper use of Michel Foucault’s work, the elements outlined by Rabinow and Rose are useful for this particular project and resonate with my own application of biopower as a tool of analysis. The elements of analysis using biopower in relation to my research project are outlined below.

The first element of analysis is that the research must analyze one or more truth discourses regarding the vital characteristics of healthy human beings. However, these discourses are not limited to those produced through biological knowledge per say, and may make use of demographic, sociological or hybridized styles of thought (Rabinow and Rose 2006: 197). The specific truth discourse explored and interrogated in this research is that physical activity is desirable and necessary for good health and for the overall wellness of an individual.

The second element of analysis is that the research must reflect strategies for intervention upon a collective existence in the name of life and health and may be directed towards a particular nation, society or pre-given community and/or be directed at a particular biosocial collective such as a particular race, gender or religion (Rabinow and Rose 2006: 197). Health interventions, such as the Daily Physical Activity requirement in public schools, are clearly directed at the bodies of students in an attempt to improve their health. While the focus of the DPA initiative is on the health of student bodies, this research focuses on how these interventions
on student bodies were made through teachers and considers the impact that such health initiatives have on the bodies of teachers.

The last element of analysis is that the research must reflect a mode of subjectification through which individuals are brought to work on themselves under particular forms of authority in relation to truth discourses and through practices in the name of their own health, the health of their family or some other collective, or in the name of the health of the population as a whole (Rabinow and Rose 2006: 197). While students’ bodies are clearly defined through the DPA initiative as the ones needing to be “fixed” through specific instruction and authority, this research focuses on the bodies of those in positions of authority, specifically, teachers and how they take up these truth discourses.

Biopedagogy is an extension of the concept of biopower. The concept of biopower refers to the power that functions through the administration of life. To add specificity to my analysis, the concept of biopedagogy is used in order to examine how biopower is applied to teaching. Harwood argues that biopedagogy is the “art and practice of teaching ‘life’” (2009: 21). Related to Foucault’s conceptualization that power over life operates through both anatamo-politics of the individual body and the biopolitics of the species body, Harwood defines biopedagogy as the pedagogical concern with both the individual body and the population as a whole (2009: 21). Biopedagogy offers a means by which to formulate an analysis on the “concealed pedagogical practices of biopower” (Harwood 2009: 21). Jan Wright uses the term biopedagogies to describe “the normalising and regulating practices in schools” (2009: 1). According to Wright, these practices have been intensifying due to increasing concerns over the perceived obesity epidemic (2009: 1). The term biopedagogy highlights the ways in which the body is made meaningful and constituted through ‘pedagogical sites’ wherein the body has the power to teach, to engage
learners to make sense of their worlds and to influence how they act towards themselves and others (Wright 2009: 7). Biopedagogy enables analysis of the discourses, practices and regulations related to the processes of life that are manifested in the teaching profession.

Furthermore, Wright argues that “biopedagogical practices produce truths associated with the obesity epidemic and include, for example, the ‘strategies for intervention,’ the power relations, and the modes of instruction across a wide range of social and institutional sites” (2009: 9). While biopedagogy is ultimately concerned with how schools teach students to work on themselves, the specific ways in which individuals use discourses of fitness, wellness and fatness are diverse, contradictory and complicated. As Wright points out, how individuals use these discourses is “mediated by their personal experiences, their own embodiment, their interactions with other ways of knowing, [and] other truths and operations of power in relation to the knowledge produced around health, obesity and the body” (2009: 9). The rest of this chapter will focus on how the teachers who participated in my research project understand and use discourses of fitness, wellness and health, as well as fatness and obesity, in their classroom teaching, in their approaches to teaching and in their interactions with students.

**Passing as Healthy and Other Performances: The Performative Practice of Teaching**

Teaching is performative. Indeed, the idea of putting on a show or of acting the part of a teacher was discussed frequently by the participants. While many teachers would conceptualize much of what they do in front of the class as a performance, the concept of performativity allows for an analysis of how that performance in the moment of teaching also demonstrates how broader social and political discourses are enacted in particular situations.

Sociologist Erving Goffman’s (1959) pivotal work in “The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life” provides great insight into how the concept of performance can be used to
examine our everyday interactions. Goffman suggests that individuals require observers to believe that they have the attributes that they are performing and that they are who they appear to be. He goes on to argue that this impression of reality results in one of two extremes for individuals. In one extreme, they become fully convinced of their own act, they “can be sincerely convinced that the impression of reality which he stages is the real reality” (1959: 17). On the other extreme, the performer may not be believed at all in her or his performance (1959: 17). Goffman refers to individuals who believe in their performance as “sincere” and those who do not believe their own act as “cynics” (1959: 18). Cynical performers may delude their observers for the observers’ own good, or for the good of the community (Goffman 1959: 18). The concept of the cynical performer was often evident in how the participants described their approaches to teaching and is explored in-depth in Chapter Four.

Postmodern and poststructuralist theories have a general distrust in the presentation of metanarrative and its claims to truth – truth-telling strategies which dominate modernist and structuralist thinking. By contrast, the notion of performativity reflects the postmodern/poststructuralist emphasis on an event or a specific moment in time, rather than a concern about representing an absolute truth (Carlson 2004: 152).

In her work on gender performativity in the early nineties, specifically in her essay “Imitation and Gender Insubordination” (1991) and in her books, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion* (1990) and *Bodies that Matter: The Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (1993) Judith Butler uses the notion of performativity. By using the concept of performativity Butler has been able to raise important critical questions about sexuality and identity construction and challenges the perceived naturalness of heterosexuality. She argues:

> Performative acts are forms of authoritative speech: most performatives, for instance, are statements that, in the uttering, also perform a certain action and exercise a binding
power. (...) If the power of discourse to produce that which it names is linked with the question of performativity, then the performative is one domain in which power acts as discourse. (Butler 1993: 225)

Examining how performativity is taken up in research participants’ experiences in the classroom enables an analysis of how particular forms of discursive power are enacted, particularly those forms of discursive power that relate to the body and dominant notions of health and fitness.

The crux of the concept of performativity is the idea that there is no authentic self behind the performance of a self. It is only through the repetition of a given identity that it comes to assume the discursive power of being real. This is not to suggest that there are not very real consequences for failing to perform an identity correctly according to a given social context. We cannot simply opt out of the performative aspect of identities. Jeffery Weeks discusses the paradox of identity in relation to social change. He describes the paradox of identity and liberation as follows:

If [identities] are asserted too firmly, there are dangers of fixing identifications and values that are really necessarily always in flux; yet if their validity is denied, there is an even greater danger of disempowering individuals and groups from the best means of mobilizing for radical change (Weeks 2004/1991: 163).

For those working with a poststructural framework, it can be difficult to reconcile the belief that identities are givens with the desire to work towards social justice by organizing around marginalized identities. By examining the performative aspects of this power and privilege and conceptualizing these performances as fluid, as my research seeks to do, does not mean that change can be enacted easily or without conflict.

The concept of performativity enables conceptualizing identities as constituted through repetitive performative acts and discourses. Subjectivities can only be logically enacted within a specific space and time and through a particular body. Indeed, the subject only comes into being
through time, space and body. The temporal aspect, or the time during which a subject emerges and functions must be taken into account, as subjects do not exist ahistorically but within particular moments in time, as well as within larger temporal periods of discourses and institutions. The corporeal or physical aspect of subjectivity is necessary to take into account as subjectivity is played out on, in, and through our bodies.

Therefore by using performance and performativity as key concepts in my research, importance is placed on particular bodies and their experiences in specific contexts and moments in time. My project emphasizes how people involved in the teaching profession come to understand their bodies through the performative acts they engage in as they negotiate contemporary schooling spaces. Performativity is a central analytical concept in my research as it offers a means of interrogating how both concepts of health and concepts of good teaching are constructed through repetitive acts.

**Risky Relations, Affective Teaching and the Pedagogical Moment**

A number of theorists (Boler 1999; Sedgwick 2003; Gatens 2004; Probyn 2005; Colebrook 2006; Ahmed 2010) have used the concept of affect in their work. Indeed in the previous decade there has been, what Ruth Leys (2011) calls, a “turn to affect” in the humanities and social sciences. The current theoretical interest in affect has led to the concept being applied in many complicated and often contradictory ways. The notion of affect is particularly difficult to define because, as Mark Paterson argues, it is an ambivalent concept that is “both active and passive in operation, entailing the diametricality of affecting and being affected (2005: 63). He goes on to explain that “affect is not just how an individual might feel, or what a particular body can do, but what capacities it might have for relations with other bodies” (Paterson 2005: 165).
By contrast, Claire Colebrook defines affect as “just that vibratory or felt movement that may or may not result in action” (2006: 54).

While there is no theoretical agreement on exactly what is meant by the term, affect is consistently applied by scholars in relation to the study of the body. The frequency of this application is the reason I have chosen to “turn to affect” within my own research. In my analysis, I use the concept of affect to speak to the complexity of experiences related to bodies and teaching. Affect is particularly useful in “getting at” the complex and meaningful moments of teaching with the flesh, as it enables a language that addresses these elusive spaces. Ruth Leys (2011) suggests that the concept of affect has made its way into the social sciences and humanities through research in neuroscience. Leys is critical of some affect theorists, such as Eve Sedgwick, who draw on affect research in neuroscience. She claims that such theorists have relied on neuroscience to “provide the empirical evidence they seek for a non-intentionalist, corporeal account of emotions” (Leys 2011: 439). Leys goes on to argue that the soundness of this neuroscience research, particularly that of Silvan Tomkins, has been questioned within the field of neuroscience itself.

Leys’ critique of affect raises some very interesting questions: Why do scholars in social science and humanities need to draw on science to validate their own work? If work in the sciences that employs affect is questioned, does that mean that the work in the social sciences and humanities is nullified? Is it possible for there to be a theoretical flow between these two seemingly distinct areas in which affect simultaneously gets deemed irrelevant in one research area while offering insights into another?

Ultimately, I believe that an in-depth response to these questions is beyond the scope of my project. However, I raise them to suggest how contentious the concept of affect is. Indeed, of
all the theoretical concepts and perspectives I have engaged with throughout this research project, affect leaves me (and many of my first readers) with a sense of unease. Leys argues that affect theorists view the concept as “prior to intentions, meanings, reasons, and beliefs – because they are non-signifying, autonomic processes that take place below the threshold of conscious awareness and meaning” (2011: 437). I am keenly aware that using an ambiguous term like affect, particularly if it is to be understood as occurring in the pre-linguist, pre-cognitive and pre-conscious moments can quickly lead to a form of biological essentialism. That is to suggest that our physical responses to a given moment or stimulus are predetermined or “hardwired.” This is not a truth in which I wish to invest. Rather, I understand the possibilities of affect as existing in the space wherein I can analyze how the teacher’s body might be at play within discursive structures and can be used to convey meaning in its own right.

Affect is often related to emotions but it is important to distinguish the difference between the two terms. Mark Paterson conceptualizes emotion as “the personal capture of feelings of intensity.” By contrast, he characterizes affect as the:

unqualified intensity, an intensity that is actualised in the sensible materiality of the body, but which opens up this actualised intensity into something mutual between bodies, or between bodies and things, a passage between intra- and inter-corporeal intensities (2005: 64).

I understand emotions to be the residue of affect; they are the sensations and sentiments that linger on after an affective moment. Affect is a space of possibility, or as Paterson puts it, the intensity, between two bodies or a body and an object. Affect is the possibility, emotion is its expression.

Sarah Ahmed’s work on happiness provides a useful application of the concept of affect. Ahmed explains happiness and its perceived goodness as follows:
A happy life, a good life, hence involves the regulations of desire. It is not simply that we desire happiness, but that happiness is imagined as what you get in return for desiring well. Good subjects will not experience pleasure from the wrong objects (they will be hurt by them or indifferent to them) and will only experience a certain amount of pleasure from the right objects. We learn to experience some things as pleasure – as being good – where the experience itself becomes the truth of the object (“it is good”) as well as the subject (we are “good”). It is not only that the association between objects and affects is preserved through habit; we also acquire good tastes through habit. When history becomes second nature, the affect seems obvious or even literal, as if it follows directly from what has already been given. We assume that we experience delight because “it” is delightful. (2010: 37)

Ahmed claims that the desire for happiness means that we are directed in specific ways, as happiness is assumed to follow from some life choices, and not from others (2010: 54). Accordingly, happiness is experienced when one has become accustomed to being affected by situations and objects correctly. Happiness is not achieved when confronting a particular affective moment, but rather when an individual has learned to interpret a moment as one that imparts happiness.

She goes on to argue that happiness is crucial to education in as much as education is about directing children’s potential (2010: 54). Ahmed’s examination of affect has distinctly pedagogical implications. As my research demonstrates, a tremendous amount of a teacher’s energy and attention is focused on imparting to students the keys to “a happy, good life”. However, the affective moments in the classroom cannot always be contained within this pedagogical goal. Regulating desire is no simple task. Indeed, as I will demonstrate in Chapter Five, often teachers confront spaces and moments of teaching that exceed the regulation of classroom spaces. These moments are not able to be defined easily or controlled when emotional outcomes are unknown or unexpected.

Affect is used to analyze the space of possibilities in a teaching moment and how these possibilities get mapped onto and expressed through the teacher’s body. The participants’
experiences are used to point to affective moments in the classroom, with their memories and emotions acting as signposts to guide our understanding of what might be possible in the classroom.

It is my hope that these three concepts will provide meaningful analysis of the participants’ experiences and can help to represent the complex and complicated world of teaching. I begin with my analysis of the challenges of negotiating contemporary notions of fitness and health in schools and the expectation that teachers serve as role models - both to their students and to their communities.
CHAPTER THREE:

BIOPEDAGOGY AND THE POLITICS OF (A) TEACHING LIFE

In this chapter, I draw on the concept of biopedagogy to examine the discourses and practices that teachers engage with during their everyday experiences in schools. Specifically, the following questions are explored: how do teachers come to understand themselves through dominant discourses of fitness and health, body size and fatness? Do teachers understand having a “fit” body as being part of being a good teacher? And lastly, do teachers understand promoting a “healthy lifestyle” as a part of their teaching role and if so, how did they develop this understanding? Using the understandings of biopower and biopedagogy that I outlined in the previous chapter, I examine how teachers incorporate health and fitness into their teaching. Lastly, I examine specific biopedagogical practices. The following chapter examines how these practices, regulations and controls are manifested in classroom teaching and ultimately how they are used to perpetuate and maintain expectations of teachers and their role in the construction of the Canadian citizen.

The Believable Body: Examining Discourses that Inform Teachers’ Understandings about Bodies

The dominant discourse for understanding the health of a body that the teachers used drew on notions such as wholeness, balance and holistic wellness. Though the participants understood health as highly individualized, they used health discourses in very similar ways. The participants were explicit in their explanations that health and fitness are not about physical appearance or about attaining a particular physique. Rather health and fitness become highly individualized states of being that are unique to each person. So while health and fitness are individualized, how healthiness is achieved is remarkably uniform. Specifically, we must work on ourselves through numerous bodily interventions. The complexities of this work were
described by the participants. Research participants discussed physical activity and eating nutritious food in the most detail, however, hygiene and elements like spirituality and emotional resolve were also mentioned. These understandings were primarily developed through “common sense” or experiential knowledge rather than by engaging in expert knowledges.

For example:

**Louise:** I think even as adults we need to get away from that because we see thin as fit and perfect. But, you know.... I know thin people that do nothing and I have a friend who is probably 40 pounds overweight is fit as I have ever seen anyone – just that is her body type.

Later in the focus group interview, Louise explained further why she believes it is important to challenge the belief that fitness and health can be determined by appearance alone. Her understanding was shaped in part by her two daughters. She explained:

**Louise:** I have a whole issue with this...all of the media is like “childhood obesity”...like it really kinda burns my...because it is not as simple a problem as they are making it sound and it is not as neglectful...it is not truly just about what children eat or drink. They come with so much of their physical make up. And I know that this is very near and dear to my heart...Alice knows my children...I have a 5’8 12 year-old daughter, who is thin and long and lean. I have a 9 year-old, who is just about as tall as me and she is quite big. If I had to pick which one is more active, it would be my 9 year-old. Which one makes better choices in what she eats, it’s my 9 year-old.

Louise’s observations and understandings of her daughters’ physiques demonstrate how she interprets and makes use of the discourses of health and fitness. Her interpretation that her daughter who is “quite big” is the healthier of her children challenges the prevailing discourse that health and fitness can be determined by physical appearance. However, while Louise challenges the discourse of fitness and health based on appearance, she still reproduces the understanding that health and fitness are linked with practices of self–care, such as making better food choices and being physically active. Ultimately, her understanding of health and fitness is
grounded in notions of working on ourselves in particular ways, specifically through diet and exercise. This understanding of health and wellness was also taken up in a discussion between Serena, Darcy and Rebecca, and is highlighted in the following excerpt from the focus group:

Serena: I mean you can be fit, for example, cardiovascular fit be able to run the Toronto marathon but not look conventionally fit.
Amy: Right.
Rebecca: I think if you could run a marathon you would look fit.
Darcy: I didn’t look fit. Not at all.
Serena: No. Me neither.
Rebecca: You ran a whole marathon?
Darcy: I did and I still had a muffin top\(^5\).
[Group laughs]
Darcy: I did. I was hoping it would drop off by that point, but it didn’t.
Serena: I mean my mother could run...I mean used to in her 40s and 50s, [she] could run further than me.

This conversation between Serena, Rebecca and Darcy highlights their individual understandings of appearance in relation to fitness and health. Though Rebecca is sceptical and believes that marathon runners will look a certain way, Darcy uses her personal experiences with running marathons to challenge Rebecca’s understanding. Darcy is further supported by Serena and her family experience, as her mother’s appearance challenged the dominant understandings of what a runner looks like. However, once again, all participants’ understandings of fitness and health are underpinned by the notion that regardless of what you look like, it is necessary to work on yourself.

Ashlee also echoes the understanding that health and fitness are not necessarily linked to a particular physicality. She notes that her definition of health also “include[s] personal hygiene, how you present yourself ... because children are looking up to you.” Ashlee understands that

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\(^5\) A muffin top is a slang term used to describe the bulge of flesh and/or fat that appears over the waistline of pants or skirts. Generally the term is used in reference to women’s bodies.
teachers should model the importance of good hygiene to their students through hygienic self-care of their own bodies. This discourse on hygiene, its extension into public health, and the expectation that instructing students on proper hygiene is a part of a teacher’s role has a long history in Canadian public schooling. Indeed, during the early development of the public school system in Canada, the teacher’s role changed from being traditionally instructive to include wider socializing and civilizing roles (Tomkins 1986: 30). The school curriculum was expanded to include medical and dental inspections, and “daily health inspection became a routine task for the elementary school teacher, associated with the teaching” (Tomkins 1986: 30). Given this historical context in which public school teaching emerged, it is not surprising that Ashlee understands communicating the importance of hygiene to her students as an element of her job.

Furthermore, “how you present yourself” is also important for teachers, as fitness and health can be reflected by looking a particular way. So while Ashlee is clear that she does not believe that health and fitness are directly linked to a particular body type, she does believe that the overall appearance of the body is used to convey a sense of health and fitness. The importance and value of “working on ourselves” is demonstrated by participants’ understandings of fitness and health. This work is undertaken through the practices of a diet comprised of “healthy” or good foods, adequate physical activity and attention to personal hygiene and appearance. It is evident in their understandings that these practices are not limited to one particular body type or size, but rather should be undertaken by everyone in order to be healthy.

In Fat Studies and in online fat activism forums, such an understanding is described through the “good fattie/bad fattie” binary, wherein a “good fattie” is someone who, while in appearance is fat, undertakes all the correct practices associated with health and fitness, regular exercise, and who focuses specifically on limiting and/or regulating food intake; eating a diet
including fresh fruits and vegetables; lean meats, and foods that are high in fibre and low in sugar and sodium. Understanding fatness through this binary, Kathleen LeBesco argues “that fatness is endorsed only to a certain degree, and not embraced without exception, as is the goal of many fat activists” (2004: 62).

By comparison, a “bad fattie” does not engage in the practices of self-care described above, and actively resists, rejects and rebels against these practices. It is this active refusal to engage in these practices that defines a “bad fattie”. For example, individuals who are injured and cannot exercise are not necessarily “bad fatties” if they express remorse for their failure to adequately care for themselves. Given my research participants’ understandings of health and fitness as something that cannot be determined by appearance alone, I argue that the “bad fattie” is much more about failing to engage with the practices of self-care than it is about the failure to achieve a particular body type.

While Louise, Darcy, Rebecca, Serena and Ashlee reflected an understanding of health and wellness based on specific practices related to the individual body, Jeffery and Anthony understood health and fitness through broader discourses. For example, Jeffery claimed that fitness “is a ‘gestalt,’” remarking “I don’t think it is the physicality that necessarily dictates how well I am doing spiritually and psychologically. It is a whole package.” In a similar vein, Anthony describes through his writing, provoked from the Material – Social Consequential writing prompt (Appendix I), an understanding of wellness that incorporates an understanding and awareness of the environment. Anthony wrote:

As human beings, I feel we are becoming more and more distanced from Earth and from natural processes. Many students don’t know where food comes from. They don’t know what is connected to what. As technology serves to “connect” us electronically – we are more and more “disconnected” from one another and from the natural world. As the saying goes, “All things are connected” – we learn this from various aboriginal paths and wisdom figures.
Anthony is conveying a broader understanding of health that can be connected to Canadian Aboriginal approaches to and understandings of health. For example, as discussed in Chapter Two, Jennifer Poudrier and Janice Kennedy argue that the concept of the “healthy body” for First Nations women is quite different from the ways in which the concept is understood in the dominant, white society in the West. Their work with Indigenous communities in Saskatchewan revealed that their participants saw health as deeply connected to culture, gender and history and explained how their understandings of healthy bodies were shaped by their family contexts and generally interpreted health through a broader social context (Poudrier and Kennedy 2008: 19). Laura Azzarito argues that “interventions deny the hidden historical construction of fitness and dieting practices as a ‘white thing’” (2009: 186). This example illustrates how the perceived problems of fatness and the construction of health and fitness must be understood in relation to socio-cultural factors.

Anthony is taking up a discourse of health that is connected to environmental concerns, notions of spirituality and a reclaiming of something that he feels has been “lost”. This discourse positions nature and “the natural” as healthy. He perceives solutions to contemporary health problems as being located in Canadian aboriginal belief systems. Through the appropriation of Indigenous cultures, this discourse ignores histories of racism and colonialism and continues to place Indigenous peoples of Canada within nature (opposed to culture or civil society). Furthermore, this discourse does not attempt to challenge the place of innocence that the white, Western subject takes up and obscures an examination of how whiteness is implicated.

Using participants’ understandings of fitness, health and wellness and how such understandings relate to the body, the following section examines the notions of fitness and home that are taken up in the classroom through the body of the teacher.
Is a Fit Teacher a Good Teacher? Examining the Role of Fitness in Teaching

Students’ bodies are regulated through various techniques of biopower in schools, as discussed in Chapter Two. While teachers are responsible for enforcing these techniques, they too are regulated and controlled by them. Their own bodies get used by the institution through their role as enforcers and they, in turn, are regulated and controlled through the same practices. For example, many of the participants discuss being unable to leave the classroom to go the washroom, particularly in elementary schools, as they are responsible for supervising their students at all times. Even at recess, they are often required to supervise children in the school yard. Not being able to leave the classroom to use the washroom demonstrates how teachers are physically regulated and controlled by the school timetable and the role that they are expected to play within it.

Teaching places particular physical demands on teachers’ bodies to be a certain way. Indeed, for many participants, fitness is an important element in the effectiveness of their teaching. Jeffery, Anthony and Elizabeth all describe how their own fitness plays (or played) an important role in their classroom teaching. Jeffery believes that the more fit a teacher is, the more able she or he is able to interact with kids at their desks, which makes it easier to build relationships with students. Similarly, Anthony describes how teaching music requires a certain degree of physical fitness:

Anthony: I have been a music teacher most of my career. Teaching kindergarten is a very active musical program. You know you are dancing with them and jumping, and I would get a good workout. And I used to actually sit on the floor with the kids, until I sort of started to feel it in my knees. So I managed to get a little chair, so I could sort of be down almost with them. I was told by my doctor not to sit cross-legged all the time because it was starting to have effects on my knees. Teaching music is quite physical. It is not the gym but it is still...you know...dance, movement, teaching the breathing apparatus, all of that stuff.
Although in a different focus group, Elizabeth echoes the understandings of Jeffery and Anthony. Elizabeth explains: “I think it is necessary to be healthy to be a good teacher, especially if you are in kind of primary grades and even junior where there is a lot, I’d say stress on your body, just from getting up and down or on and off the floor all the time.” While Elizabeth believes that teaching is very physical, she does not interpret being “overweight” as an element that would negatively impact an individual’s teaching practices.

All three research participants describe the physicality of teaching and the strain that the everyday demands of the profession can have on their bodies. Being able to connect with students “on their level,” particularly in elementary school, is understood by participants to be a key element of effective teaching and a desirable goal for positive teacher-student relationships.

Elena described a more complicated relationship to fitness and teaching.

**Elena:** This is something that I definitely struggled with because when I was in Teacher’s College, teacher training was when the Daily Physical Activity was being piloted. And it was being piloted in the school I was doing my practicum in. So, that really set the tone, in terms of my Teacher’s College, of what a good teacher is. So that theoretical knowledge I gained there, and then that experience being in the classroom, being guided and mentored. So having that experience, and being in there where we are encouraging fitness, we’re encouraging being active and healthy, certainly caused as lot of ...or created that image of needing a fit body to be a good teacher. ... So that kind of set that tone for me. Certainly, once I graduated, I went away for a while, and then I came back and started supply teaching, and right away I could feel that pressure where I needed to have a more fit body. So I started working out every single day and things like that. So, certainly, that was part of initial teacher identity was this idea of fitness because of that pilot program.

She went on to describe how some teachers in the school were indifferent to this physical activity initiative: however, these were also the teachers who had been there the longest and whose jobs were secure. For Elena, a new teacher and a self-described as a larger woman, she understood her own fitness as something that could be the difference between getting a teaching position or
not. She describes her attention to her own fitness as being almost like another job requirement. Her attention to her own physical fitness was the most extreme while she was in the precarious position of supply teaching and looking to find a permanent teaching position.

**Elena:** Eventually, it got to the point where for the one year I would be at the school...I would get to the school at 7:30AM in the morning and I would be there until 6 or 7PM at night, just coaching and marking and getting ready. And I’d go to the gym for an hour. And that was my day. ... And then working out, it should have been stress relieving, but it was just this extra anxiety because I was like, okay I’ve got to get more fit because I’ve got to do this with the kids, and I have to look this way, and I have to look the part. It became more a stress than an enjoyment.

Once Elena got a permanent teaching position and she had achieved more job security, she decided it was not possible to work out as much as she had been doing previously. Furthermore, given her new job security she no longer had to compete for jobs in the same way.

In contrast to Elena’s views on fitness and teaching, Jean does not understand there to be any correlation between fitness and being a “good” teacher. She does not believe that teachers should be rated as good or bad based on their body type. While Jean does not believe there is a connection between having a fit body and being a good teacher, in her own teaching practice she does encourage the dominant discursive practices such as eating well. Jean’s understanding that fitness and good teaching are not linked demonstrates a separation between the individual body and the discourses that are engaged within schooling institutions. Certainly, while it may not be important for individual teachers to have fit bodies, they are expected to reproduce and teach the dominant discourses of health and fitness. This expectation is underscored in Elena’s experiences, wherein she struggled with being responsible for encouraging students to engage with discursive practices of fitness, while not having a body that reflected her own engagement with these practices.
Research participants’ uses of health and fitness discourse in their classrooms demonstrate how biopedagogy, or the teaching of life, is related to notions of governmentality, or how we conduct ourselves in society. In the teachers’ descriptions of their efforts to produce the self in a particular way, they are “making themselves up” in the Foucauldian sense. They manage their bodies for the purpose of proper self-governing and through their roles as teachers, are compelled to role model self-governing behaviours associated with hegemonic notions of healthy and fit subjects to their students. Participants have learned that it is imperative to engage with these practices (or appear to be engaging with them). They engage in these practices due to an understanding that such practices are good for the students, good for the educational institution, good for the community and good for the nation.

Several participants spoke of using their bodies indirectly through reference to their own health and fitness regimes in order to help teach students the most correct forms of training the body. Both Elizabeth and Jen spoke about sharing with their students the types of healthy behaviours they engage in their own lives. For example, in a goal setting activity with students, Elizabeth shared that she has a personal goal of going to the gym three times a week. She went on to describe that she saw some students setting similar personal goals for themselves, and interpreted these decisions as demonstrative of the impact that she had had on them when she shared her own health and fitness goals.

Similarly, Jen would share with her students the types of physical activities she engages in:

**Jen:** Even discussing something as simple as “Oh, you know, on Saturday I went for a walk”. You know, and then they ask you, “Oh! Where did you go? Why did you go for a walk?” You know. You start building a conversation and getting them to realize... I’ve taught in a lot of “inner city” schools [Jen uses air quotes]. Their life is really school and home, and they don’t really have a broad sense of what all
is out there except what they watch on TV or what they are doing in video games. So, their - I am generalizing here: a lot of their parents aren’t fit, and maybe are engaging in things that are incredibly damaging to their body. And so, they really need that kind of education. You know, I think it is our job to talk about it at least, and at least make them aware of what’s out there.

The connection between fitness and health and access to proper types of knowledge regarding both was also reflected in Jeffery and Anthony’s conversation. In Jeffery’s and Anthony’s cases, they discussed how many of their students live in apartments and in neighbourhoods where it is dangerous to walk after dark. Recall from Chapter One that Jen, Jeffery and Anthony all identify as middle-class Canadians. Jeffery identifies as Jewish and Anthony identifies as Italian/French-Canadian. Jen chose not to identify her race or ethnicity. Through these located experiences, the participants place themselves and their students within discourses of health, class and race. These understandings construct and reproduce the connection between health, middle-class values and race. The participants understand themselves as members of the middle-class and understand their middle-class experiences with fitness as representative of an appropriate attitude towards health. They also understand their students (in part, due to their geographical location in “apartments” and “dangerous neighbourhoods,”) to be working-class and poor, and as a result, unable to participate in appropriate health and fitness activities.

The work that must be enacted on the body in order to appear to be striving towards an optimal state is deeply rooted in class value systems. One must have access to “good” quality fresh foods, be able to afford gym memberships and/or join sports organizations and also have the necessary time to dedicate to these pursuits, in addition to possessing particular knowledge and attaining suitable education such as how to eat properly and be healthy. As discussed in the previous chapter, fat bodies of the working class and poor - particularly those who use the welfare system - are used to justify class-based stereotypes. For example, the fat “welfare mama”
is seen as a body living off the backs of “good” tax-paying, gainfully employed citizens. Her fatness is read as gluttony and laziness and her refusal to get a job. Fatness becomes a means of reading her as not deserving of social assistance. Indeed, her fatness proves that she is a drain on “good” society. These discourses of race and class and discourses of fitness and health do not operate in isolation but rather are overlapping and mutually sustaining.

It is still necessary to interrogate how teachers develop their understandings of particular students as subjects that “need that kind of education.” The inner city is coded by the research participants as a working-class, racialized space, needing middle-class intervention. The poor and/or racialized students that live in these spaces are understood to be lacking particular understandings and awareness of health and fitness. Furthermore, while my research participants’ experiences and views reflect individual understandings that they have on these subjects, they are also indicative of the broader discourses on class and race manifested in and through the education system.

Laura Azzarito argues that “it is through the monocultural and ahistorical language of the discourses of fatness and fitness in schools that young people’s bodies, in subtle ways, are pedagogized to white ideals of the body” (2008: 185). She goes on to argue that practices of biopower enacted through schools rely on the implicit understanding that minorities are more likely to become fat and thus less productive in society (2008: 191). As Azzarito’s claims demonstrate, the research participants’ understandings of working class, poor and/or racialized students are reflective of broader functions of biopower which operate within schools.

Furthermore, the desire to impart particular health knowledge related to white middle-class values was understood as part of the participants’ job as a teacher. Again, this understanding of the role of the teacher in engaging in such practices must be placed within
broader discourses related to the role that education plays in normalizing student bodies and instructing students on the correct care of the self. As Nikolas Rose explains:

We should not deny or minimize the genuineness of the concern for individual well-being and social justice that suffuses this work. But alongside the notion of education as an equalizing apparatus runs another conception of schooling as a socializing and moralizing enterprise. For if education was to be a vital apparatus of citizenship, it was never simply because of the intellectual capacities and qualifications it conferred. Egalitarianism also encompassed a hope that the educational apparatus would be the means of inculcating the aspirations of citizenship in children – the will, as well as the means, to organize their lives within a project of self-betterment through diligence, application, and commitment to work, family and society. (1999: 192)

Many participants’ experiences of imparting particular notions of health and fitness in the classroom emerged by drawing on their own personal experiences of their bodies and fitness regimes, which reflected a white, middle-class value system. Furthermore, the desire to impart their own health and fitness knowledge to students is reflective of broader biopedagogical practices of education that attempt to normalize and control student bodies.

In addition to using their bodies and personal experiences of exercise to impart white, middle-class understandings of health to their students, study participants also reported using their bodies by participating in various activities with their students in the school setting to elicit correct bodily control and management over students. For example, Anthony described how he interacts with younger students at recess. He explained that when he is supervising the playground at recess, he will play on the climbers with them:

so I will go play with the kids, go up and down, go on the slide and do all sorts of stuff. And they get all wound up. We have a good old time. But the...it’s more like playing with them, and then they are not fighting with each other and stuff.

Anthony would use his body in this way to reinforce normative codes of conduct for his students.
Similarly, Elena describes participating in physical activity with her students as a means of getting students to “buy into” the activity and to eliminate “all sorts of behaviour management” of students. While the specifics of this “behaviour management” were not discussed, in general, I take this to mean controlling and policing students’ bodies in class. For example, getting students to stay seated, pay attention to the teacher and not disrupt other students. Jen also addressed the issue of managing student bodies in her writing. She wrote:

*I’m not sure if this is actually “taught” to beginning student teachers, but it is definitely a widely practised philosophy; the idea that everyone needs to remain still while they are listening to a lesson and while they are doing their work. For some students this is impossible. Many students need the sensory input of movement in order to process the lesson or work that they are a part of. If our goal is to “teach” then some students need to be able to move during that time. Punishing a student because they aren’t sitting still may be the same as punishing them for trying to learn. Doesn’t make much sense. (...) Movement is necessary for learning.

When Jen shared her writing with the group, we discussed how bodies are read as misbehaving in school. Hartley prompted us to try to tell Jen’s story using our bodies. I was sitting down, so I folded my arms and put my head down on an imaginary desk. When Jen saw me do this her response was “I would really be happy if one of my kids did that!” and Louise added “that [referring to the positioning of my body] wouldn’t actually be disrupting anybody. That’s not how students look when they misbehave!” Louise went on to state that what I had performed was “the ultimate you’d want; that they were ready for a break. It would just be interfering with their own learning, not the learning of every single other student, ‘cause that’s what happens.” In response to Louise’s statement, Jen stated that “I actually teach how to take breaks.”

This was an interesting moment in the workshop. Although my intention was to perform disobedience, my actions were interpreted by Jean and Louise as a desirable behaviour for students to exhibit. The way in which I had enacted “misbehaving” or rebelling in the classroom
was shaped by my own experiences as a student. I have learned that the correct behaviour in
class is to be self-contained, often sitting facing the front of the class, with hands folded on the
desk, and not disrupting the activity being led by the teacher. I have also learned that the correct
behaviour for disinterest is to fold arms and put your head on the desk.

The participants used their own bodies and understandings of fitness and health to shape
how they interacted with their students. In addition to drawing on personal and family
experiences, the participants’ understandings shaped by broader discourses related to race, and
class. It is through these multiple and diffuse networks of understanding that biopedagogy is
enacted in teaching practices. In the next section, I explore how teachers interpret and use
specific biopedagogical practices.

**Practices of Biopedagogy**

The various practices of biopower call on teachers to behave and perform in particular
ways as an extension of their role as educators. Many of my research participants spoke of the
Daily Physical Activity requirement. For some, they viewed actively participating in this
initiative as a necessity, while others described school environments in which teachers would not
participate. Anthony, whose school now has implemented a required daily thirty minutes for
gym, describes the first year of doing the DPA with his class and how he used an exercise video
with his class: “I had to be fit, because I had to do it with them. (...) You know, running on the
spot, jumping jacks, and all the rest of this stuff. I was in a sweat by the time twenty minutes
were up.” Elena describes a similar experience with the DPA. She describes what it would be
like to do DPA with a group of active grade 12 students:

**Elena:** There is no way I could keep up with them. Even when I was coaching. I mean
there is no way I could keep up with the boys. I could keep up with some of the girls,
maybe. But a lot of them, no. And there was certainly that pressure. And I did feel very
hypocritical in asking them.
Ashlee and Elizabeth’s experiences contrast with those of Elena and Anthony. They discussed how the DPA requirement was implemented at the school where they did their practicum together:

Elizabeth: I don’t know if it was a pilot school [for DPA] but there was a lot of focus on physical activity.
Amy: So, it was a focus in that school?
Elizabeth: Yeah.
Amy: And your training?
Elizabeth: Yeah.
Ashlee: Yeah. Like every morning they went and ran around the school for 15 minutes. Before the school day started.
Elizabeth: Yup.
Ashlee: Doing like the DPA thing.
Elizabeth: Yeah. And they had different circuits.
Ashlee: Yeah. And we would just watch them.

They recalled that some teachers would participate with the students but that most would stand and supervise. The participants generally preferred to use their bodies in order to participate in activities and understood this practice as good teaching that could help to facilitate positive relationships with students. However, the practice of having teachers monitor physical activities is still a physical act itself, and calls on teachers to use their bodies in particular ways. Merely monitoring students was viewed by many of my research participants as an uninspired approach to teaching, ostensibly because it serves to re-inscribe traditional power relationships between teacher and student. Participants in my research understand “getting down to the students’ level” as positive. This act enables them to represent and reinforce the goals of biopedagogy (i.e. physical control and regulation) in a seemingly more effective way. The effectiveness of this practice is expressed through the limiting of traditional top-down uses of power, and is enabled through the use of the teachers’ body as a relate-able teaching medium.
This example is reflective of the complicated understandings of power in schools described by feminist and queer curriculum theorists that were explained in Chapter Two. The examples above most explicitly reflect Jennifer Gore’s (1993) arguments related to power and feminist practice. Gore argues that the common feminist practice of getting students to sit in a circle rather than row does not necessarily alter the relationship of power between the teacher and the students. Similarly, the participants’ practice of being active with their students on the playground further extends their ability to observe, regulate and police student behaviour. Although the practice of “getting down on the students’ level” is understood in contrast to traditional approaches to teacher supervision, being positioned as relatable by the students may enable greater access for teachers to the students’ activities, bodies and lives and thus allow for greater interventions to be made.

These behaviours are complicated. They can be about encouraging compliance and student “buy-in” but they are also thought of as expressions of genuine care for and desire to connect with students. Furthermore, these teaching practices emerge at a particular moment in history which reflects particular understandings of both the modern teacher and student as emotionally complex.

In addition to the DPA, several research participants discussed with me how physical activity became a focus for a particular period of time over the school year or for a special class outing. For example, Rebecca would run every day with her students during fitness month in May at the school where she taught and Darcy would run every Friday with her students during their weekly run around the neighbourhood. Both Rebecca and Darcy discussed how running was part of their own physical fitness regime and both, at one point, had been training for long distance races, a 30 kilometer run and a marathon respectively, during the course of a school
year. They incorporated their own interests and investments in running into their classroom teaching. Running laps around the school or gym is a very common activity used in schools to have students engage in more physical exercise. Indeed, Ashlee and Elizabeth supervised their students during daily morning runs. As Rebecca and Darcy described, they ran with students because they want to participate in activities with students but also because they were avid runners themselves.

The widespread popularity of running as a tool of physical fitness and health in schools can also be understood through discourses of Canadian nationalism. Specifically, these discourses get mapped on to and through the body of the Canadian hero, Terry Fox. The popular image of Terry Fox, undertaking his Marathon of Hope, served to connect Canadians both literally, as he attempted to run across Canada, and metaphorically by being the personification of Canadian values. Terry Fox is heralded as a national hero and has come to embody ideal Canadian characteristics: determination, humility, endurance and the ability to overcome obstacles. Many schools hold annual Terry Fox runs in the autumn as a means of community-building and to raise money for cancer research. Indeed, Rebecca talks about teaching her students about Terry Fox and incorporating his story into English class using the book Run by Eric Walters. The use of the Terry Fox run as a pedagogical tool highlights how teaching reinforces notions of fitness and health as they relate to teaching students to become good Canadian citizens. In her analysis of Run, Tanis MacDonald argues that “Terry Fox is ... consistently called upon to inspire through tropes of heroism, youth and determination, and profoundly lost to illness and time” (2011: 19). Therefore, running, particularly participating in

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6 Terry Fox was an athlete and cancer research activist. Fox, with one leg amputated due to cancer, attempted to run across Canada in 1980 in an effort to raise money and awareness for cancer research.
Terry Fox charity runs, becomes more than a physical activity. It becomes an emblematic act of Canadian patriotism.

Similarly, Anthony described a field trip he would be taking his students on shortly after the research workshop. His chosen field trip activity reflects his particular understandings of fitness and health in relation to the environment:

**Anthony:** So, part of my ...like I am not a go to the gym kind of person...but this is sort of linked to environmental awareness. Going on hikes...like I like to hike and I like to go and bike but ...yeah. I don’t jog. Just an example, next week I am taking my class skating. Many have never skated before. And it is a huge effort to take them because I have to have helmets for them all and I have to get skates for the ones that don’t have skates. It is a huge effort.

**Amy:** Yeah!

**Anthony:** Just to go skating! And we are going to do a half-hour hike together to get there. And the complaining I have heard. “Oh! We’re going to die...”

Anthony’s taking his students skating on an outdoor rink was also understood by him to be reflective of “Canadian-ness”. Similarly, Rebecca described taking her students skating and playing hockey with them. Indeed, in all three of the research workshops that took place during the winter months, skating was mentioned numerous times. Both Louise and Rebecca (who were in different research workshops) described their anxiety about having to take students skating because of their own low skill level. Regardless of their own abilities, participants in my research understood skating as an important activity to introduce to students. This was perceived to be especially important if the students were new to Canada, as skating is understood to be part of the quintessential Canadian experience. Perhaps skating is understood to be an important element of Canadian identity because of its relation to hockey, or perhaps, skating outdoors is seen as representative of an experience unique to Canada. Taking students skating becomes a way to foster a particular idea of Canadians through their ability to have access to and participate in this
activity. Participants’ understandings of the “Canadian-ness” of skating explicitly connects skating to the construction of a national Canadian identity.

While it is possible that participants were running ice hockey style drills with their students during skating field trips, I understood the activity that the participants described their students engaging in to be more akin to figure skating than to hockey practice. Understanding the relationship of skating to gender, class and national identity is particularly fascinating. In her historical analysis of masculinity and figure skating, Mary Louise Adams argues that figure skating, traditionally a sport dominated by men, sought to produce a “‘man of feeling’, a late eighteenth century [English] ideal that privileged politeness, sensibility, [and] expressiveness” (2007: 875). However, as notions of masculinity and manliness changed, so too did the style of skating, eventually leading to the understanding of figure skating as a feminine sport (Adams 2007: 875). I am intrigued by the use of skating as a physical activity within schools and its relation to gendered, class and national identities. While ultimately, these questions are beyond the scope of this research project, examining the contemporary understanding of skating and its use within Canadian schools would be a fascinating project for future research.

As I have argued in the above section, the participants in my research project drew on their own experiences and understandings of what are considered to be quintessential Canadian experiences in order to teach sport and fitness to their students. This practice of drawing on the personal to help students learn was repeated through the workshops and appears to be something that is encouraged in the profession and in Initial Teacher Education.

**Food Monitoring and Preparation**

Eating in schools is a precarious act for both students and teachers. In the following chapters, I discuss the performance of making good food choices that teachers demonstrate in
front of their students and the affects of biopower. In this section, I discuss particular practices engaged in by participants and their responses to being called on to perform this particular role modelling in schools. Through eating and observing others eating, we believe we know something about ourselves and others based on the types of foods that get consumed. The type of food consumed is important to understandings of health and fitness as well as how a food is eaten and by whom. For example, a chocolate bar eaten by a slim woman might be interpreted as a simple indulgence that is not indicative of her diet more broadly. Similarly, a fat woman observed eating a salad messily or chewing with her mouth open may be perceived as gluttonous. In this way, judgements about fitness and health in the context of eating are not only about the food being consumed but also about the practices and behaviours related to eating, as well as the permissions available to some people and not others.

Given the importance of eating, food and food choices in the context of contemporary fears related to the obesity epidemic, food consumption in schools requires biopedagogical intervention to ensure that it is being undertaken correctly. In this contemporary moment in Western culture, food choices are interpreted through whole systems of expert knowledges which determine the “goodness” or “badness” of the choices. Maria Chamberlain argues that in the dominant cultural discourses on food, fat, and health in the West: “[n]ot only is obesity a sickness, it reflects on one’s citizenship. The right kinds of food in the right portions are the key to sound national identities” (2001: 101). Nationalist loyalty then is deemed to be demonstrated through the types of activities citizens engage in, such as skating, as well as reflected in the types of food one chooses to consume, and the ways in which we consume it.

All of the schools in which my research participants taught had strict food policies around peanuts and nuts. These institutional rules prohibiting nuts in schools were followed and
enforced by all of the participants in my research as the health threat related to allergic reactions to nuts is understood by them to be a very serious risk. Although Louise (as will be demonstrated later in this section), does not understand the monitoring of student food choices to be a part of her job, she does add the caveat “as long as it is nut–free.” The policies around nut consumption in schools reinforce the notion of the risk and danger associated with food in general.

This sense of risk and danger is reinforced through an anecdote related to me by Elena, the only participant in my study who taught Food and Nutrition classes. In the following excerpt, she discusses how one of her first lessons in these classes was on instructing the students how to properly wash their hands:

**Elena:** Actually, thinking about bodies in the class is hand washing... I had to teach how to wash hands for the food and nutrition class. That was really, really, sort of an interesting thing to do because I showed them a video about proper hand washing, and they all kind of giggled at me when I first said it, and they thought it was really cool. And then, I had to take them over to the sinks, and then I washed my hands and went through the whole process, and they had to wash their hands. And it was just something that they should have learned as toddlers, right? But with food handling, you know, it’s like okay, we’ve got to make sure you are doing it right. It was kind of weird having them stand there, and I am actually using my body...I am sure you’ve noticed I talk with my hands a lot...it’s something I do in the classroom as well. That was something too! I just thought of that.

**Amy:** And this is in grade nine?

**Elena:** Grade ten! It was a weird thing. I had a whole 75-minute lesson on washing your hands! With a little video, people were laughing at me.

As demonstrated by Elena’s description, the Food and Nutrition classroom gets constructed as a space of health risk if proper procedures related to cleanliness and hygiene are not followed consistently and correctly. Elena’s lesson on hand-washing articulates and reproduces the risks associated with eating and the preparation of food. Indeed, being aware of these risks is so great that hand-washing becomes a topic for the entire first lesson in Food and Nutrition. Caroline Fusco argues that: “theories of cleanliness ... have had an ideological function historically: they
have ensured social order and hegemonic values. Sustaining hygiene has relied on the maintenance of clean and sanitary spaces and that people invest in personal hygiene practices and technologies of purification” (2006: 71). Through both the information provided in her lesson and through her physical demonstration of proper hand-washing techniques to her students, Elena places her body at the nexus of the construction and repetition of discourses of cleanliness and risk and practices of purification and self-care.

Many of my research participants discussed their role in monitoring - and in some cases, policing - the foods being consumed at school by students. Deana Leahy describes lunchbox surveillance as one of three key biopedagogical devices used in schools (2009: 179). Leahy argues that this form of intervention is supported by risk discourses and expert knowledges, however, these expert knowledges “hover in the background” and are used to determine good food choices (2009: 180). For Leahy, the main intention of this intervention is to use various affects, such as pride, shame and disgust, in order to elicit correct eating choices from students (2009: 180).

Ashlee, Elizabeth and Jean described two specific lunch monitoring interventions they were asked to participate in at school. These interventions were presented under the blanket term “Healthy Foods School”. Ashlee and Elizabeth described how one teacher at their school decided to start a healthy snack monitoring program, wherein teachers would access students’ snacks and give points for those deemed to be healthy. Older students were also recruited to monitor the snacks of younger students. At the end of the year, the class with the most points would receive an extra gym class as a ‘prize for receiving the most points. How teachers were to determine which snacks were “healthy snacks” was not elaborated on in the workshop, possibly because the notion of “healthy snacks” is understood to be common knowledge.
Jean described a similar initiative at the school where she works:

Jean: This was our first year rolling out this Healthy Foods initiative by the Ministry. So, we didn’t monitor it. It was just kind of telling the kids what they were to do. We still had Pizza Day lunches for the kids. [inaudible] But if the kids wanted to bring for their birthday, ...they weren’t allowed to bring cake or ice cream or anything like that. Valentine’s Day, they weren’t allowed to give lollipops, Christmas all that. Nothing was to be given out.

Jean went on to describe how she was expected to send notes home if students’ lunches did not comply with the school’s Healthy Foods initiative. She did not have to do this often. However, on one occasion, she had to send a note home with a student who brought ice cream in for her birthday. Jean interpreted this role as just part of her job, as evidenced by her response to my questions about sending the note home:

Amy: Were you okay with that? Did it make you feel awkward? Or did you just understand that as part of the job?  
Ashlee: That’s crazy! [to have to send the ice cream home]  
Jean: No. It didn’t make me feel awkward. I understood, but I felt bad for the child. She’s a grade three, she doesn’t really understand. She was actually new to the country, so an ESL learner. So it is possible that there, understanding is lost in the language barrier happening there. But I didn’t feel bad. We were trying, as a whole school to start an initiative. Or to carry out an initiative. To make our kids healthier. It made sense to me.

By contrast, Louise, Jen and Alice all believe that singling students out in class does more harm than good. Their approach is discussed in the following excerpt:

Louise: I am not taking on what someone has in their lunch and telling them they can or cannot eat it. If it is a peanut-free product and your mother sent it for you – fine. Because I also think, I have sent treats in my children’s lunches. For a variety of reasons – we went to a birthday party, we baked and we got it. That is not my job.  
Alice: No.  
Louise: My job is to teach you all about healthy choices. Not at that exact moment. That is not the teachable moment – when I am tearing apart your lunch.  
Jen: Because they are eating.  
Louise: Because you know what, it could have been the only thing they had.
Jen: That’s right!
Louise: It is better than the kid who is sitting here with nothing.
Jen: That’s right.

Louise explicitly states that monitoring and policing student lunches is not her job. Louise’s understanding is in contrast to Jean’s, who does understand enforcing such practices as part of her job as a teacher. However, Louise is very aware of when students have lunches to eat and when they do not. Her awareness of student lunches (or lack thereof) was demonstrated when she shared an experience of observing a student who never had a lunch during her weekly lunchtime supervisory duty. She observed this so frequently that she inquired with other teachers if the student has a lunch when they are on duty. Louise’s story demonstrates that while she may not believe in shaming or limiting food choices, she is acutely aware of students’ eating habits. Although Louise’s motivation for monitoring student lunches is driven by her concern for students, this concern is realized through a practice she does not support. Her experience is an example of the contradictory application of biopedagogical practices.

With the exception of Elena, a Family Studies teacher, there was no discussion of how participants knew what constituted “good” or “bad” food choices. It appears that understanding and teaching how to make good food choices were shaped by their personal understandings and “commonsense” notions of what is healthy. While there were differences in how the power to judge and restrict food eaten by students was used by the participants, monitoring food and minimizing the risks associated with it is central to biopedagogical practice. This practice was assumed by the teachers to be an integral part of their teaching role and based on the descriptions participants told to me occurred with little or no formal training. The impact that this surveillance technique has on teachers’ food choices and their performance of making “good food choices” will be discussed in the following chapter.
Concluding Thoughts

Discourses of fitness and health, and research participants’ relationships with them were shaped primarily by their personal experiences. The participants’ understandings of health and fitness emphasized individual practices but were underscored by identity discourses associated with race, class and nationhood. Their discussions of health and fitness demonstrate the interrelatedness of these discursive structures. Generally, fitness and health were understood not as being associated with a particular body type or appearance but rather as being a consequence of attending to oneself through healthy practices such as physical activity and choosing to eat healthy foods. Given the physical requirements of teaching, being “fit” was viewed by participants as a requirement or at least, an advantage for teachers, especially as fitness was interpreted as allowing teachers to relate better to students and therefore to be more effective. Furthermore, all of the participants (either through explicit discussion of healthy practices with their students and/or through using their bodies to demonstrate healthy activities) promoted healthy lifestyles to their students. Once again, this emphasis on the importance of healthy behaviours is understood to be integral to the task of being a teacher. This understanding was developed through sharing experiences in the classroom, rather than through explicit engagement with expert knowledge. The specific techniques of this performance of being a healthy subject will be explored in the next chapter.
CHAPTER FOUR: 
PASSING AS HEALTHY AND OTHER PERFORMANCES: THE PERFORMATIVE PRACTICE OF TEACHING

The previous chapter examined the notion of biopedagogy and how my research participants took up and were expected to address notions of health and fitness in their teaching. This chapter explores the performative elements of teaching as they relate to health, fitness and fatness. I argue that both the use of the teacher’s body and teaching practices are performative acts in the classroom and draw on the concepts of performance and performativity to respond to the following questions: How, if at all, do teachers use their own bodies as a pedagogical tool?; What types of pedagogical practices do teachers use, if any, that reflect notions of fitness and health?; And what, if any, are the pedagogical practices used by teachers to challenge dominant understandings of fitness and health? First, I examine how teachers engage in attempts of “passing as healthy” as a pedagogical practice. Then, I explore the use of enthusiasm as a pedagogical practice to reinforce lessons on health and fitness. Lastly, I examine the connections between health and morality in dominant discourses around health and fitness, and examine how teachers negotiate their role of “moral compass” in the classroom and in their larger communities.

Passing as Healthy and the Performance of Eating in Front of a Class

As discussed in Chapter Three, eating in schools is not only necessary given the amount of time teachers and students spend there, but it is also “risky” behaviour as demonstrated through the regulation and monitoring of potentially dangerous food, such as peanuts. Eating becomes a site of intense scrutiny and surveillance by teachers as they attempt to implement various healthy eating initiatives. This scrutiny also allows them to be aware of any students who are going without food. While the previous chapter explored the practices that teachers use in
this biopedagogical moment, in this chapter I examine how teachers negotiate the matter of eating in front of their students. Put another way, I ask: How do teachers experience eating in schools when they become the object of the judging gaze of students? Necessarily physical, the act of eating in front of students by teachers is used as a pedagogical moment, while simultaneously serving to regulate and restrict the eating behaviour of the teachers themselves. For example, Jean discussed consciously making an effort to eat foods that she understands as healthy when eating in front of her students:

Jean: So... It was making sure that we also, at snack time, were eating healthy food like an apple or ... We had a milk program at the school. So, I bought into it and I tried to drink milk every day. I HATE milk. But I tried to drink chocolate milk every day! Yeah. So, I guess in terms of eating, I definitely, made a conscious effort to model healthy eating to the kids. Not bringing back pop or something like that to drink.

For Jean, drinking milk in front of the class and being conscious of her food choices were ways to reinforce notions of healthy food and eating habits for her students. Elizabeth also indicated that she used her own food consumption in front of students as a means of demonstrating healthy behaviour:

Elizabeth: ...I don’t think I am as purposeful (...) But..like especially with thinking about the food that I bring into the classroom. Or because they notice...if I’m eating something, they know exactly what I am eating because they’ll make comments like “Oh! That looks really good! Can I have some?”

Despite not thinking about the food she chooses to eat in front of the class as a conscious choice, Elizabeth is aware of how much her food choices are observed by her students. Jen is also aware of her food choices being monitored by students and she attempts to eat healthy foods in front of her class as a result of this surveillance. She stated “I have had kids comment on my lunch. So on the days...in general... I try to make a really healthy lunch. So, I do but [whispering] I don’t always.” Jen’s understanding that students will be scrutinizing her food choices shapes the types
of foods she consumes in the classroom. Furthermore, when she does not make “good” food choices, she is aware that this is an act that is shameful. For example, Jen described being ashamed when she did not bring a healthy lunch on the days she had lunch supervision duty in the classroom. Shame was mentioned a lot by the participants and will be discussed further in the following chapter.

Jean describes the impact of performing healthy food choices in front of her students and explains how her students’ embracing of the rules of the school served to limit her food choices as a result:

**Jean:** The kids started to adopt it. Like by the end of the year, the last day of school, one of the students came around, and he was offering Freezies. I guess he had brought it in for his class, and his teacher let him give them out. And he offered me one and my kids in my class said “No. We only eat healthy snacks”. Even though I really wanted one!

Despite her desire to eat a Freezie, Jean’s food choices were restricted by the surveillance of her students. Jean understands students’ enforcement of the rules relating to food in class as demonstrative of their understanding of what is healthy and allowable food to eat in school.

While there were different approaches to eating in front of students, underlying these performances is the practice of using food choices and eating to reinforce dominant beliefs about eating, food and health. For example, Jean and Louise have different approaches to teaching students about which foods can be eaten in class; Jean strictly enforces the school’s rules related to food and does not allow treats, such as ice cream, in class whereas Louise allows treats - like cupcakes - on students’ birthdays. Louise explains how she rationalizes her food choices to herself and to her students through her lessons on food. She explained:

**Louise:** Exactly. And that, I think, is the other reason I don’t speak to a child’s lunch - Because, you know what? – on Friday frequently, a small group go out for lunch.
**Jen:** Yeah! Yeah!
Louise: So, frequently you come back. You may have a bottle of water but what if you have a pop that day?

Alice: Yeah!

Louise: And if you are not done – it is sitting on your desk. That’s why I kind of do the treat/everyday type thing. Because I do that myself. Someone brings in birthday cupcakes. Some people shut the door and say “absolutely not.” I think: “bring them in, and let’s celebrate that person’s day, because it is a big event. And of course, I’ll have a cupcake.

Louise teaches her students that it is healthy eating behaviour to have treats occasionally and she reinforces this understanding in her choices about the foods she consumes in front of her students. Jean admitted to walking into class everyday with a Tim Horton’s coffee, an act that she understood as not modelling healthy behaviour. Perhaps because Jean believes that the Tim Horton’s coffee cup reveals her consumption of fast food, something that is considered to be a “bad food” choice. She strongly enforced the rules related to the Healthy Schools Initiative that her school was participating in that year. She used the food that she ate in front of the class as an extension of these rules.

Jean: No. I tried to...I guess I tried to ...if I went out for lunch, I wasn’t bringing back MacDonald’s and sitting there in front of the kids, so “Hey! Look what I can eat.” And I think...the staff at the school also did the same thing. Like I knew there were teachers going out and not eating very healthy lunches, but we didn’t bring it back to model unhealthy eating in front of the kids, right?

Like Jean, Anthony also enforced healthy eating practices in his class and only allowed healthy food to be brought in for birthdays and special events and celebrations, like Halloween parties. He would also trade his healthy snacks, such as organic carrots, for students’ unhealthy snacks, such as Gummie Bears.

Like Jean, Louise, and Anthony, Darcy discussed her experiences of negotiating a similar Healthy Food initiative in Britain. She explained:
Darcy: So, all of the school dinners changed and we ate with the students to show them that they are not going to die if they eat vegetables. And to model that this food is good and it’s worth eating. We ate with the kids then and it was good. I actually enjoyed...I mean we all had the same lunch and it was...I don’t know...it just felt nice to sit with the kids in sort of an informal setting and just chat. It was like a different way to get to know them. But when I was teaching back in B.C., like I would think about what I would take in my lunch. Of course I would. Even snacks that I would have out at recess.

Darcy went on to explain that if she brought a can of pop to school, she would wait until after the students had left to drink it. She also stated that in the staff room there were chocolate biscuits to eat with tea. Neither the pop nor the chocolate biscuits were consumed in front of students.

Darcy and the other teachers at her school engaged in self-regulating behaviour. When I asked what prompted this behaviour, Darcy stated that her food choices were largely motivated by wanting to develop a particular relationship with her students and that consuming prohibited food and drink in front of her students would make her life more difficult in the classroom.

The teachers’ experiences of eating in front of students are used, as Deborah Britzman outlines, not so that experience can speak for itself but as a means to bracket and perform particular repetitions, problems and desires (2002: 33). I draw on participants’ experiences to demonstrate how health is performed in the classroom. These experiences bring attention to the repetition of acts, as well as the failures and slippages of the performance of health. How does eating an apple in front of a student, or drinking a pop out of students’ view reinforce notions of health? Furthermore, what do these acts teach us about health? To answer these questions, the pursuit of good health must be understood as performative and teaching health, through such acts as eating healthy food must be understood as a performance.

The notion of eating as performance reflects Marvin Carlson’s claims that postmodern/poststructuralist analysis emphasizes the event or specific moment in time, rather than being concerned with representing the truth (Carlson 2004: 152). While there are
similarities and often blurred lines between performance and performativity, an important distinction between the two is that performance is voluntary, a conscious act, whereas performativity is involuntary and often engaged in unconsciously. By using the notion of performativity, Judith Butler has been able to raise important critical questions about sexuality and identity construction and to challenge the perceived naturalness of an identity. Butler uses the concept of performativity to interrogate the supposed naturalness of heterosexuality, however, I apply the notion of performativity to identities related to health. Butler argues that identities do not exist prior to their being enacted. This is the crux of performativity – there is no authentic self behind the performance of a self. It is only through the repetition of a given identity that an identity comes to assume the discursive power of being real. Butler argues:

What “performs” does not exhaust the “I”; it does not lay out in visible terms the comprehensive content of that “I,” for if that performance is “repeated,” there is always the question of what differentiates from each other the moments of identity that are repeated. And if the “I “ is the effect of a certain repetition, one which produces the semblances of a continuity or coherence, then there is no “I” that precedes the gender that it is said to perform; the repetition, and the failure to repeat, produce a string of performances that constitute and contest the coherences of that “I”. (1991: 49)

The voluntary health acts that the participants are performing in front of their students are an example of health as a performance. In terms of health, individuals become understood as healthy through the repetitive acts associated with health, such as eating certain foods like fruits and vegetables and restricting or abstaining from “bad” foods that are high in fat and refined sugars, as well as engaging in regular physical activity. Importantly, this claim does not mean that there are no consequences for failing to perform an identity correctly according to a given social context. We cannot opt out of the performative aspect of identities without risk of social consequences. For example, a person identified as a man who fails to perform masculinity in a socially correct way can encounter various forms of harassment and violence as a result of his
failure to perform hegemonic manliness. Or, in terms of health, a person who fails to perform the necessary acts associated with good health may become read as a threat to themselves due to an assumption about the reduction of their life expectancy, or possibility as a threat to the nation, if the poor health then requires state-sponsored healthcare. That said, how health is performed is somewhat flexible given the social conventions and contexts that regulate, control and discipline how good health is enacted.

The participants acting out healthy food choices in front of their students are examples of attempting to engage in what I call “health passing.” Health passing is the conscious act of performing health. For example, when Jean actively chooses to drink milk (even though she does not want to do so because she hates milk) the act is an attempt to pass as healthy. These performances of health reveal the performativity of health. Health does not pre-exist the performativity of health. The performance of health by the research participants demonstrates the contingency of health in relation to particular acts performed on and through the body. While my research participants were conscious of their performances of health, they did not explicitly discuss the acts they engage in as performance with their students. As such, the participants’ repetitive performances of health become normalized to their students in the classroom.

Health is not a natural given but rather is achieved through the correct repetition of particular acts. Recall that the participants do not necessarily engage in these acts or believe that they are important to sustain in their own private lives but they do understand that it is important to perform healthy choices in front of their students. Although it is beyond the scope of this project, I am curious as to how the students make sense of these performances of health. Do they see them as acts? Or do they understand these behaviours as indicative of what it means to be healthy? Certainly, individuals can be read as healthy despite limiting the degree to which they
engage in health acts, however, this demonstrates that some individuals are able to “pass” as healthy more easily than others. Indeed, the performance of health becomes more complicated when teachers’ bodies are not able to “pass” as being fit or in shape. Elena describes her discomfort of teaching food and nutrition and, due to the probability that students will not read her body as being fit:

**Elena:** For myself, because I am a larger woman and Food and Nutrition isn’t really an interest of mine at all. (...) So, I was very self-conscious going in to that class. Because I was like, they are going to see me and I am not fit, I don’t fit that stereotypical role, body image. And then, I am going to be up there lecturing them about eating properly. And try to engage them in this discussion to do it, when my body doesn’t reflect what society believes a healthy body should look like. So, that really caused a lot of anxiety for me at the beginning of the semester.

Elena went on to discuss this experience in more detail in her creative writing. She wrote:

*As I mentioned throughout the formal interview, there have been many moments in my teaching career where I felt that my body was on display – in fact, it was something that was constantly in my mind. This of course stems from my own issues and struggles with my body and my perceptions (both from myself and the views I believe others to have).*

*The most uncomfortable moment that I have had, where I felt embarrassed and ashamed of my body occurred during a lesson in a grade 10 Food and Nutrition class. I was giving a lecture on body types and had to teach about the three body types that all people fit into (according to the course textbook and materials). Basically, there was an underweight/lean person, an average weight and then an overweight person. Each category of person included a picture and a few facts about the health and lifestyle of the different “types” of people. The lean and average people had attributes focused on eating well and being active. The third category of person showed a picture of a woman with a body shaped similar to mine and the then listed how these people tend to be inactive, to eat unhealthily and are at higher risk for diabetes, heart attacks, strokes and other various ailments. Identifying with this image and then discussing the given attributes of such an individual in my lecture made me incredibly embarrassed and uncomfortable. I really felt as though I was a representation of what my students should not be and thus not a “good” teacher/role model.*

Elena’s experience underscores the risks associated with not passing as healthy in a school when part of the job is to teach lessons that reinforce dominant discourses of health and fitness.
However, in her teaching of this lesson, Elena included multiple interpretations of the three body model outlined in the curriculum for the course and in doing so, she was able to challenge dominant discourses of health and fitness and possibly she was able to create a space in which her body may not be deemed unhealthy.

Elena described through her creative writing how she challenged the dominant understandings of body size and health in her class. She wrote:

*I went on with the lesson and focused on how people can have attributes of more than one of the categories and about the limitations of such a system (which lead into subsequent lessons about society and media’s creation of beauty standards) but it was still unsettling and uncomfortable for myself. While I don’t believe that any of my students would belong in that third category, I do worry about those with body dysmorphia and perhaps making them concerned/worried about their own bodies, how they are perceived and valued.*

Elena presented challenges to the dominant discourses that were presented through the curriculum. However, she describes that even challenging these discourses was “unsettling and uncomfortable” for her. Elena’s experience articulates the risks of challenging fat phobia that many fat activists face. Elena’s experiences of outlining multiple interpretations of body size to her class are similar to performances of Katy Dierlam. Like Elena, Dierlam a.k.a. “Helen Melon: Coney Island’s Fat Lady,” uses multiple narratives of fatness in order to challenge dominant understandings of fatness. Dierlam’s attempts at challenging fat phobia are particularly risky, as Sharon Mazer (2001) states:

*underlying the multiple threads of Melon/Dierlam’s performance was the tension between visible body and spoken word. The text of her performance – what she said, what we were to hear – was a series of interlocking narratives that simultaneously acknowledged and denied her appearance as a Fat Lady – what we saw.* (2001: 258).

Mazer argues that ultimately, Dierlam’s attempted interventions fail as the audience can only interpret her performance through dominant ideals of slenderness and its relation to individualizing successes (or failures) to achieve it (2001: 271). While it is possible that
Dierlam’s audience members and Elena’s students relate to their presentations of multiple narratives of body size through their own experiences of failure to achieve the ideal, it is also possible that being confronted with multiple viewpoints may offer a space for reconsideration and transformation.

Through performing acts of good health, specifically through eating “healthy foods” in front of their students, the participants engage in health passing in their classrooms. These teaching moments ultimately reinforce to students that it is through engaging with these acts that health is understood to be achieved.

**Faking It: Enthusiasm as a Pedagogical Device**

Appearing enthusiastic about fitness, exercise and/or the various school initiatives aimed at improving student health was central to my research participants’ teaching of lessons and activities that reinforced such discourses. Several participants described how they would use their enthusiasm in order to elicit interest from their students on the subject matter, regardless of whether or not they were interested or invested in it. This performance of enthusiasm was used to motivate students to participate in Daily Physical Activity exercises and other activities and lessons connected with health and wellness. For example Ashlee states: “... whether or not I would be feeling it [healthy/well], I would definitely find a way to project it somehow.” Similarly, Louise claims, “You can sell them anything, if you’re excited about it. It’s all in your approach and in your sell.” Elena described how the use of enthusiasm was emphasized in her teacher training:

**Elena:** In my teaching training the focus was on the first 5 minutes of every lesson, and we had to have some kind of hook to draw the students into our lesson. You couldn’t go up and say “okay we are going to read this story, open your book.” It had to be doing cartwheels and standing on your head to get the students attention. They say you’re competing with video games and TV, and all this stuff.
(...)

That was sort of the mentality. Students aren’t going to listen to you unless you are fun and engaging.

She went on to state that when she was teaching the DPA, she “would be like jumping around and flapping my arms” to get her students interested.

Intrigued by how enthusiasm was being used by the participants, I asked Louise:

**Amy:** So even, like you said, as a role model, it is important to perform enthusiasm for fitness? Perhaps even more important than engaging in the fitness yourself because that’s how you are seen. As long as you perform enthusiasm for fitness, happy healthy lifestyle, that is a key thing for teachers.

**Louise:** Absolutely!

I posed a similar question to Elena, who responded “Exactly! Yeah. Especially, just starting out [as a teacher]. (...) Certainly, that level of faking. Teachers become good actors. We get used to that.”

As demonstrated by the participants’ experiences, using enthusiasm is a common pedagogical device used to elicit interest in the subjects of health and physical activity. The participants understood that believing in the subject matter or lesson, such as the DPA initiative, was not as important as the appearance of being enthusiastic. But what does enthusiasm look like in the classroom? And how does the teacher’s body convey enthusiasm? As Elena described, she did not really believe in the DPA initiative, but through the use of her body, specifically, by “jumping around and flapping [her] arms,” she attempted to convey her interest in the activity.

The impact of enthusiasm on student learning outcomes has long been studied in educational research, particularly in the field of Educational Psychology (Bettencourt, Gillett, Gall and Hull 1983; Brigham, Scruggs and Mastropieri 1992; Kunter, Tsai, Klusmann, Brunner, Krauss and Baumert 2008; Patrick, Hisley and Kempler 2000). Enthusiasm is also used as an indicator of teacher effectiveness (Delucchi 2000; Frenzel, Goetz, Ludtke, Pekrun and Sutton
2009; Ramsden 1991). While the notion of enthusiasm has been studied within educational research, my approach to understanding how it plays out in the classroom is to view enthusiasm as a learned performance that emerges in a particular social, historical and cultural moment. With this in mind, I ask: What are the performative aspects of enthusiasm and how does enthusiasm get mapped onto the teacher’s body? How, specifically, does enthusiasm manifest in classroom teaching practices and how does it contribute to health passing?

Given how much the notion of performing enthusiasm in the classroom came up during the workshops I conducted, I decided to do a quick web search to see what kinds of resources come up in relation to this term. Interestingly, the first website that comes up for the keyword search “performing enthusiasm in the classroom” in the Google search engine is an online resource for Physical Education teachers written by Monica Parson (2001). Parson is a faculty member of the Department of Health Promotion, Leisure and Human Performance at Elon College, North Carolina. She describes five behaviours that physical education instructors should use to appear enthusiastic:

1. Vary your speaking voice in order to hold students’ attention.
2. Use your eyes to mirror the excitement in your teaching. [She suggests looking at students directly in the eye to convey interest in order to listen with your eyes as well as speak with them.]
3. Use body language that expresses enthusiasm, such as clapping your hands or giving students a “thumbs up” when students have done a good job. [Parson goes on to suggest not to stand in one place but to move around as this will also allow teachers to more closely monitor students.]
4. Use pleasant facial expressions to show excitement. [Parson suggests expressing “pleasure via your face when students are successful at the tasks you ask them to perform.”]
5. She recommends encouraging students through an “I am on your team attitude” (Parson 2001).
Parson’s suggestions reflect a cognitive-behavioural psychological model. In this approach, enthusiasm is a means through which a teacher modifies students’ behaviour. This approach assumes that we can effectively convey our intentions through our behaviour and that our behaviours will always be interpreted in the ways that we intend them to be. However, applying a poststructural approach to the performance of enthusiasm complicates the linearity suggested by the cognitive-behavioural psychological model.

For example, Louise demonstrated an ineffective approach to teaching the DPA by using a monotone voice while several participants discussed moving around the classroom and physically getting down to the students’ level as part of good teaching practice. The majority of these “enthusiastic behaviours” are physical, and require teachers to use their bodies in particular ways. While seemingly commonsense, these behaviours are representative of particular social and cultural values. For example, in particular contexts, the use of direct eye contact can be interpreted as a threatening or aggressive gesture, depending on what that eye contact looks like.

As demonstrated by the participants, teachers must learn how to perform enthusiasm with their bodies. As Elena points out, these enthusiastic behaviours were emphasized in her teacher training, where she learned that she had to find a “hook” in her initial lesson to get students interested in it. For Elena, this “hook” was akin to “doing cartwheels and standing on your head to get students’ attention.” While Elena said this jokingly, her physicality is emphasized in her description of trying to get students interested. It is possible that although Elena is attempting to “hook” her students in, her body might be being read differently than the way she intends it to be or is aware of. Like health passing, the performance of enthusiasm maps discourses of health and fitness onto the teachers’ body in the classroom.
The assumptions about the effectiveness of performing enthusiasm in Parson’s suggestions, as well as how these behaviours were utilized by the participants in their classrooms, are that enthusiastic behaviours will be clearly understood by students who will then feel compelled to act accordingly. However, despite the best efforts of teachers, students may be keenly aware of when their teachers are acting enthusiastic in order to get them to engage in a given activity or task. The cognitive-behaviour model was a popular approach to teaching health and physical activity that many participants shared. However, as enthusiasm is a performance, there is always room for slippages, subversions, resistance and/or failure. For example, a yawn by a teacher during the DPA might convey more to students than a teacher’s performance of enthusiasm. Furthermore, we cannot assume that just because teachers appear interested and enthusiastic about a health and wellness initiative or activity, that their performance will have any effect on students’ attitudes or behaviours in relation to it.

As identified by the participants, the health practices embedded in initiatives such as the DPA initiative or the “Healthy Schools” program do not require teachers to be interested in these initiatives, but rather they are required to appear invested in them through the performance of enthusiasm for good health. Through the use of enthusiasm, the participants believe they are able to perform the importance of good health more convincingly to their students, encouraging students to “buy into” the performances they are “selling” more easily. While beyond the scope of this project, it would interesting to examine and complicate notions of students’ “buying into” of the performances of enthusiasm by their teachers by interrogating the performances they use to “sell” students a topic. Similar to how the teachers in my research have used enthusiasm to engage students, how might students perform enthusiasm as a way of making their everyday lives easier in the classroom?
In the following section, these performances of health and fitness by the teachers are further examined in relation to concerns about morality and the role that the teacher plays both in the classroom and in the larger community.

“We are the Moral Compasses of Society”: Other Performances of Self in the Classroom and in the Community

In addition to their descriptions of health passing, the participants described how other aspects of their lives are on display in the classroom. While our conversations in the workshops were primarily based on how their bodies and lives were a source of curiosity for students, participants would often use these discussions as a space in which to discuss the broader expectations of the role of teachers in the community. In particular, the notion of morality was discussed in relation to the expectations of the teaching profession. In the following section, I examine the role of morality and the use of the “personal” in teaching. I begin with examples of participants describing questions raised by students about their personal/private lives. For example, Anthony reflects on typical questions his students ask about his personal life:

Anthony: Yeah... So, definitely you are under the microscope, whatever you are doing. Yeah. When I ride my bike, it’s like “don’t you have a car?” like...you must be poor. It’s odd. Yes, I have a car and I choose not to use it. You know. They would question me. Then, it’s what kind of car do you have? So...many of the families I do teach don’t have a vehicle. They’re living in apartment buildings and they use TTC or they’re walking. So, it is also status...they’re trying to see how cool are you, like what do you drive, where do you go. Do you have a Wii? Do you have a ‘this’ and do you have a ‘that’? They want to know what TV shows you’re watching.

Louise and Jen also discussed how their students want to know about their teachers’ personal lives:

Louise: Our children know far more about us as people than we ever knew about our own teachers.

Jen: Yeah. I would agree.
Louise: I think they like that too, right? I mean, they know I have two children. They know how old they are. Sometimes I’ll say, “Oh my gosh, Evan did this at school today, we are going to try this today.” My children arrive home after school by themselves at ten after three – I don’t get out until 3:35PM. My cell phone rings everyday at ten after three. Now, someone in my class, says “they’re home safe.” So they know more about your life and what you do. Like you said... you went for a walk and what your interests are. You know, when you do the ol’ “what did you do on the weekend?” you share something as well.

Students’ interest in and inquiry into the lives of their teachers were generally understood by participants as a positive phenomenon and was generally encouraged. But, at times, it could also be invasive and require teachers to be aware of constant scrutiny and of the potential consequences if they shared something regarded as unsafe or dangerous with their students.

Sharing aspects of their personal lives serves to regulate and control teachers in particular ways. In Workshop 1, the participants explained that knowing which aspects of a teacher’s life were acceptable to disclose to students and which ones were not acceptable was “commonsense.” Rebecca applied her knowledge of which behaviours were acceptable for teachers in order to share with students by discussing the types of physical activities she engages in outside of class:

Rebecca: It is just whatever I happen to be doing in my life sorta ends up being recycled in the classroom. Because kids want to know who you are. I mean, that is a part of my life that I am comfortable sharing with them. You know. I can talk about fitness. That’s fine.

Amy: It is an acceptable ...

Rebecca: Yeah. It is safe for me to talk to them about. You know...working out...and for them, they seem to find it interesting. (...) They want to know who you are.

Discussions of personal fitness routines, like running, biking and walking are understood as safe as they reinforce the dominant discourses on health that function in schools. Simultaneously, they serve to present the teacher as a moral subject and the role of the teacher is not confined exclusively to the classroom or school. Teachers are understood to play a role within the larger community as well and their behaviours even outside of the context of schooling are understood
as needing to represent and enforce community notions of morality. Elizabeth stated that the idea that “[teachers] are the moral compasses of society” was made explicit in her teacher training. Similarly, Elena recalled learning in her teacher training that “teachers are supposed to always act in accordance to a Christian way of thinking...” and that they must present themselves as “a good Christian would.” According to this logic, the topic of fitness is understood to be safe.

Furthermore, health and fitness are topics that Rebecca can discuss while not feeling too vulnerable sharing something from her private life. The use of Rebecca’s fitness regime as a “safe” topic to discuss with students underscores the perceived moral goodness of physical fitness and normalizes the role of fitness within the school.

In contrast to the moral aspects related to discussing personal fitness regimes with students, Elena recalls learning in her Initial Teacher Education classes about the consequences for teachers who were discovered to be conducting themselves with questionable morals outside of the classroom:

**Elena:** But in our law class, we did a study of a teacher. A teacher who was married to another teacher in B.C., and they did a photo shoot of them naked for a magazine or something. And so, they lost their jobs because it was not a Christian thing to do – to be on display naked.

**Amy:** What?! [laughing]

**Elena:** I can’t remember the wording or anything. That was six years ago or so. But I do remember that sticking out and thinking, well, that’s their personal life. Certainly, I wouldn’t want pictures of me naked be around so that students could see what I look like naked because that would make all sorts of issues in the classroom. I am sure – for [classroom] management. But it was a really interesting ethical/moral thing that was going on there.

**Amy:** What are we saying here? Teachers aren’t supposed to be having sex? Where do you draw the line?

**Elena:** It goes back to when teachers were supposed to be spinsters.

**Amy:** Yeah. Celibate women.

**Elena:** Yeah. Who lived at the school house. That was it, and that was their job.
The use of the body in discussions about teachers’ personal lives was acceptable when it is understood as performing moral behaviours like physical exercise. However, being “caught” engaging in acts that are understood as morally questionable such as sexual activity and alcohol consumption are cause for increased regulation and control for teachers. Furthermore, Elena believes that being caught engaging in immoral behaviour (such as having naked pictures of you made public), would have implications in the classroom in terms of student behaviour.

When teachers share stories of their private lives, in effect, they perform morally acceptable discourses of the personal. As Susan Miller argues:

> these confessions are neither individual nor even personal. They are constructed sites for modern texts that neither we nor students author. I am obviously suggesting that this personal, like the pedagogical I have already located in an openly stated historical agenda for cultural regulation, is a particular and specific fiction. (1995: 160)

As Miller argues, the teacher’s personal life becomes a space in which to enact particular and specific cultural, social and political understandings of acceptable behaviour. Through the construction and performance of the personal, particular subjects are constituted in the classroom. As demonstrated by the above examples, the importance of the teacher’s performance of the personal is crucial for the reinforcement and perpetuation of the moral imperative to take care of oneself.

Michel Foucault claims that the “the system of codes and rules of behavior” may be rather basic and that exact observance of such codes is not as an important as “the relationship he has with himself, in his different actions, thoughts, and feelings” (1985: 30). Foucault goes on to explain that the emphasis in these “relations with the self is on the methods and techniques by which he works them out, on the exercises by which he makes of himself an object to be known, and on the practices that enable him to transform his own mode of being” (1985: 30). The relationship to the self or “care of the self” becomes a mode for the expression of moral choices.
Drawing on Foucault’s work, Jennifer Gore claims that the moral codes of pedagogy are expressed through themes of goodness and truth and operate through supervision and correction (1993: 129). Therefore, teachers choose to discuss particular kinds of acts in their private lives, understood as good for cultivating morally responsible adults. Such moral acts expressed through the “care of the self” are often related to contemporary notions of health and wellness.

These forms of pedagogical care are highly gendered practices. Through dominant discourses of femininity, women are positioned as caretakers and nurturers. These discourses of femininity intersect with the child-centred approach of modern schooling practice, wherein teachers enact a mothering role. Valerie Walkerdine describes the child-centred approach to teaching practice as an approach that conceptualizes each student as an individual for whom knowledge “is acquired and produced through the development of an active learner, who develops ‘at his own pace’, by actively incorporating experience” (1985: 208). This approach places the teacher as a passive observer and monitor of the sequence of natural development of the student (1985: 208).

Further interrogating this approach to teaching through her work on schoolgirls and their teachers, Valerie Walkerdine argues that feminine qualities, such as nurturance, are understood “as desirable in both teachers and girls alike” (Walkerdine 1990: 76). Walkerdine goes on to argue that “nice, kind, and helpful girls are like the teacher” (1990: 76) and are charged with being the “guardians of the moral order, keepers of the rules” (1990: 77). Through their attention to keeping the moral order and enforcing the rules in the classroom, teachers and “good” schoolgirls⁷ enable the active student learner to foster their own intellectual development. Thus,

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⁷ It is important to note, as Walkerdine’s work demonstrates, that these discourses of femininity, in many ways, contradict the student imagined in child-centred approaches to schooling.
the enforcement of moral order and the pedagogy of care in the classroom become highly feminized forms of labour.

For example, when a teacher shares with her students that she went on a long hike or run on the weekend, she is not only performing the personal in the class, she is also connecting this performance of the personal with modelling the notion of how to take care of oneself. Through the performance of her personal life, the teacher demonstrates care of the self, which, in turn, reinforces the status of the teacher as one who has made correct moral choices. It is through the performance of the personal that teachers can constitute themselves as good moral subjects in all aspects of their lives. By contrast, the teacher described by Elena, who was discovered to have taken naked, sexy photos of herself becomes understood as morally bankrupt. Her performance of the personal threatens to disrupt the notion of the good teacher as a chaste woman who is in control of her sexual desires. I discuss the notions of sexuality and desirability and their implications in teachers’ professional and personal lives in greater detail in the following chapter.

As the experiences of the research participants demonstrate, moral regulation is central to the everyday life of teachers in the classroom. Kate Rousmaniere, Kari Dehli and Ning de Coninck-Smith argue that in schools:

Moral regulation works in ways that render some forms of expression, conduct, and behaviour obvious, natural, and normal. That is, some ways of saying, doing, and being human are privileged over others, rendering the other ways deviant, dangerous, marginal, or unacceptable. By their very taken-for-grantedness, dominant moral norms appear to live a secret, invisible, and effortless life. (1997: 273)

However, while these moral norms may appear to be “secret, invisible, and effortless,” the maintaining them requires constant vigilance and attention by teachers to ensure correct conduct and behaviour. This “moral labour” is central to the teaching profession. Being the “moral
compass” is something that all my research participants took very seriously both within the classroom and out in the larger community, particularly if they lived in the same community in where they taught. It is fascinating how explicit this aspect of teaching was made in some participants’ Initial Teacher Education classes. In addition to the moral behaviour expected of them within their classroom performances, the participants also spoke about negotiating the moral dimensions of teaching when they are out in the broader community.

For example, Elena believes that being a teacher “infiltrates every single aspect of your life” and was concerned about conveying a professional image, both within the classroom and when she was out in the community. While Elena did not describe engaging in any activity that could be seen as morally questionable, she was still hyper-aware of her image in the community. In his well-known work, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Erving Goffman argues that when people observe individuals enacting a particular role in society, they must take seriously this performance. He argues that we:

> are asked to believe that the character [we] see actually possesses the attributes he appears to possess, that the task he [sic] performs will have the consequences that are implicitly claimed for it, and in general, matters are what they appear to be. (Goffman 1959: 17)

The professional requirement for teachers to be “moral compasses of society” causes teachers to become hyper-vigilant around how they perform such a role in their community in order for their performance to be read as convincing and reflective of teachers possessing a strong moral character.

Similarly to Elena, Elizabeth was concerned about moving into the neighbourhood where she teaches. She described the community as “very gossipy” and a place where “parents talk about teachers all the time.” Even though Elizabeth did “not anticipate doing anything that they would interpret negatively,” she was still concerned about being observed out in the community.
Given the type of surveillance in the community, Elizabeth was particularly nervous about being judged by others as engaging in any type of behaviour that could be interpreted negatively in the community. She explained as follows:

**Elizabeth:** Yeah. Well, I am nervous if I go to the LCBO.\(^8\) I am always looking over my shoulder ... to see if somebody is there. (...) I just think that would - like those kind of lifestyle choices - to kind of have that displayed for community would be a little uncomfortable.

Consuming alcohol or being seen places where alcohol consumption is implied, such as at the LCBO or in a bar, was a particular concern for some participants. Darcy described her concerns:

**Darcy:** It is a concern, too, because you really...not that I am doing unacceptable things outside of school, but I remember being told in teacher training, you need to think about what sort of image you’re portraying outside of school as well, because if parents see you, if students see you. If you run into a parent at the pub and you’re just shit-faced, right? You know...

In contrast to many of the experiences shared by participants, Jean described how she received LCBO gift certificates and bottles of wine as thank you gifts from parents and students at the end of the year. She understands these as gifts that reflect the parents’ understanding that she is a “human being as well.” Interestingly, Jean, who lives in the same community where she teaches, also discussed how she frequently takes yoga classes with parents of students. These encounters give Jean and the parents a chance to say hello and to “hang out together and do the class.” This familiarity may enable Jean’s performance of morality to be more flexible because the parents of her students have observed her morally correct behaviour in other settings. This in turn may enable more trust or perceived knowingness about her character. Jean’s experience also serves to

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\(^8\) The acronym stands for the Liquor Control Board of Ontario. The LCBO is the primary place to purchase alcohol in Ontario.
demonstrate how notions of morality are not fixed but highly contingent on particular personal interactions and understandings.

As demonstrated by the participants varied experiences relating to the consumption of alcohol and the perception of their performance in their profession and in their personal lives, the consumption of alcohol is a morally ambiguous act. While the participants’ concerns about being seen consuming or buying alcohol can be linked to fears of not maintaining their performance of having high moral standards, Jean’s experiences demonstrate that consumption of alcohol is not strictly regulated and policed. That said, while consumption of some alcohol may be acceptable, none of the participants described teaching while drunk or hung over or how having an alcohol dependency affects their teaching. It is possible that the participants have never taught while intoxicated or recovering from the effects of intoxication or that they do not have or admit to an alcohol dependency. It is also possible that such silences are present because they could be seen as evidence of inappropriate care of the self and by extension, poor moral choices. While alcohol consumption is not necessarily understood as being detrimental to an individual’s health (in contrast to acts such as smoking or illegal drug use), it is, however, an ambiguous behaviour with respect to understandings of health. So, given the desire for teachers always to appear as morally upstanding, engaging in a morally ambiguous act could be enough to have their performance as a teacher called into question.

Given the potential legal ramifications of discussing drug use, especially when with a group of colleagues, I am not surprised that the research participants did not admit to or discuss their own drug use in the workshop. However, given how often alcohol and drinking were mentioned in the workshop, I am surprised that none of the participants discussed either their own tobacco smoking habits or their witnessing of other teachers and/or students smoking
tobacco. This absence in our discussions is interesting and may be suggestive of broader social and moral sensitivities to smoking.

The participants discussed at length how a teacher’s body is always on display and how they are scrutinized, monitored and judged by their students. These experiences have resulted in teachers becoming hyper-aware of their bodies in the classroom as well as conscious of which experiences they could (and could not) share with their students. Specifically, experiences with health and fitness, such as sharing with students details of their marathon training regime, are regarded as safe as they reflect the dominant discourses of health that function throughout the school. Furthermore, the teaching profession requires that teachers be the “moral compasses of society.” This common understanding of teachers caused many of my research participants to demonstrate extreme caution and awareness of how they were being perceived when they were out in the community. This discourse of morality is also connected to discourses of health and fitness in that if a good teacher is a healthy teacher and good teachers are morally upright, then appearing to be healthy becomes a moral imperative for teachers.

Concluding Thoughts

The notion of performance runs throughout teachers’ everyday lives, both within the classroom and in the broader community. Often, teachers use their own bodies to reinforce dominant discourses of health and fitness. Specifically, many participants enacted healthy eating in front of their students. These performances of health are examples of health passing which demonstrates the performativ underpinnings of health. The ability for participants to demonstrate “healthiness” for students suggests that such acts come to be read as healthy.

There were not many explicit examples of instances during which participants understood themselves to be actively resisting dominant discourses of health and fitness within their own
classrooms. However, one participant, Elena, described complicating the understanding of poor health being solely connected to one particular body type. Her own understandings of her body made this component of the curriculum particularly uncomfortable for her to teach. She believed that it was necessary to challenge the dominant understandings of body size conveyed in the class textbook despite (or perhaps because of) her own discomfort with the course material and her concern about her students.

A crucial pedagogical practice shared by all research participants was the use of enthusiasm to reinforce the value of health and fitness. Participants described how they used enthusiasm, which was expressed through their bodies, to “sell” students on lessons and activities related to health and fitness. Enthusiasm was used along with health passing to convey an effective performance in which the students would ultimately participate themselves.

Additionally, study participants were called upon to share details of their personal lives with their students. To negotiate the complexities of sharing their personal lives with their students, participants would often draw on their own physical fitness regimes as these elements of their lives were deemed “safe” to share with their students. Lastly, research participants described how those involved in the profession of teaching are expected to uphold particular standards of morality. Such an understanding resulted in the participants being highly aware of how they were being read in the community. Continuing to broaden the understanding of teachers’ bodies, the following chapter examines the concept of affect in the classroom.
CHAPTER FIVE:
RISKY RELATIONS, AFFECTIVE TEACHING AND THE PEDAGOGICAL MOMENT

While the previous chapter analyzed teachers’ experiences related to performativity, this chapter examines participants’ experiences in the classroom by applying the concept of affect. As explained in Chapter Two, as a concept, affect is particularly difficult to define and many scholars use the concept in varied and often contradictory ways. While there is a wealth of fascinating theoretical work on the concept of affect, I am interested in exploring how it might be used in empirical research. I approach affect as a space of possibility that exists between two bodies or a body and an object and I use the concept to examine how discourses of the body are mediated through teacher’s bodies and to analyze the role that these discourses play by describing particular classroom moments that were discussed in the workshops. In this chapter, I address the following research questions: Does the classroom curriculum ever seem to be at odds with teachers’ own bodies and/or teachers’ experiences of their bodies? If so, how do teachers negotiate this disjunction while teaching? How have students referred to participants’ bodies when in a teaching role? And if their bodies have been referred to by students or by others in the classroom, was it a positive or negative experience?

I begin my analysis of affect by discussing several stories shared by the participants that address the complexities of having their bodies “on display.” Then I discuss how participants negotiate shame in the classroom. I conclude with an analysis of everyday moments of touch and desire that my research participants have experienced. These stories reflect not only the teacher’s body in relation to other bodies in the classroom but also demonstrate how teachers’ bodies relate to broader social discourses such as those related to morality, sexuality and the protection of children. These moments, seemingly mundane and of little consequence, reveal much about the complexities of teaching and how discourses take shape with and through the body of the
teacher. It is important to understand these moments not as the affective moment itself but rather as signposts that point to them. The teachers’ stories reflect the memories and emotions that linger after an affective happening. Perhaps it would be helpful to understand these moments as the echoes of affect which take on their own shape and meaning in the lives of teachers. The remembering, retelling and writing of these moments add layers onto the affective moment and offer a way of exploring how teachers’ bodies are affected both before, during and after the moment of teaching. These descriptions offer the reader an opportunity to engage with the affective possibilities and consequences of teaching. They offer a place to imagine what those possibilities might be.

The Teacher’s Body and Ordinary Affects

A teacher’s body is always doing something in the classroom. Indeed, the common practice of using the teacher’s body to model correct behaviours and skills, such as healthy eating, is based on this awareness and as such constructs and perpetuates the teacher’s body as a crucial site of inquiry for students. As described by the participants in Chapters Three and Four, teachers often use their bodies in order to teach discourses associated with health, fitness and wellness. This pedagogical approach creates a teaching space that is based on scrutinizing the teacher’s body. Certainly, using the teacher’s body in relation to teaching discourses of health and fitness is not the sole reason for students’ attention to the teacher’s body. However, to reinforce discourses of health and fitness teachers’ bodies and actions are scrutinized differently than the bodies of non-teaching members of the general population.

In this chapter, attention to the teacher’s body is observed in the comments about the teacher’s body made by students. My research participants’ reactions to these comments

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9 The phrase Ordinary Affects was coined by Kathleen Stewart (2007).
demonstrates how seemingly mundane and innocuous moments in teaching reveal complex and complicated understandings about how the teacher’s body should look and appear. Two experiences described by the participants are discussed below: one describing the experience of being complimented by a student; another describes the experience of anticipating teaching a challenging lesson. These ordinary teaching experiences reveal ways in which teachers are affecting and being affected by their students. These experiences were chosen as they represent both the physicality and discursive complexity that occurs within a seemingly commonplace and mundane experience for a teacher in the classroom. Through their comments, students reveal that the teacher’s body is very much a part of their everyday experience of learning in the classroom.

The following comments from the participants are examples of some of the “innocent comments” made by students to teachers. For example Anthony states “Oh! They’ll comment on my haircut. Yes. ‘Oh! You got a hair cut’. (...) They commented when I got new glasses, for sure.” Participants’ responses to these incidents indicate the complexity of these pedagogical moments. Many participants described how their students notice everything about teachers’ bodies and often comment on what they observe. Their awareness of being observed by students and their concern about being judged shapes many of the participants’ experiences in their classrooms.

For example, Rebecca, who teaches grade six, describes a moment at which a student complimented her on being skinny. Her description of this moment is as follows:

Rebecca: [Laughing]. They notice everything and they comment on everything.  
Serena: Definitely.  
Rebecca: They’ll say “You look tired today.” - I don’t like [it] when they say [that]. “What did you do to your hair”? I had one girl say to me that I was skinny when I was skinnier then too, which I didn’t like. She was like “that’s because you are so skinny, you can do this.” [It was] something to do with [wearing certain] clothes. That made me uncomfortable.
Amy: Because....
Rebecca: It was a good thing for her. She was complimenting me.
Amy: Okay.
Darcy: Skinny was a compliment?
Rebecca: It was a compliment, but I just didn’t like being ...I didn’t like being on display in that way. Like...and I certainly didn’t....I don’t think students really heard her say that...but it is not something I would be comfortable really talking about with my class.
Amy: The idea of thinness as positive?
Rebecca: Yeah.
Amy: [The idea that] if you were to lose weight this is a good thing.
Rebecca: Yeah.
Amy: Those are all sort of triggers for you that this is problematic.
Rebecca: Yes.
Amy: So that is where the discomfort came from..?
Rebecca: That thinness was good for her. That it was seen as a positive.
Amy: Okay.

As described in Chapter Three, Rebecca would use her body and descriptions of her fitness routines to her students as a means of reinforcing dominant discourses of health and fitness. These conversations were understood as something from her private life that was “safe” to share with her students. Perhaps Rebecca considered these conversations as “safe” because they placed her as an expert and located her and her body within discourses of elite sport, as a result of her marathon training. However, here Rebecca describes moments in her class of being “on display” that made her feel uncomfortable and ill-at-ease. Furthermore, a student’s description of her body as skinny was a conversation that made her uncomfortable.

One way of examining this moment is to analyze how Rebecca’s experiences with her student fit within the context of hegemonic femininity. As I have discussed in Chapter Two, the thin female body is the Western ideal and therefore, failure to maintain a slender body results in a failure to achieve hegemonic femininity. Many feminist scholars have argued there is intense social pressure for women to maintain a thin or slender form (Orbach 1978; Chernin 1981; Bartky 1993; Bordo 1993). Given this pressure, women both police and regulate themselves and
other women. The student’s comment about Rebecca’s thinness is reflective of these norms and practices. The student’s eagerness to accept and reproduce hegemonic expressions of femininity resulted in Rebecca feeling ill-at-ease.

Furthermore, the moments when a teacher is “on display” demonstrate how the teacher is both affecting and being affected by her students. Something is indeed happening in these moments. Our corporeality is part of our everyday experiences and is crucial to how we experience our social worlds. Michelle Fine’s (1988) work related to schooling, girls and sexuality (summarized earlier, in Chapter Two), may also be used to interpret Rebecca’s response to her student’s comments. Fine draws on French feminists who have argued that expressions of female voice, body, and sexuality are essentially inaudible when the dominant language and ways of viewing are male (1988: 34).

Fine argues that it is important for educators to offer a counter-discourse to hegemonic thinking related to women’s bodies. She refers to this counter-discourse as a discourse of desire. The discourse of desire attempts to acknowledge the silences and differences related to the gendered body within education and emphasizes an understanding of the self as it relates to socially-constructed meanings of sexuality (Fine 1988: 34). These techniques could be particularly useful for re-imagining how the body could be understood within education, however, as Rebecca’s experience demonstrates, she is not comfortable discussing these concepts with her class. As she is regulated and policed through dominant ideas and beliefs around women’s bodies, Rebecca, as the teacher, is also rendered silent in the classroom.

Furthermore, these pedagogical techniques call upon these affective moments as a site of learning. After being affected by the teachers’ body, the student can demonstrate their learning of a particular discursive lesson. In the case of Rebecca, her student demonstrated her
understanding of dominant forms of femininity and how these relate to having access to engage
in particular activities, like wearing fashionable clothes. So, while Rebecca did not discuss these
moments further with her students (as they brought up feelings of discomfort), her student
demonstrated how she was affected by Rebecca’s body in the classroom. The young student, in
being moved to respond to her teacher’s body and the resulting discomfort for Rebecca
demonstrates how the teacher’s body interacts with students’ bodies in complicated ways in the
classroom. Furthermore, these interactions reflected and reproduced broader discourses of
femininity.

Similarly, Elena described her discomfort with being “on display,” in particular in a class
centred on eating, health and nutrition. She described her unease at being in this position as a
teacher. Unlike Rebecca, Elena’s students never confronted her or discussed her body in relation
to course material or content. However, Elena was always waiting for such a confrontation to
occur with a student:

**Elena:** Even getting up in front of the class and talking about healthy body weight and,
you know, talking about images of body and all of that. It was very ...it made me very
self-conscious of myself. It made me so aware of my body at all times. And I always tried
to take it and talk about ...okay this is what the world says we look like, this is what
people typically look like, but it doesn’t mean everybody has to look like it, type of thing,
to engage and let the kids know that you don’t have to look like this. And you can be
healthy if you are not 5’7 and 120lbs. And just really doing that. But it was ...I always felt
very on display. And I’ve always felt that the kids were kind of looking at me and
[asking] “why are you telling me this kind of stuff? You’re not. You don’t fit that mould
of what this healthy person is supposed to be looking like.” So, it was very nerve-
wracking for me. Very much so. I don’t know if my students ever thought that. I mean, I
had absolutely lovely children, students, in that class. We had a lot of fun. But I was
always very aware of myself. At all times in that class. And even just beginning in that
space where it was like the kitchen and the food, and those associations. It was very
interesting to try and navigate that. (...)

**Amy:** So they were resistant to you in this class?

**Elena:** I didn’t feel that they were. I didn’t at all. I just kept expecting them to be.

**Amy:** Okay. Anticipating...
Elena: Yeah. I never felt that from them. I think it was just my own self-awareness and my own self-esteem and my own body issues myself that I was projecting. I never had any resistance from them. They accepted - they did learn in the class and I did too! I was like, this is so cool! I didn’t know this! So, I don’t think they reacted that way. They may have, but they never indicated that to me, so it was okay in that regard. But every day, I just felt like, one of these days, they are going to say something. You know? Or just...I think it was just my own issues coming up and trying to work through. But I never felt it from them.

Elena described her impression of teaching moments wherein she was responsible for teaching health and fitness and having a body that seems to be at odds with the content of the lesson. Her awareness of the dominant discourses of ideals of femininity and how they relate to understandings of health and fitness shaped Elena’s uncomfortable experience in class. She was concerned that students would rely on these discourses to discredit her authority in the classroom. Interestingly, as Elena says “it was just my own self-awareness and my own self-esteem and my own body issues myself that I was projecting.” Elena’s description points to how she was affected not by a particular comment or specific interaction with a student but rather by the anticipation of such a moment. Anticipating this event shaped her understandings of the classroom and of her students.

While it is beyond the scope of this project to inquire about how Elena’s body issues were projected onto the class and how the students read these moments, it is interesting to consider how teachers’ fears and anxieties might shape lessons in the classroom and how they might affect students. Elena’s anxiety about her “own body issues” and her concern about how students will take them up demonstrate the complexity of teachers’ lives and how they can be affected in the classroom.

Although affect manifests in individual moments, these moments do not exist outside of broader social and political discourses. As the above examples demonstrate, the teacher’s body is doing something. What teachers’ bodies do in the classroom and how their bodies are both
affected and affect others through discourses of corporeality will be the focus of the rest of this chapter.

**Doing Shame in the Classroom**

On the subject of shame, Elspeth Probyn notes:

> Different affects make us feel, write, think, and act in different ways. Shame, for example, works over the body in certain ways. It does this experientially – the body feels very different in shame from how it feels in enjoyment – but it also reworks how we understand the body and its relation to other bodies or, for want of a better word, to the social. (2005: 137)

What is shame doing in the classroom? Many of the participants shared experiences of shame or fear of being shamed. Often these experiences related to how their bodies were being read by students, particularly in relation to demonstrating particular physical skills, such as throwing a ball or skating. For example, Rebecca states “I didn’t want to be laughed at, I didn’t want to be laughed at by my students (...) I would be terrified to be laughed at by my students.” I do not know why exactly Rebecca would be terrified to be laughed at by her students, perhaps because this action would limit or challenge her authority in the classroom or perhaps it would have a negative impact on her self-esteem/self-perception as it relates to teaching. In her creative writing, Rebecca shared her concerns about being ashamed of parts of her body and how she would take pains to conceal these parts of her body from her students. Rebecca wrote:

> Recently, I have had a couple of experiences where I have felt that I have had to cover or hide parts of my body that I believed to be repulsive, or at least unattractive, to my students. I am speaking about piercing sites. Let me explain...

> Two summers ago, my earlobe tore when my hairdresser caught her brush on my earring. It meant I could no longer wear earrings. [As an aside she writes] Admittedly I have a history of sensitivity in regards to my ears. As a nine year-old, I underwent extensive plastic surgery to fix my ears, which were somewhat deformed. As a child, I never wore ponytails, and wore my hair long to cover my ears. The summer I had surgery, I had to wear a large bandage & I didn’t visit with any friends because I didn’t want them to know.
I decided to have my earlobes repaired → I went to a plastic surgeon to have both holes repaired so I could start fresh. When I came home, my earlobes were swollen & I had ugly black stitches where the holes had been. I felt like a freak → Bride of Frankenstein! The stitches stayed in for several weeks. I was careful to keep my hair down and was conscious to never put it behind my ears. I didn’t want my students to see me this way, I didn’t want to explain what had happened or for them to say “eww, gross” etc. I managed to avoid any discussion about my earlobes & I was VERY relieved when my ears were free of stitches.

The second time I felt that my body was on display was in regards to my nose piercing. Our school had a policy of no nose piercings...so I had to wear a plastic stud. Because I took my nose ring out & put the plastic stud in every day, my nose piercing became infected. It was horrible → red & pus-y. I remember talking one to one with a student and he couldn’t take his eyes off my nose! I tried to cover it with make-up but that looked WORSE. I was angry with the school for enforcing this policy. It’s my nose/face/body, why can’t I do what I want?

In both of these situations, I felt like I was in school again, as a student facing humiliation. I felt a loss of control and resentment for being placed in these situations (emphasis in original).

Rebecca’s fear of being humiliated in front of her students and her shame about her ears and nose had to be negotiated during her teaching. This fear of humiliation is reflected in her need to hide and cover parts of her body that she believed to be “repulsive.” However, Rebecca was forced to negotiate these fears in the teaching profession which encourages educators to use their bodies as a means of modelling correct behaviour and actions to their students, placing intense scrutiny on teachers’ bodies. Rebecca’s negotiations around the shame she felt towards her body played out in her interactions with her students, as demonstrated in her description of her interaction with a student who stared at her nose throughout their whole discussion. Furthermore, the policies of her school that required her to remove or hide her piercings evoked a sense of loss of control and feelings of resentment from Rebecca. Rebecca’s story demonstrates the complex and intense relationships that we have with our bodies and how these relationships may be intensified for teachers in the classroom.
The intensity of these relationships has an impact on the participants’ teaching philosophies as well as on their teaching practices. For example, Elena describes her experiences of throwing a baseball poorly in front of her students. She states:

**Elena:** There was one time I went to throw a baseball, and it was during a game ... I was in a car accident a few years ago, and really messed up my neck and shoulders – it was when I was eighteen. I ended up having a lot of problems with using my hands and mobility in my arms and still have a lot of neck pain and things like that. So I was having a bit of pain and I threw the ball and I just...I don’t even know. I was aiming there, and it went over there [points to the opposite direction]. I just did this in front of my entire team and another team. And I was pretty respected in the baseball circle there because of the knowledge I have. I was just mortified. And the kids kind of looked at me, and I was like “I got to hit the gym a little more often.” And it was just one of those types of comments that I made, and they were like “Oh! Okay.”

Similarly, Elizabeth describes having to participate in a Dance-a-thon that the school was participating in for charity. As the Dance-a-thon was for charity, Elizabeth felt she had to participate despite her fears of dancing badly in front of her students. She states:

**Elizabeth:** And I was very terrified of it because ... They were doing that Just Dance the moves on the board and when you are there by yourself with grade sixes who can real... who take gymnastics and dance and they are all amazing at it. I felt like a little self-conscious and tried to just be as ridiculous as I possibly could, so that you kind of disguise that fact that you have no idea how to move two sides of your body at once.

My research participants explained how they attempted to protect themselves from being shamed in front of their students by putting themselves down or by making fun of themselves. As demonstrated by Elena’s statement “I got to hit the gym a little more often” and Elizabeth’s approach of being deliberately “just be as ridiculous as I possibly could.” Elena and Elizabeth use different tactics in order to prevent students from shaming them in the classroom. Elena draws on health and fitness discourses, specifically, the notion that individuals can perfect their bodies by engaging in regular fitness regimes, to avoid or reduce the potential to be shamed in front of her students. Elizabeth’s approach of intentionally looking foolish is an attempt to
“disguise” her actual low skill level. However, it is also possible that this tactic is also used to reflect that this exercise is not important enough to take seriously. Participants’ experiences of shame and humiliation in the classroom have influenced their teaching personae and the ways in which they interact with their students.

Fears of being shamed by their students shaped both teaching philosophies and teaching practices. Many participants described not asking students to engage in activities that they had found humiliating or embarrassing, such as performing gymnastic skills in front of the whole class, when they were students. As a teacher, Darcy recalled her own unpleasant experiences of gym class as a student, when she confronted her former Physical Education teacher at a school meeting. She stated:

Darcy: Having Mrs. S there was like “Holy shit”! I remember gymnastics with her. And I remember the dance club and I remember having to do a somersault on a bench with the narrow side up and falling off. You know? That kind of stuff. Just seeing the woman was awful.

Amy: Right. Those memories come flooding back from our own schooling.

Darcy: [laughing]

Amy: So it informed [your teaching] before you even got into the classroom. It would inform choices that you would make when you were setting up your lessons.

Darcy: Oh! Yeah! And I mean... I wouldn’t have them do things that ... like the things I remember from elementary school as being just humiliating and embarrassing and just unpleasant things to do. We wouldn’t do those things.

Darcy went on to state that “I wouldn’t do things like ... a line-up of students and each student would go one at a time while the rest of the class watched. Things like that just wouldn’t happen. I was very aware of the kids’ comfort level. You know...being in the class...taking part in the class.” Her own experiences of shame and humiliation as a student shaped the approaches that Darcy used in her classes.

For the most part, participants believed in not asking students to perform tasks that they themselves could not do and this philosophy was often tested in relation to physical activity and
exercise. Often, if it was possible, the participants would skip a sport or activity that they could not model for their students and the sport or activity was omitted in favour of one that they could felt they could model correctly to avoid being shamed by their students. Several participants described how they would not participate in school activities in which they felt they lacked ability or sufficient talent to model correctly. For example, Anthony stated that he did participate in a school game of basketball where the teachers play against the students, stating “I don’t need to demonstrate my abilities.”

Another teaching tactic used to reduce the chances of modelling an activity or skill incorrectly and thus to reduce the chances of being laughed at, teased and shamed by their students, was to have a student who was known for possessing the given skill, model it for the class. For example, Elizabeth described how she would ask certain students to demonstrate a particular skill to the rest of the class. She stated “I think for me, if I couldn’t do something, I would pick students in the class who I knew were on the volleyball team or on the basketball team and could demonstrate those skills better.” Elizabeth also described her anxiety about being shamed by her students:

Elizabeth: Well...last year I did some Phys. Ed prep coverage. So, in the primary grades they do kinda have to do to do kinda movement and rolling and jumping and landing activities and things like that. So..but then...I don’t know. I think I would feel more self-conscious if I did those kind of activities with my grade six class, than I would the grade twos and threes. ‘Cause they think you’re great all the time. The grade sixes know a little bit better. Like my kids would make fun of me. Just because....
Amy: If you did a front roll incorrectly...
Elizabeth: Oh they would have laughed! Yeah. They would have laughed at me. I think that is fine. ‘Cause I think we had the relationship where they realized I wasn’t perfect and I could make mistakes and I wasn’t good at everything. So, I would have allowed it.
Amy: But you still wouldn’t necessarily put yourself...
Elizabeth: Oh no! No!
Amy: ... in the ring to be ....
Elizabeth: Ridiculed. Probably not.

By asking students to perform skills that the research participants did not feel confident or competent performing themselves, participants were able to protect themselves from being shamed or humiliated in front of their students. These experiences of shame and humiliation are perpetuated through the belief that they cannot perform these skills or activities correctly, which is a manifestation of discourses that position teachers as experts on everything that they teach. Despite encouraging students to understand teachers as “not perfect” or “people too” participants’ experiences of shame and humiliation in the classroom were shaped by an understanding and/or fear of being read as not perfect or lacking in skill.

At the beginning of this section, I drew on Elspeth Probyn’s work to ask: What is shaming doing in the classroom? This question shifts the focus from the individual teacher’s experience of shame in the classroom to the broader political and social uses of shame. The understanding of feeling shamed in school due to an inability to demonstrate a particular skill or activity must be understood in terms of what that ability to exercise that skill means in contemporary society.

What does it mean when shame is experienced if a teacher cannot execute a cartwheel or run laps around the school? While individualized notions of failure and success are related to these acts of shaming, they also reinforce and re-inscribe notions of morality related to the body and fitness. Probyn argues that:

Shame can serve to produce and police a certain morality that lends itself to the desire for codification. ... However, if shame is construed only as a means of reproach and becomes a way of wielding power under the guise of moral rectitude, its uses are likely to be unpalatable. Moreover, for those groups who have borne the brunt of this type of insidious power, shame is something to be feared. (2005: 94)
Shame is often used as a means of controlling, regulating and policing the body. As expressed in the experiences of my research participants, good teachers should be able to model with their own body the physical skills that they are asking their students to perform. These understandings of the teacher’s body stem from an understanding of their body serving as a site for constructing and reproducing dominant discourses of health and fitness. When teachers are unable to perform these tasks, they are shamed (or risk being shamed) as they reveal their own failures and therefore allow their power and authority in the classroom to be questioned. While the research participants are able to enact various forms of power in their classrooms, like their students, they too, are regulated and restricted by the discursive structures of the educational institution.

As noted in the previous chapter, in order to pass as healthy, teachers need to continuously repeat their performances of health in the classroom. However, in every repetition of this performance of health, there is the possibility of failure. And yet, teachers must continue their performances of health even though there is a constant risk that they will fail. Furthermore, even when attempting to pass as healthy, teachers can never really be assured as to whether or not they are successfully passing. There is no space in dominant discourses around health to refuse to engage, as refusal (or subversion) only serves to reify the discourse. To demonstrate this point, recall the concept of the “bad fattie”, who intentionally chooses to eat a diet high in fats and sugars and who refuses to exercise. While the “bad fattie” may be attempting to challenge dominant discourses of health, her subversion can only be understood through the very discourse she is attempting to undermine. Indeed, failure to achieve normative ideals of health is assumed within the discourse. Shame functions during the moments of risk and anticipated failure that occur when attempting to pass as healthy. Therefore, one of the principal ways in which participants experienced shame in their classrooms was during their attempts to pass as
healthy, while constantly being at risk of revealing their failure to achieve the healthy ideals that they were required to teach to their students.

While many of my research participants described their own experiences of being shamed and the teaching techniques they used in order to avoid being shamed by their students, some also described being in a position to shame students; to be the shamer. Elizabeth and Elena described experiences in which students were shamed in their classrooms. Elizabeth described how being required to record students’ heights and weights caused a student to feel ashamed of her weight. She stated:

**Elizabeth:** Well, we went...the kids went on a ski trip in January and we had to kinda measure their height and their shoe size and their weight, as well. So, that, for me, was kinda a really eye-opening experience, just seeing how different the weights would vary in my class. How one girl burst into tears, ‘cause we were doing it kinda out...out of the way, so other people wouldn’t see and they wouldn’t know, but it was just so uncomfortable. I didn’t want to make her step on that scale. And she is overweight and she was just bawling, and I am like, “listen, I promise no one will ever know...like how much you weigh...like it is not going to get out there.” And I am like: “I am not judging you for it, we just need to know for these skis to make sure you’re equipped safely.” But I was really uncomfortable, and I felt that that was something I shouldn’t be doing with them because...like, it is embarrassing. For a lot of them. So...that was kinda a really difficult moment to kind of talk her through that and get her on the scale and then...just to have that comparison of like her and these other kids who were like 65-70 lbs in the class. Just to kinda realize how difficult it can be for kids at that age. Like 11 year-olds. I didn’t enjoy that moment.

Elizabeth’s experiences of being responsible for shaming her student stemmed from the expectations of her role as a teacher, specifically, her responsibility to ensure the provision of appropriate ski equipment for her students to protect their safety. It is possible that Elizabeth could have negotiated this moment differently, particularly if she did not like the position that she was placed in. For example, as her students were aged twelve and thirteen, she might have considered having students write down their own heights and weights on individual note cards.
She then could have collected the note cards and formulated a full list recording each student’s height and weight. While heights and weights were still recorded, perhaps having this autonomy and limiting the judging gaze of the teacher would have elicited a different response from the student in question.

Elena also described a moment of negotiating shame in the classroom. Elena described witnessing a student being shamed in gym class and decided to intervene using her own body to minimize a student from being humiliated by other students in the class:

**Elena:** That reminds me - I was teaching Phys. Ed once in one of my teaching placements with grade eights and there was a girl in the class who was very large. And she was very aware of her body and very self-conscious of her body and she had great marks in all the classes except for phys. ed. It was kind of like -- these activities we would be doing in gym class and she would stand off to the side and she wouldn’t participate and she became more noticeable when she was trying not to be noticeable. And I remember so many times, not being in proper gym attire and going out and doing the exact same activity, like right beside her so she wouldn’t feel as on display while doing whatever activity. My heart just bled for her. I felt so, so much pain for her because I knew how she was feeling. Like - she just felt very uncomfortable with doing anything.

Elena’s interpretation of her student’s experiences in the physical education class led her to use her own body to physically attempt to block her from shame. It is possible, however, that by inserting her own body into the activity in an attempt to block the student from being shamed, she may also have drawn more attention to her. Elena’s experiences demonstrate that not only is it possible to feel shame when teachers are required to or attempting to teach skills that they cannot perform but also, shame functions in the classroom when teachers and students witness students being unable to perform physical skills.

In his descriptions of how his body was discussed by students, Jeffery also demonstrated how notions of gender and the performance of the body relate to affective moments of shaming:

**Jeffery:** And because I talk about physicality a lot and I talk about body language a lot. So therefore, I use my body to do it a lot. All sorts of things have come up. Guys
especially, they are so competitive because we play in intramural and so on. They’ll say things like “Hey!” - if I wear short sleeves, they’ll say “Oh! You’ve been working out or You’re getting flabby, eh!” Either: “You’re getting a gut there, man!” or “Hey, you’re looking good!” Guys just do that. And likewise, I don’t encourage it but I don’t discourage it. ... Females, as well, always - not always but often - comment on hairstyle and glasses, clothes.

His description demonstrates how a shame is also shaped by gendered codes: “Guys just do that.” Jeffery’s experience of being shamed and using shame in the classroom is very different from those of the participants who identified as women.

In their role as teachers, Elizabeth, Elena and Anthony were placed in a position of potentially shaming students. The experience of shaming students took place in a setting that reproduces and reinforces dominant discourses of health and wellness, specifically, going on a ski trip or performing physical activities in a gym class. The role of a teacher to reinforce dominant discourses of health and wellness in their classroom also enables them to shame students, albeit in the case of participants, in complicated ways.

The expectations of teachers to model with their own bodies physical skills and abilities for their students often enables a moment of shame in the classroom for the participants. An inability to perform a particular physical skill was a disjunction in many participants’ experiences with teaching the curriculum. In order to negotiate this disjunction in the classroom, participants would avoid teaching the particular skill or activity that they could not perform themselves or ask students to demonstrate the skill for their classmates. In the event that their participation was required - as in the example of Elizabeth participating in the Dance-a-Thon, the participants reported that they would often put themselves down. This use of humour enabled them to avoid or minimize the intensity of being shamed and embarrassed in front of their students.
Dominant discourses of health and wellness were connected to experiences of shame in the classroom through the participants’ own past experiences of being shamed as students in their own gym classes growing up, to feelings of humiliation at not being able to perform particular physical skills to their students as part of their lessons and through the ability to shame students. The teachers’ negotiations of shame in the classroom demonstrate the nexus of shame and health and how these notions are played out on and through the body.

**Affection and Risky Touching in the Classroom**

Many participants who identify as female described how being read as pretty or attractive by their students influenced their experiences of teaching. Specifically, these participants spoke of how wearing casual clothes to teach in would often elicit comments about their bodies from students. For these participants, being read as professional was closely tied to their clothing choices. Elena described her experience of teaching in casual clothes for the first time as follows:

**Elena:** Even the first time I wore jeans to the school. It was towards the end of my first semester because I was just so scared of not being dressed appropriately or whatever. Yeah. I had students comment to me “Oh! Yeah! You are looking good!” Things like that that are very inappropriate. But even this outfit [points to outfit she is wearing] – it was a female student not being rude, not being like, trying to hit on me or anything. She was like: “You look so nice! I really love that combination you have on!” They notice the clothes that I am wearing! It was really mindboggling. If I straightened my hair and would wear it in – every student would comment on it. It was just like, not negative - “Oh! Looks really nice!” Certainly, [cemented] that awareness that I am being looked at all the time.

Similarly, Darcy and Elizabeth described how being read as young and attractive by students when they were supply teaching made their jobs easier:

**Darcy:** I did a lot of supply teaching in secondary schools and I think I had a much easier ride than some of the older supply teachers because I was younger and I wore clothes that were sort of like what they wore and I looked more like them and could relate to them. So I sort of used that to my advantage. I mean, that sounds awful to say it, but it made my life easier there.
Elizabeth described a similar experience: “I noticed that ... I am not trying to brag about myself or anything...these grade threes where like ‘Oh! She is so pretty!’ and I am like ‘Thanks.’ Then I felt that they listened to me better. I think ...they definitely do respond to attractive people better.” Elizabeth went on to state that attractiveness would only really be effective in the short term and that students’ responses to a teacher’s attractiveness would not “necessarily last over time.”

For many of the younger participants who identified as women, clothing choices were linked to negotiating how their bodies are sexualized. The participants learned to choose clothes that would convey modesty and would downplay their sexuality, particularly by concealing their cleavage. Rebecca described an uncomfortable moment when she was seen wearing a low-cut top: “I was actually out running and I was wearing a (...) Lululemon top [and it was] a little lower than I would normally wear in school and I ran into one of my students. And I was kind of like ‘Oh’! I kind of felt awkward about that.” Rebecca’s experience reinforces the understanding that teachers who are women need to appear to be modest and chaste, even when outside of the classroom.

Elena also shared an experience her body being sexualized by a male student:

**Elena:** When I think about it in that context. For sure. I actually wore this shirt to teach in one day and I don’t normally wear this to teach because I feel it is a little too revealing. That’s another thing - is picking clothes all the time, because when you are leaning over...I learned that kind of the hard way, because of a comment a male student made when I leaned over to help him and then he kept calling me over to help and I didn’t make that connection. Until kind of the end and he was just like “That was a good class Miss.” And I went “Oh! My gosh!” Certainly, as a high school teacher and being a young high school teacher, you get a lot of inappropriate compliments from male students. Very often! That was just something I wrote off as everyday, normal thing. You just kind of get used to it. That was a very real reality for me which was uncomfortable. Some of them. Eventually, I figured out a way to use sarcasm and just be like oh! That is
really creepy! Because most of those kids that would make those kind of comments could handle sarcasm coming back at them. But I had students ask me out on dates. And I am kind of like, where are you getting that this is even okay because I don’t have a friendship mentality with my students at all.

Serena also described negotiating how her body was being sexualized by her students:

Serena: I hadn’t even taken drama in high school because I was too shy. Okay, I am teaching drama. I had to teach Grade 11 boys drama. And they said “Oh! Miss, are you going to teach us how to act in a porno movie?” And that is just the beginning of that story.

Indeed, it was “just the beginning of the story” as Serena went on to write more about her experience of negotiating the ways in which her body was beginning sexualized by the male students at the school where she was teaching. In her creative writing, Serena decided to respond to the prompts “Citational Corrective” which prompts participants to reflect on a popular claim made about teachers and “Complications” which asks participants to reflect on a moment when they felt their body was on display when teaching. Serena wrote the following in response to these prompts:

Popular related claims about teachers that come to my mind are: “The teacher has poor classroom management skills!” or “That teacher is inexperienced and cannot control the class!” or “That teacher should spend some time observing Mr. or Mrs. so that they could learn how to control the class” These popular claims really irritate me! Why? Because the teaching profession is often taught as a technical, mechanical enterprise where, if you just obtain the right “tools,” then you will be a good teacher. What B-Ed programs don’t seem to focus on is how teachers are judged and related to upon the first impact or moment they walk into a classroom.

When I worked at an all-boys secondary school, I wasn’t given a chance to “be” a teacher at all. When I walked into the classroom, I felt that the boys just saw my body, my perky tits and ass and that is how they related to me initially. No amount of “observing Mr. X’s class could change the fact that I was sexualized overtly in the classroom, in the corridors, in the schoolyard. I always felt like my body was “on display.” If I had to stand on my tip toes to reach something on a shelf, I could feel the boys looking at me in this body. If I dropped my pen and had to pick it up off the floor, I could feel them looking
If I wore jeans on “school-wide” own clothes day, I felt like I was being “checked out.” As though I was in a club. I also felt like my body had to be “perfect.” I am naturally pigeon-toed, and I know that I have a kind of funny-looking gait. So, whenever I’d have to walk across the school yard amongst the herds of boys, I tried to make sure I walked straight (with my feet not turning in, like they naturally do) and I always was extra-vigilant about the possibility of tripping and falling. So these experiences and feelings are important because they call into question the popular claims about teachers “needing more experience” or more time “observing other ‘good teachers.’” The way my body was looked at, talked about gawked at made me feel like a bad teacher, even thought I knew I wasn’t a bad teacher – I just wanted the sexism in this place to be dealt with...

Interestingly, the three participants from Workshop One, who all identified as mothers and shaped their philosophy of teaching around notions of motherhood, did not describe experiences of being sexualized as teachers, nor did they discuss their clothing choices as a means of appearing professional. For these participants, being professional in the classroom was linked to asking themselves how would they want their own children to be treated by a teacher.

The teaching profession calls on teachers to affect students through the use of their bodies to model correct behaviour and school practices without also acknowledging how this pedagogical practice serves to sexualize the teacher’s body. Sheila Cavanagh argues that:

Maternal pedagogies of love, care, and salvation are seen to be structured by desire and by what Michel Foucault (1977) calls disciplinary power. These power relations are eroticized through the pedagogical transgression, and the disciplinary order of the school – which is based, in part, on heteronormative formations of gender identity – is under threat. (2007: 134)

Research participants’ understandings of how their bodies manifested and reproduced these discourses of desire related to gender and heterosexuality was expressed through their concerns about and attention to dressing appropriately to minimize and reduce the possibilities that their bodies could be viewed as sites of desire. These attempts become especially confusing when the teacher’s body is used to model good health practices and fitness, as these bodies are socially
constructed as sites of desire and attraction. In the schooling environment, premised on heteronormativity and maternal pedagogies, the female teacher, whose body is used as a model of good and desirable physicality, must also resist and deny such attention and attraction from students. Teachers’ bodies were often the sites of desire for students. Research participants - particularly those who identified as young women - described their experiences of negotiating verbal expressions of attraction and desire by their students, whereas the participants who identified as men discussed the complexity of negotiating touch with students in their class.

In his creative writing, Jeffery shared the following thoughts on touch in the classroom in the form of “Advice for New Teachers:”

*Teachers of all lengths of experience, but especially new ones are told to “never initiate physical contact with a student.” The reality is that some students feel intimidated or threatened by appropriate physical teacher contact, but equally importantly, others are not, and in fact are nurtured & strengthened by such contact.*

*By appropriate, I am speaking of a hand on the shoulder or backs, a light massage of shoulders, a playful push. I am fortunate to have had feedback from two young adults in their late 20s who were former students as Grade 9 or 10 kids. One came across a busy street to thank me for the day that I put my hand on her shoulder, ‘like this’ she demonstrated & told her how good a writer she was. The way she placed her hand on my shoulder indicated that she remembered the [unreadable] touch. I did not recall the relatively [illegible] incident in the day of a teacher she did & remembered the touch [highlighting from original] 12-15 years later!*  

*A young man also approached me. I recalled him as kid quite aptly labelled with ADHD. He couldn’t sit still of more than a few minutes at a time. He told me that not only did my ‘pushing’ & hip checks & jostling give him something fun to look forward to & an activity to release some of the excess energy, but also made him feel accepted and [illegible] for who he was. Go figure!*  

*It [illegible] risky as a teacher to touch a student in any way, especially today. However, how can a holistic approach to teaching, based on a real human relationship predicated on caring and trust, be possible without human contact.*

Jeffery’s narrative provoked the following conversation in the workshop:
Jeffery: You need tremendous sensitivity, because some kids are threatened and intimidated and it is obviously the responsibility of the teacher to really be tuned in to that.

Anthony: This has been played out in our school yard – jostling and fights has resulted in no touch at all. Not good touch. Not touching someone’s hair or anything, because it can be taken the wrong way.

Jeffery: Especially for little kids.

Anthony: So they can play; they can’t touch. What do they want? For them to just stand there? As a music teacher, little kids like to hug me when they come to the music room because they love music. It is their favourite subject of the week. There are gender issues too. I think it may be easier for a woman to touch children.

Amy: Or the expectation that as a woman, you are going to be more “touchy-feely” with your students.

Jeffery: A teacher was labelled as gay. But if he went to touch a kid they would... [the term] fag would be used.

In the workshop, we decided that Hartley would direct the scene inspired by Jeffery’s story. In the scene, Jeffery and I became characters from his story. We started collectively by discussing the specifics of the touch - such as the placement of the hand and the amount of pressure to apply. We also discussed how touch is a very subjective experience for people and I stated that “If there was something wrong, you would feel it.” This belief reflects the complexity of affect, particularly in the classroom. We do not know how our actions will affect others. Often, we can only have access to this understanding through interpreting others’ reactions to our actions.

After our initial discussion, Jeffery and I acted out the scene:

Amy: [Standing in hallway]

Jeffery: [approaches Amy, and touching her shoulder says] I want you to know that you are a really excellent writer.

We then act out the same scene but we change how I am positioned in the scene:

Amy: [Sitting in chair]
Jeffery: [approaches Amy from behind. She cannot see him when he touches her shoulder and says] I want you to know that you are a really excellent writer.

When we had completed the scene, Hartley stated “Just looking at that. ... It completely changes how that was read.” Were you affected when you read these two scenes? Did you smile at the first scene, perhaps recalling a similar experience with a teacher in your own life? Or did it bring up an uncomfortable memory? Did the hair on the back of your neck stand up when reading the second scene? Or, perhaps you thought it might be the beginning of a sexy story? It is risky in schools, as a teacher can never know the affect a friendly touch may have on a student. So, while Jeffery’s touch was meant and understood as an encouraging gesture to his student, it could easily have affected her negatively.

Touch also factored into Anthony’s experience of teaching. He discussed how his body became a site of curiosity for his young students. He described his experience as follows: “I have a lot of Kindergarten children...like classes when I was a music teacher and in Spring [I was] wearing shorts ... so, I would feel these hands going up and down my leg, sometimes.” When I asked if he was okay with that moment, he went on to explain:

Anthony: Yeah. But when it first happened to me, I was taken aback. But then, I began to think ‘Oh! I get it. Yeah. And with little kindergarten kids, it is totally...not.... I have hair that they have not seen on that part of the body ever before.

For Anthony, he understood that his legs were being touched by students as a result of their interest in his body and in a particular notion of masculinity. The role that touch played to convey this interest is central to an understanding of this affective moment. Eve Sedgwick argues that:

Even more immediately than other perceptual systems, it seems, the sense of touch makes nonsense out of any dualistic understanding of agency and passivity; to touch is always already to reach out, to fondle, to heft, to tap, or to enfold, and always also to understand
other people or natural forces as having effectually done so before oneself, if only in the making of the textured object. (2003: 14)

Given these attributes of touch, it is not surprising that both Anthony and Jeffery described touch in the classroom as a useful and important pedagogical practice and form of human communication. The risk of a teacher touching a student in a way that is threatening and/or inappropriate legitimizes “hands-off” policies within schools, however it is important to ask: what is lost by not allowing teachers to touch students?

It is risky for teachers, particularly men, to touch students or to be touched by students. Indeed, for both Jeffery and Anthony, these moments of touch were potentially dangerous. However, as Sedgwick argues, touch is a way of effecting understanding through and with the body. For Anthony, he was being touched by his students before he had an awareness of the act. Perhaps the risk associated with touch in the classroom is - at least, in part - associated with its challenge to, (as Sedgwick points out) understandings of agency and passivity, in that not all touch in schools re-inscribes dominant understandings of a teacher’s power and control over students. Rather, some touches, as the case of Jeffery’s Kindergarten students suggests, demonstrate the teacher’s passivity in the classroom. Jeffery being touched by his students also demonstrates how as a teacher, his body is a site of objectification and curiosity for students.

For the participants, having their bodies become sites of intellectual and/or sexual curiosity was both a source of happiness and a cause for concern. For both Jeffery and Anthony, touching students and being touched by students was a means of reinforcing understandings of intellectual curiosity and social connections. However, these moments are precarious for teachers, as they always contain a possibility of being misunderstood and the possibility of a loss of control. Whereas for the young teachers in my study who identified as women, having their bodies read and referenced as attractive and desirable made their jobs easier - which was
ultimately seen as a positive experience. This desirability in turn, made them individually responsible for quelling feelings and expressions of sexual desire by their students.

**Concluding Thoughts**

By exploring research participants’ descriptions of being on display in their classrooms, I have considered some possibilities of what the teacher’s body is doing pedagogically in the classroom. Participants’ experiences with shame and humiliation were used to analyze the consequences of when a teacher’s own physical body was at odds with the curriculum they were responsible for teaching. Many of the participants reported experiencing shame and humiliation when they were not able to demonstrate with their bodies particular skills or activities to their students. In order to minimize this shame, participants would avoid teaching these skills in the classroom or would call on students to model these skills for the rest of the class. Teachers’ individual experiences of shame also demonstrated how gender norms and expectations are coded into shame scripts. For women, shaming (either through their own experiences or witnessing students’ experiences of shame) was often interpreted as negative and as something to be avoided or minimized. For men in my study, while it was not necessarily encountered as desirable, shame was used as a means of expressing a dominant form of masculinity and cementing male bonds.

In this chapter, I analyzed how attraction and heterosexual desire were woven through the participants’ experiences of having their bodies referenced by students. Similarly, while many participants found that being read and referred to as attractive made their day-to-day life in the classroom easier, they are also called upon by the teaching profession to minimize this type of attraction and attention. Beyond the individual experiences of attraction and desirability in the classroom, these moments demonstrate expectations related to femininity, heterosexual desire
and teaching. The discussion of touch was used to further elaborate on the expectations of male teachers and how they are read as a sexual threat in the classroom. Using male participants’ experiences with touch in the classroom, I explored how students and teachers use touch to develop and relay understandings of the body.
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS
DISCOURSES OF THE BODY AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS IN TEACHERS’ PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL LIVES

In this thesis, I have addressed the following questions: How do teachers understand notions of fitness and health? Do teachers understand having a “fit” body as a part of being a “good” teacher and do they understand part of their role as a teacher to promote a “healthy lifestyle” to students? Do teachers use their own bodies as a pedagogical tool? Are there any pedagogical practices that teachers use to challenge dominant understandings of fitness and health? Does the curriculum ever seem to be at odds with teachers’ own bodies/experiences of their bodies? How, if at all, do teachers negotiate this disjunction while teaching? And lastly, have teachers ever had their body referenced by students, other teachers or parents when teaching or in a teaching role and if so, was this a negative or positive experience?

To answer these questions, I used an exploratory research method, which I call embedded performed ethnography. This research method combined techniques from ethnography, specifically, ethnographic interviews with elements of arts-based research, specifically creative writing and dramatic exercises. As a result of the combination of these two methods, the research participants shared rich, detailed and complex experiences of negotiating their understandings of their bodies and the bodies of others in the classroom. These experiences speak to issues and concerns related to health and fitness. They demonstrate how teachers negotiate these discourses through their bodies in the moment of teaching and in their everyday lives. These experiences also reveal how teachers’ bodies are raced, classed, gendered and sexualized and how teachers are expected to adhere to particular moral codes through a myriad of complicated and interrelated practices and expectations.
By drawing on literature from critical physical education theorists, feminist and queer education theorists and Fat Studies I was able to interrogate the experiences of the teachers from a critical perspective that challenges dominant understandings of bodies in schools. I have applied a poststructural theoretical framework and by doing so, I do not question why teachers have the experiences related to their bodies that they do but rather how such practices function the way that they do. Using the theoretical work of Michel Foucault which highlights how bodies are both regulated and empowered within institutions, I have examined the particular discourses of the body that emerge in and through schools in this contemporary moment. I began my research by examining how teachers respond and react to school-based health initiatives, like the Daily Physical Activity requirement, however, very quickly, the research began to reveal the many ways that teachers need to negotiate their bodies in the moment of teaching and in their everyday lives, as they attempt to uphold dominant notions of a good teacher.

Discourses of fitness and health and research participants’ relationships with them were primarily shaped by their personal experiences. While research participants’ understandings of health and fitness emphasized expectations of the individual, these understandings were also shaped by dominant discourses associated with race, class and nationhood. Their discussions of health and fitness demonstrate the interrelatedness of these discursive structures. Generally, fitness and health were understood by the research participants as not being associated with a particular body type or appearance but rather as consequences of attending to oneself through healthy practices such as physical activity and choosing to eat healthy food. Given the physical requirements of teaching, the notion of being “fit” was discussed as a requirement or advantage for teachers - especially as fitness was interpreted as allowing teachers to relate better to students and as a result, to be more effective in the classroom. Furthermore, all research participants
reported promoting healthy lifestyles to their students, either through explicit discussions of healthy practices with them, or through using their bodies to demonstrate healthy activities in context of their teaching.

The performance of health appears to be understood as implicit to the teaching profession and was developed by individual teachers through experiences in the classroom rather than explicit engagement with expert knowledge. The notion of performance runs through much of teachers’ everyday lives, both within the classroom and in the broader community. Often, teachers use their own bodies to reinforce dominant discourses of health and fitness. Specifically, many participants reported enacting healthy eating practices in front of their students. Teachers’ performances of health such as this are examples of health passing or the ability of the participants to enact “healthiness” to students. Such acts demonstrate how particular actions and practices come to be read as healthy in the classroom.

A crucial pedagogical practice was the use of enthusiasm to reinforce the value of health and fitness to students in the classroom. Participants in my study reported that they would use enthusiasm - which was primarily expressed through their bodies - to “sell” students on lessons and activities. Enthusiasm was used, along with health passing, to convey an effective performance in which the students would ultimately participate.

In addition to discussions about health and fitness in their classrooms, when discussing their own experiences of their bodies in the classroom, participants also shared many experiences of shame and humiliation. Indeed, stories of shame and humiliation were shared with me, most often when a teacher’s body is at odds with the curriculum they are required to teach. Teachers’ described experiences of shame in their classrooms also demonstrate how gender norms and expectations are coded into shame scripts. For women, the experience of shame - either their
own direct experiences of it or their witnessing of students’ own experiences of body shame - was often interpreted as negative and as something to be avoided or minimized. Conversely, for the men in my research study, shame was not necessarily experienced as desirable but was used as a means of expressing a dominant form of masculinity and of cementing male bonds.

Furthermore, narratives of attraction and desire were woven through the participants’ experiences when students made reference to their bodies. Similarly, while younger female participants found that being read and referred to as attractive made their day-to-day lives in the classroom easier, they also felt called upon by the teaching profession to minimize opportunities for eliciting this type of attention from students. Beyond the individual experiences of attraction and desirability in the classroom described by study participants, these moments demonstrate dominant expectations of femininity and desire in teaching. The discussion of touch was used to further elaborate on expectations of male teachers’ behaviours and how male teachers are read as a sexual threat in the classroom. Using male participants’ experiences with touch in the classroom, I explored how students and teachers use touch to develop and relay understandings of the body.

The methodological approach of embedded performed ethnography enabled the everyday experiences of teachers to be described in rich detail. Using multiple methods in the research workshops that I conducted was not an attempt to achieve a cohesive understanding of teachers’ experiences but rather several methods were used to allow participants multiple means of expressing and describing their everyday experiences in the classroom. The discussion of the “innocent moments” of teaching (as I referred to them in the workshop) would reveal how teachers’ bodies are located at the nexus of complicated and complex interlocking discursive systems.
As such, I was able to analyze and interpret these moments as anything but innocent. The moments shared by teachers reveal how teachers and their bodies are understood through broader educational and social discourses. Initially, my project was centred on how health initiatives, such as the Daily Physical Activity requirement are taken up by teachers and how these initiatives implicate teachers’ bodies. However, in the course of conducting this research, I realized that these initiatives were just one means in which teachers and their bodies were called upon to do particular types of work in the classroom. I have identified how teacher’s bodies are representative of complex and complicated discursive practices in education. As I have argued, these practices relate to notions of health and what it means to be healthy. These notions of health are located in particular understandings of race, class and the nation which privilege some bodies while simultaneously excluding others. I analyzed such practices in my discussion of how teachers that identify as white and middle-class have come to understand particular student bodies as in greater need of education (and intervention) about health. Specifically, students from poor or working-class neighbourhoods and/or recent immigrants to Canada were often understood as in greater need of guidance regarding appropriate health and fitness practices. Understandings of how power relates to race, class and nation are not new to discussions of socially just education, however, locating this discussion primarily on and through the teacher’s body is a unique approach to studying these experiences.

My research exploring teachers’ experiences in the classroom has allowed me to develop the concept of health passing. By drawing on how teachers’ describe the supposed healthy acts they intentionally engage in to model health to their students (such as eating apples and/or drinking milk in the classroom), I have been able to articulate how health can be understood as a performative act rather than as an inherent quality. Drawing on Judith Butler’s work on the
performativity of gender and sex, I argue that in these instances, a teacher’s health is not located in his or her body but rather it is through her or his body in the performance of health. Much like our performances of gender, our performances of health have very real and tangible consequences in our lives. It is through our repeated performances of health that health has meaning in how we understand ourselves as healthy and therefore, “good” subjects.

Furthermore, the “care for the self” that teachers are expected to model and teach their students are gendered practices. These practices are reflective of dominant discourses of femininity which place women and those involved in feminized professions, like teaching, as caretakers and nurturers. As such, teachers are to assume the role of instructing students on health and proper “care of the self” as these tasks are understood as natural extensions of what mothers should do.

While such performances of health are highly localized and rooted in individual bodies, performances of health are at play in our understandings of citizenship and belonging (or not belonging) in the nation. For example, fatness can be understood as an individual failure to properly perform “good” health. However, fatness can also be interpreted as a threat to the nation. Beyond individual concerns with health, in Canada, fatness supposedly threatens to overburden our socialized healthcare system. How teachers use their bodies in classes to reflect particular notions of health reveal how bodies interlock with notions of individuality and national identity.

My research is an example of how the concept of affect can be utilized in an empirical research project. I have found that affect offers a rich conceptualization for qualitative research related to the body. In particular, it can be used to study the body in relation to other bodies. Affect is a concept that offers an invocation for researchers to do empirical work. Borrowing a
phrase that I learned from doing drama workshops, this kind of research puts affect “on its feet.” It can be challenging to interpret and decipher exactly what and how affect should be interpreted. However, I would encourage future researchers - especially those interested in qualitative and/or arts-based research - to start exploring this concept in their work. It was only when I stopped worrying about whether or not I was using the notion of affect in the right way that I began to understand what could be possible by using this concept in my research.

**Contributions to Research**

My research offers contributions to the several areas of research. First, my methodological approach to this work may be used by education researchers who endeavour to study the body in context of schooling in innovative and creative ways. This is an exciting time in educational research to be working and developing these kinds of methodologies. My research offers an exploratory methodology, embedded performed ethnography as a means of researching the body and schooling. It is my hope that this methodology will offer a creative and unique combination of methods for researchers interested in studying how the body might be at play in schools. I would encourage those interested in this approach to draw on this methodology in order to experiment with different methods and modes of research, as these can lead to fascinating revelations and inspirations.

In addition to my contributions to research methodology, this research also adds to the field of physical education literature by applying and extending the concept of biopower. Specifically, my research demonstrates not only how teachers reinforce and reproduce dominant discourses of health and fitness in the classroom, but also how they are subject to these forms of regulation and policing in their roles as teachers. My research also contributes to this field through the concept of health passing. This concept positions health as a performance enacted
through various repeated acts. It is the repetition of these acts that constructs health and that normalize health as a natural given. The concepts of performance and passing as healthy may also be useful in the fields of feminist and queer curriculum studies. The research also contributes to this field as it examines, through specific classroom moments, the complexity of the body, sexuality and desire in the classroom. Lastly, this research contributes to the area of Fat Studies as it explores through teacher’s experiences how schooling perpetuates and reinforces fears of fatness. My study has described and analyzed specific spaces within education and as such, offers unique applications of Fat Studies theories in order to examine how teachers understand their bodies and what it is at play in relation to them during the pedagogical moment.

According to feminist scholar, Alison Bartlett:

Our acknowledgement of bodies, how we write them into our stories and acknowledge their desires, inevitably affects our bodies of knowledge and the possibilities for teaching. And as with any feminist practice, this can be regarded as both a narrative strategy and a lived practice through which we read (and write) our texts, our courses, our students and ourselves in our institutions. (1998: 91)

It is important to study teachers’ bodies. This work is significant not only because it has direct implications for teachers but also because teachers’ bodies are rich and complex sites for theorizing and thinking critically about contemporary practices and discursive understandings that shape our lives.
WORKS CITED


Goldstein, Tara. 2001. *Hong Kong Canada*.


Evocative:

Possibilizing

Identify a common disciplinary claim, one often taught to beginning students in your field (e.g., “Teachers should leave their emotions at the door”). Then, write a paragraph or two based upon your own experience that demonstrates how that claim might be held in suspicion.

Literary

Write a brief piece in which through the use of poetic language you make a moment from your teaching experience come to life. Make sure you select a small moment. Think in terms of an image or an iconic impression that seems particularly rich for exploration.

Write a short piece in which through the use of literary structure you make a moment from your teaching experience come to life. Think in terms of emergent patterns that carry the weight of the moment you wish to explore.

Reflexive:

Contaminant

Write a brief piece in which you demonstrate how your own positionality or research practice influences a given claim you might wish to make in the classroom. For example, how would being a person without a physical disability or difference impact your work with students with a physical disability? How would your own cultural situatedness sway your understanding of a given incident, custom, or practice?

Insider

Compose a piece which you put on display how your insider status provided greater insights into your subject. For example, how would being a person with a learning disability impact your work with students with learning disabilities?
Implication

Write a paragraph or two where you describe how you are part of the problem you are trying to understand or solve. In other words, show how your actions are actions you are writing against.

Embodied:

Mind/Body Split

Write a short piece that highlights the tension between what you think and what you feel in the classroom. You might try locating the tension in terms of some action you know you should take but feel you cannot.

Sensuous

Compose a paragraph or two where you rely upon your sensory recall to bring a teaching experience forward. Bring your teaching experience forward through your senses (auditory, visual, gustatory, olfactory, tactile).

Bodily experience

Write from your body recognizing how your body is a repository of the felt and known. Think in terms of how your body has kept or recorded an experience in school. Remember the trauma, the violence, the illness, the scar, or the unease.

Partial and Partisan:

Linguistic limitations

Write a brief piece where you first describe a teaching experience. Then, reflect upon your description and what you feel cannot be expressed through your written language. Indicate where you feel language falls short of letting you capture what you want to say.

Ideologically laden

Write a brief piece where you first describe a teaching experience. Then, reflect upon your description and note what you feel are the ideological assumptions of your account. What are you privileging by what you have written? What are you leaving behind? Who gains and who loses by the description you have offered?

Uncovery

Write a paragraph that argues for or against a given position on teachers or education in general. Think in terms of “should” claims or “I believe” statements. Then, write a second paragraph where you expose or unearth the implications of your first argument. Think in terms of how your first account left gaps, can be
reversed, or is haunted by what is missing. In other words, deconstruct your first argument.

**Material:**

**Curative**

Describe a situation from your teaching with which you are struggling. Discover through your writing how you might feel about it. Allow your writing to serve as your means of discovery. Start with some feeling, issue, or event that you are currently trying to make sense of.

**Citational corrective**

Think of a popular claim about teachers and write a piece that takes that claim. Write by processing how the claim you first cited goes against your own teaching experience. What in your own teaching experience makes you feel suspicious? As you hold the claim against your teaching experience, what makes you question or resist its assertion?

**Socially consequential**

Write a piece that offers an alternative to current teaching practices. Think of your piece as a call to action, a personal manifesto, or an ideological commitment. Make clear, either implicitly or explicitly, what do you want from yourself as well as others?

**Additional Writing Prompts**

**By: Amy Gullage**

**Contradictions**

Describe a teaching moment when your body contradicted your lesson or your message (e.g. Your message is “Learning is fun” but your body language revealed you to be bored). Emphasize how your body language and/or movements revealed your internal dialogue.

**Complications**

Describe a moment during your teaching when you felt your body was “on display”. How did it feel? How did these emotions/feelings/sensations get mapped onto your body?
Identities

Write a brief piece describing how you used identities that are mapped onto your body (e.g. gender, race, class, ability etc.) during a teaching moment. Describe how this use of your body felt.

Write a brief piece describing how identities that are mapped onto your body (e.g. gender, race, class, ability etc.) were used by students to interrupt a lesson or teaching moment. Describe how this use of your body felt.