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**STILL HOPEFUL IN THE ELEVENTH HOUR: A
CRITICAL CULTURAL STUDY OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND'S KINESIOLOGY
DEPARTMENT**

BY

JUSTIN HEATH PAYNE

**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF SCIENCE
IN
KINESIOLOGY**

UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND

2014

MASTER OF SCIENCE

OF

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ABSTRACT

My thesis is a critical examination of the cultural practices of the University of Rhode Island's Kinesiology department 2010-2012, which produces particular norms for what constitutes Kinesiological knowledge. Through the use of the qualitative methods of autoethnography, poetics, a British Cultural Studies optic on the study of everyday cultures, and Foucault's theory of disciplinary power I attempt to illuminate how a positivistic quantitative Exercise Science way of knowing and studying human movement gets normalized as the privileged form of Kinesiology department. My thesis critically examines my unique experiences as an Exercise Science turned Physical Cultural Studies student as a way of better understanding the way in which ES normative practices (re)create moment by moment a 'common sense' way of thinking and doing Kinesiology in hopes of disrupting and contesting those norms.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My appreciation of and gratitude to, Dr. Kusz, goes well beyond the scope of my thesis. If he hadn't taken a moment to compliment my KIN 278 final paper, I would not be the person I am today. In such a small moment, a teaching moment, he was able to have, what I know will be, a lifelong impact on me. This world desperately needs professors who believe in the development of a critical sociological imagination as necessary for producing engaged citizens that have the quality of mind to meet the demands of an ever changing social landscape. I hope in some way that the product was worth the process for him.

I would also like to express my love and thankfulness to my wife, for supporting me during this unexpectedly long endeavor.

PREFACE

I find it necessary to write a few words about the nontraditional format of my thesis. On one hand, this thesis is the result of more traditional modes of academic qualitative research such as the use of critical theory and ethnographic methodologies. On the other, in keeping with contemporary qualitative practices, the presentation of this inquiry is intended to be a thoughtful, creative, and stylistic academic project. I rely on the work of Denzin (1994, 2001) and Richardson (1994) to justify an artful research approach, all the while trying to illuminate something about the culture of the University of Rhode Island's Kinesiology department. For Denzin (1994), "The writer will be presented as a bricoleur, a person who fashions meaning out of experience, using whatever aesthetic and instrumental tools that are available" (p.15). The assumption of the preceding quote and one that informs my thesis project is the presence of the writer/researcher in the text.

Rather than attempting to reject the influence of the writer/researcher on the object of study, Denzin (1994) asserts that they are irreducibly intertwined, "The product of the bricoleur's labor is a bricolage, a complex, dense, reflexive, collage-like creation that represents the researcher's images, understandings and interpretations of the world or phenomenon under analysis" (p. 18). Speaking to the more creative aspects of writing culture Denzin (2001) offers, "Sociologists and anthropologists continue to explore new ways of composing ethnography, and more than a few are writing fiction, drama, performance texts, and ethnographic poetry" (p. 324).

While there are published examples of more creative autoethnographies (Wall, 2006; Spry, 2001) I do feel the need to make clear my thoughts about the way I chose

to express/represent my thesis project. Richardson (1994) asks, “How do we create texts that are vital? That are attended to? That make a difference?” (p. 517). She is speaking in part to what some people consider the ‘boring’ way social phenomena had been written about. But she mostly wants to call attention to writing as a method of inquiry and it is here that her values about writing overlap with my experience in writing this thesis. Richardson (1994) reveals, “I write because I want to find something out. I write in order to learn something that I didn’t know before I wrote it” (p. 517). Me too.

But when I write I also value leaving a bit of ambiguity in the more creative parts of my thesis.

My reasoning behind such an investment in ambiguity, which runs counter to the scientific writer’s goal of specifically explaining phenomena of all sorts, is based on my desire to create or leave room for readers to insert themselves into my experience and to dialogue with it. My highest aspiration for the things I write is for the reader to want to enter into a conversation with me about my writings. When academic work tends toward trying to be comprehensive, authoritative, and airtight in its findings and claims about truth with a capital ‘T,’ it leaves less room for the reader to inhabit and make one’s own connection to the ideas. For me, I enjoy the surprising ways a reader takes up ideas in my writing that I didn’t intentionally include, that seems to be the very idea of postmodernism in which all knowledge is in doubt, but valued (Richardson, 1994).

Yet my desire to embrace and maintain some ambiguity in my interpretation of aspects of the culture of the URI Department of Kinesiology and my own experience in the department is more complicated—for some reasons that deal with conditions

experienced within the department and some that derive from my biography and social experiences I carry with me. I will explore these reasons in greater detail within the following chapters. But at this time, let me say that through my experiences within the URI Kinesiology department inhabiting oppositional subject positions, one of a positivistic exercise scientist and one as a Physical Cultural Studies (PCS) critic, I have found an all or nothing dichotomy. The qualitative, social scientific, critical humanist perspective offered by a PCS critic within the URI Kinesiology department simply is not valued or respected as highly as the quantitatively based, positivistic science mode of knowing human movement. This attitude and belief in the superiority of a quantitative-based and positivistic form of scientific knowledge stifles a lot of generative dialogue about alternative ways of knowing or doing kinesiology research. Since a positivistic exercise-scientific way of knowing human movement is the norm, disregarding a PCS view of human movement almost seems natural to many of those invested in this way of studying human movement. This is hard to accept and not to take personally for a Kinesiologist who identifies as a PCS scholar. But, more than that, trying to inhabit both spaces proved to be impossible within URI's Kinesiology department.

Human movement can be witnessed in more than just physical realities of biology and landscapes, it is always necessarily bound (enabled and limited) by particular fields of vision seen through ever changing expression of ideas borne out of the specific cultural, economic, social, and political forces and conditions of any given historical moment. Learning to hold these two views together was hard, but not being able to talk about their existence in most public spaces within URI's Kinesiology department was

often uncomfortable as a PCS student. So, for these more complicated reasons, I purposefully choose this alternative mode of academic writing—autoethnography and personal stories—in order to embrace a calculated ambiguity in how I represent my experience in the URI Kinesiology department and my interpretation of its culture in the hopes of opening up a conversation about these issues for those involved in the department.

In the first chapter, I introduce the Tao Te Ching's Uses of Not, which is a conceptualization of the usefulness of space. Positivistic scientific writing does not create space to include the researcher's subjectivities and relies on rhetorical devices such as not using personal pronouns and writing in the third person to assert that the information they create through their research constitutes objective, empirical 'facts' about the human body or physical activity. By contrast, I want my writing to reflect the constructivist notion that knowledge is provisionally built on distinct assumptions and belief systems about the world and objects of study, as well as oriented by value judgments embedded in the social process of theorizing and constructing knowledge (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Recognizing that all knowledge construction is theoretical and paradigmatic would disrupt the ease with which quantitative, positivistic research can be regarded as producing 'facts' and 'Truths' that are beyond philosophical debate. While I want the more theoretical and qualitative knowledge I produce in this thesis to be taken seriously by my fellow Kinesiology colleagues, I also want to engage with and respect their ways of knowing the world so that a new day in Kinesiology might arise where new, more cross-paradigmatic modes of research—research projects that cross

the divide of qualitative and quantitative approaches as well as positivist and critical theory paradigms—may be generated in new and unexpected ways.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Hour 1: The Young and the Interpellated, July 2008

Dr. Kusz, the Kinesiology 278: Physical Activity, Cultural Diversity and Society professor, hailed me as I walked by his office cutting short my journey to the research office. I stepped lightly through the open door and appeared to have entered a different domain. His books had long since exceeded the containment capacity of the shelves and started growing up like trees in some sort of forest-like structure. He swiveled around in his chair and brushed back the errant strands of long brown hair as he surveyed the paper empire that knelt before him. At that moment, many thoughts ran through my mind...

I was frustrated. No, it was more than that. I was mad. My wife, walking beside me down Cemetery Lane, listened with calm support as I described in clipped bursts of emotion, how my class was going. My body was tense as my heart picked up the pace to provide the blood to fuel my anger. I told her how I felt manipulated and somehow smaller as he challenged my thinking about how and why human bodies move.

“We have these discussions in class [KIN 278] and he has a response for everything we say, which isn’t so bad. But, then he goes into his lecture and as he goes along the PowerPoint slides follow pretty much the conversation we just had,” I vented.

What upset and fascinated me about these exchanges in KIN 278 with Dr. Kusz, a man who called himself a ‘cultural critic,’ was the way in which his teaching style revealed to me that my sense of having an autonomous mind was largely a myth. Even though my thoughts and views up to this point in my life felt like the trademarked products of my mind they were really the product of my social experiences living as an American white man growing up in turn of the 21st century America. In particular, this realization angered me because it forced me to confront the individualistic and masculine investments of my identity that valued rugged uniqueness.

Framing the discussions and subsequent lectures of KIN 278 in this way is what the Tao Te Ching refers to as the ‘Uses of Not’:

The Uses of Not

Thirty spokes
Meet in the hub.
Where the wheel isn’t
Is where it’s useful.

Hollowed out,
Clay makes a pot.
Where the pot’s not
Is where it’s useful.

Cut doors and windows
To make a room.
Where the room isn’t,
There’s room for you

In this case, the framework erected by Dr. Kusz through the discussion and subsequent lectures created space for/within me to take notice, reflect, feel watched, and ultimately to change myself and the direction of my life. He never came out and stated that this framework was intentional *or* that we should listen for the

predictability of our responses. But, the silence on the matter while offering me a private space to come to the realization that the nature of things is never fixed, also worked to do other tricky things.

That space for critical awareness and examination created by Dr. Kusz's class, whose seeds were beginning to grow in my mind, led me to reevaluate my history, my identity, and the direction of my life. Somehow I realized through taking KIN 278 that I had made him into another father figure, like other men in my life before him, who sat in judgment of me, even if only in the confines of my own mind. In this moment of cultural creation, the teaching techniques employed by Dr. Kusz especially that of silence, served to establish a hierarchy and a passive authority between me, my fellow students, and him.

I recognized this subtle technique because I myself have employed it to move others during other moments in my life.

Yet, at the time, I was merely reactionary with my dealings with Dr. Kusz, responding to his reasoning and arguments in a visceral way. I was not trying to understand the academic concepts underpinning his lectures. I was just trying to protect particular aspects of my identity, such as my race and gender that I had taken for granted. If I were a little more self-reflexive I would also have noted that I used silence when dealing with certain people as a way to wall off my insecurities.

While I was adept and comfortable at dealing with physical displays of power, this more cerebral way of exerting power was something altogether different and new for me. Especially in terms of being on the receiving end of it. It was the establishment of a relation of intellectual supremacy, what I viewed as a behind the

scenes puppeteer, because he engaged us in a discussion already knowing the moves many of us would make. Yet, he made no mention of the cultural and historical roots of our thinking that were transparent for him even if still opaque to us. He just left it up to me to make the realization of the ways in which we learn to think are the product of our history and culture.

When I did learn this lesson I felt like I was diminished a bit. I no longer could convince myself that I was a truly unique individual and thinker even if this form of individualism and individuality is what our American culture loves to promise us. For someone whose identity has been built upon such notions of self, this lesson wasn't easy to accept. To be fair to Dr. Kusz, all of this happened not because of who he was, or who I was for that matter, but who we became through the alchemy, pattern, and circumstance of our interaction in the classroom the summer of 2008.

Yet, that same masculine ego that was challenged by KIN 278 also helped me *want* to understand those ideas about the invisible roles of culture and social power in producing human movement—really, human action—because I had a felt sense of wanting to be right and I wanted to avoid the humiliation I felt in a past educational experience when ‘sticking to my guns’ led me to publicly state to my high school geometry teacher, “I know what I know!” immediately after giving a wrong answer.

But, most importantly, in reflecting back on this formative moment in my education as a Kinesiologist, I started to take my first steps toward cultural studies because now that I recognized a hierarchy and father figure in my midst, I needed his approval. This external validation of worth seemed to naturally follow from the lessons I had been taught throughout my life, from childhood through my family, to

coaches, the military, and the Almighty, each demanding a particular and at times overlapping or opposing set of behaviors. So, I was invested in a distinct notion of what it is to be a man that I think also had to do with my working class whiteness. I wanted to be comfortable inhabiting this new space of higher education, of Kinesiology, and while KIN 278 disrupted my common sense view of the world and my place in it, I needed to (re)assert a notion of self that was still what I could consider essentially me (Bufton, 2003). I could position myself, if not as Dr. Kusz's equal, at least as his right hand 'man.' At the time, my reasoning for starting to take seriously the PCS ideas I was learning about from Dr. Kusz seemed pure enough. I would sacrifice certain aspects of my identity, beliefs, and values to be the one who 'gets it'. It is a circular masculine logic that offers itself in the form of an internal monologue, stating that being a man means sacrifice, the bigger man cuts himself most, and denying masculinity is most masculine. A logic that at first glance seems resistive to the logics of hegemonic masculinity, but that I now see really just re-inscribes them in slightly different form.

I was interpellated into this physical cultural studies mode of understanding human movement because I connected, on a very personal level, with the ideas of hegemonic masculinity covered in KIN 278. Hegemonic masculinity is a concept used to describe a particular narrow way in which men are taught in American culture to perform their masculinity in order to exercise social power--be tough, be strong, don't back down, don't show emotion, etc. For the first time, I was given a formal language in which to speak about and understand many of my childhood and military experiences and the associated internal tensions those experiences invoked. In many

ways, the study of culture is the study of knowing what we know and how we come to know it, particularly when ‘knowing what we know’ feels so natural that the history and social connection of those ideas seems completely disconnected or nonexistent. What is really culturally produced can easily seem like something we often think of as a natural, innate, and immutable fact about ourselves and/or the world. In Chapter 7 of my thesis, I talk about the metaphor of ‘holding thoughts lightly’ espoused by the comedian, Emily Levine. This metaphor allows an understanding of knowledge as provisional, especially when confronting my presuppositions and assumptions I have about the world because it implies portability, subtle influence, and resists wringing out the awareness of social and historical contexts from one’s thinking. For me, thinking about knowledge as contingent and provisional is preferred because it helps to guard against returning to more ethnocentric, naturalizing, and universalizing ways of knowing and being in the world.

The silver lining, for a guy that loves ideas, thinking, connecting, and creating, is the development of the understanding that everything we do, know, and say now has many more dimensions and influences than one casually (and causally) imagines. Indeed, knowledge itself is best understood as a fallible, partial, and limited social construction rather than something pre-cultural that is ‘discovered’ objectively and transparently by humans (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This was a way of knowing I had never contemplated prior to KIN 278.

... To my surprise, at the end of that summer semester, Dr. Kusz called me in to talk about the term paper I wrote for his class. He said he was impressed with my

paper and that “I had a future in sociology, if I wanted one.” Looking back, I take new meaning from what Marx’s famous quote that each person is a product of ‘social conditions not of our own choosing.’

But, as I examine the pieces of my recent experiences in order to construct some mythical origin of this project out of a past littered with other potential formative experiences upon which origin stories could be built, I think these experiences were like the spokes on the wheel or the walls of the room crafting me a space to work and live.

Statement of the Analytic Focus of This Project

The Kinesiology department at the University of Rhode Island (URI) has a unique mix of fields from which human movement gets studied. The department’s fields are oriented by broader disciplines themselves differentially organized by scientific, social scientific, critical, and humanistic foundations for knowledge. In the rendition of Kinesiology at URI, various areas of specialization within the department are oriented by differing and even oppositional epistemologies and methodologies relative to the study of human movement.

Using a British Cultural Studies (BCS) perspective in this thesis, I critically examine how the Kinesiology department at URI operates as a contested terrain where struggles over how certain types of knowledge are valued over others take place. As a member of this departmental culture, I will critically examine my own experiences and observations to make visible how various ways of knowing human movement are valued differently within the department. This differential valuation creates a hierarchy of Kinesiological knowledge that gets produced both through formal

structures of the department like curricula and through informal everyday discourses and social relations. Although I attempt to illuminate both of these formal and informal aspects, I spend particular time showing some of the less visible, ‘informal’ ways in which a department that is represented and often imagined by some of its members as equally valuing all of the subfields can, in practice, subtly create a hierarchy of value that leaves particular ways of knowing human movement and of being a Kinesiologist more or less valued than others.

The goal of this thesis is to shed light on the social process of how particular types of Kinesiological knowledge get represented as important, valid, legitimate and universal through the everyday practices of various members of the URI Kinesiology community (faculty, staff, undergraduate students, and graduate students), while others get marginalized and regarded as suspect and less important.

For example, I am interested in illuminating how the formal and informal practices of the department promote a particular way of valuing a higher education, or a Kinesiological degree, mostly as a means of technical, professional development where getting a well-paid job is the goal or ideal. This way of imagining the value of a degree in Kinesiology diverges from a more critical humanistic value of higher education where the goal is to develop a deep and comprehensive understanding of how and why humans move the ways that they do in a particular culture and historical moment. Further still, the specific type of knowledge that I argue is produced, normalized, and promoted within the Kinesiology department often deftly insists that members form or mold their identities into certain subject positions that accept and promote exercise science knowledge without question. This way of valuing

Kinesiological knowledge subtly brackets what can be thought and said about human movement in formal and informal discussions both inside the classroom and in the spaces that make up the culture of the department.

This hierarchical means of valuing particular forms of Kinesiological knowledge is not solely produced by and within the relations of the faculty, staff and students that make up the URI Kinesiology community in 2010-2011, but is also produced by broader socio-historical forces informing the Kinesiology department at URI in 2010. More specifically, I argue that an implicit value system organizes social actions and relations within the department so that knowledges produced from a positivist scientific standpoint and oriented around the biological or physiological are often made to appear as the dominant, legitimate, and default mode of knowing human movement, or common sensical basis for expressing Kinesiological expertise.

So then, the objective of this thesis project is to make visible how this hierarchical valuation of Kinesiological knowledge materializes through daily actions and interactions of the faculty, students, and staff within the departmental spaces that produce the idea that positivistic scientific constructed knowledge directed toward the interiority of the body is the commonsense way to understand human movement. Additionally, I show how other ways of knowing human movement, particularly, but not only, a critical socio-cultural orientation toward human movement, are often marginalized in a variety of ways that are not always done deliberately or maliciously, but that have material effects on the everyday experiences, relations, and identities of members of the URI Kinesiology community that affect one's sense of comfort and community within the department.

Justification for and Significance of the Study

My interest in the ways in which Kinesiological knowledge is produced and valued developed from my experiences as a non-traditional student progressing towards a Bachelor of Science degree in Kinesiology with a specialization in Exercise Science. After ten years of active submarine service in the United States Navy, I exchanged my loyalty to the dolphins¹ for a new one with the Rhody Ram. I expected to find out how and why the human body works the way it does. The influence of submarine culture with its insistence on the twin values of interdisciplinarity (the need to know, at a moment's notice, how to work any system that existed on the boat for the health and safety of everyone) and forceful backup (a core principle for submarines that encourages a questioning attitude of all members of the crew regardless of rank, specialization or time onboard) contributed significantly to the way I approached my academic career. When I chose my undergraduate degree program I did so for personal reasons, most notably to stay active, athletic and healthy. At that time, I conceptualized the body as a machine, much like a submarine with integrated vital systems. Assuming this view of the body from a biological and physiological 'systems approach' meant valuing knowledge that cut across various positivistic scientific fields such as the chemical, physiological, and biological and were deemed 'foundational' to understanding human movement. At the time, seeking scientific answers to questions about how to live a healthy lifestyle by looking inside a body at

¹ Submarine dolphins are a symbol of inclusion and acceptance into the submarine community. A sailor earns his dolphins by demonstrating in-depth knowledge of damage control procedures and all systems of the boat. Qualification usually takes nine months to a year.

its systems to how and why the body moves and works as it does seemed commonsensical to me.

As alluded to in the 1st Hour story that began this chapter, when I took KIN 278 Physical Activity, Cultural Diversity and Society, in the summer of 2008, I found myself challenged and angered as my thinking about how and why human bodies move proved to be limited in ways I had never imagined previously. I had never fully contemplated the invisible roles of culture, social structure, and social power in producing how and why humans choose—or don't choose for that matter—to move their bodies as they do. For the first time I was going through the process of the kind of critical humanist education promoted by Cornel West² a thinker I have come to admire for his prolonged contemplation of the question of what it means to be human. KIN 278—organized by a British Cultural Studies optic on human movement that revealed how human movement is produced by the cultural, social, economic, and political forces and conditions of particular historical moments—also brought a realization that scientific and cultural studies modes of understanding human movement seemed to be separated by what I would call 'a paradigmatic steel curtain.' Each mode espouses a common interest in trying to explain how various humans move their bodies, but produces explanations that are quite different and often lead to divergent, competing ideas about what constitutes the 'realities' of what crucially

² Cornel West is a Princeton professor, an activist, philosopher and public intellectual. His ideas of education are centered on the question of what it means to be human. He believes the human condition should be examined in order to shed the superficial and reveal the substantial. This process of getting to the substantial is also a process of a metaphorical death of assumptions and suppositions.

produces healthy forms of human movement. These modes were hard for me to reconcile, especially in the departmental culture in which I landed.

Not long after taking KIN 278, I encountered firsthand the tension that can exist in a Kinesiology department when community members envision human movement through differing ontologies, epistemologies and methodologies—one way of understanding based in positivist science and steeped in the biological and physiological and one founded on the sociological, the cultural, the historical, and the political.³

I was a research assistant for a funded study of a diet and exercise intervention in older overweight adults. During a meeting with one of the co-principal investigators, I asked if I could write a paper exploring how we might deliver this knowledge to the target population of the study. I thought it was the next logical step to consider how to get the information from this study to the community and more selfishly, I thought my initiative would set me apart from my peers by trying to integrate the knowledges I was learning in my physiologically- and sociologically-based Kinesiology classes. But instead of reward, what I found with my question was the limits of some positivistic scientific inquiry. I was told that what I was looking for ‘was not quantifiable’ and because it could not be quantified the question did not merit further discussion. This response to my effort to bring together the scientific-based and critical theory-based modes of understanding of human movement I had been learning in my classes—which serendipitously occurred as I just finished KIN 278 and began

³ Positivism and post positivism hold the ontological view that reality can be accessed and research findings can be considered facts. In contrast, constructivism (BCS) does believe realities are locally and specifically constructed, where multiple versions of truth are always political (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

extracurricular work on a strictly quantitative study—urged me to reassess my academic future. Apparently, I had not given up my dolphins fully quite yet.

As I began to consider the possibility of choosing the Cultural Studies of Sport and Physical Culture graduate program (as opposed to the Exercise Science track), I was often asked by fellow students and faculty (and most importantly my wife!) some form of the question: “What can you do with a Master’s in Physical Cultural Studies?”

This question usually was spoken out of genuine concern for me. Yet, it carried with it a tacit value judgment about critical socio-cultural knowledge relative to scientific knowledge. This knowledge value judgment was accompanied by a sea change in the way in which faculty and graduate students interacted with me. It was as if my Kinesiology membership was being revoked. The persistent probing about my decision to change my graduate specialization combined with a subsequent change in treatment from various members of the department’s community exerted enormous normative power on me. In a classically Foucauldian manner, this social pressure was compounded by my own internalized, disciplinary voice as I questioned if what I was doing was a responsible act for a man with family responsibilities or just a selfish act of indulgent intellectual curiosity. Ultimately I reconciled this momentary crisis of faith by rationalizing that the question of the practicality of a Master’s degree in the Cultural Studies of Sports & Physical Cultures also represented to me the devaluing of higher learning, and of critical thinking, which I recognized as the comprehensive development of my mind in order to fulfill my responsibility as a dutiful citizen of the United States; not merely as a means of getting a better, higher paying job. The underlying economic imperative, implied in the question: ‘What can you do with it?’

challenged my sense of duty as a co-provider for my family and ironically seemed to contradict the other popular maxim frequently sounded today to students—‘Do what you love!’ This experience revealed to me how this apparently innocuous and well-intended question, ‘What can you do with it?,’ is a hidden-in-plain-sight, everyday cultural discourse through which contemporary URI Kinesiology students are commonly compelled to value particular ways of knowing human movement over others. While this question surely is not only uttered in the URI Kinesiology department, it was refreshing not to have to address it when I found myself surrounded in classes taken by students from the Communication Studies, Writing/Rhetoric, and English departments.

CHAPTER 2

ON PARADIGMS

Hour 2: The Fit and the Beautiful

I have come to wonder what, if anything, is the influence of our minds on our bodies. I remember a moment in WRT-512 *Introduction to Rhetoric*, when during a discussion instigated by Mountford's (2003) *The Gendered Pulpit*, I began to contemplate the physical manifestations of having internalized a particular way of thinking about one's gender. I thought about how I often perform the traditional male gender role by an outward expression of being stoic, in control, and unemotional during particular moments in my life. A mental image appeared in my mind that associated the binding of women's bodies through corsets, dresses, and heeled shoes with the binding of male emotions. This mental image got me thinking about Foucault's notion of a soul, and how power is a productive force that works on people through the disciplining of their bodies. In this moment, I began to understand more deeply how my performance of masculinity was shaped through the ways I had unknowingly been disciplining my body throughout my life; I considered how normative power shaped my mind and body in a sort of continuous feedback loop.

In other words, this moment in 512 led me to deeper thoughts about how my masculine identity was made. The journey of my body first through basketball courts, weight rooms, then to the Kinesiology department and also through an interest in exercise science. To be clear, I was, for one who identified himself as an athlete, a late arrival to lifting. At 25, I breathed the bar for the first time.

“Breathing the bar; a barbell meditation”

When the late hour finally forces surrender,
reaching out to my bedside lamp,
I pull the chain on another day,
waving the white flag of darkness.
as retinal nerve cells
paint abstract pictures across my eyes,
a show of slow acceptance.
as the colors recede
beneath the depths of still water.
Cupped in the hands of my mind.
The day’s thoughts a skipping stone
making ripples, repelled by surface tension.
The thin membrane of sleep.

Yet under the glare of halogen lights,
the weak grasp of mental imagery
slips from my feeble fingers.
The cacophony of colliding iron, grunts
and socialites bombarding me
until my focus has been drawn and quartered.
My muscles cool and tight.
My workout a to-do-list of motion.

As in all meditation I had to learn
to breath the bar.
An act of accepting and redirecting.
Inhale, receive the weight,
Press!
Inhale, a father stacking iron
on his son’s bowed back.
Press!
Inhale, Russian test,
Press!
Inhale, weakness.
Press!
Press the weight, press the pressure,
Press until your body receives your mind.

While the above poem explores weightlifting as a means of meditation, there was a definitive change in my body as a result of weight lifting. This change was not only a physical change of muscle strength and endurance and body composition, but I

also experienced a positive change in how my body was turned into a symbol that enhanced my masculinity and made me feel pleasure. Eventually, by the end of my second enlistment, my body became my calling card. I experienced good physical, mental, and social feelings that were determining factors in choosing my program of study at the University of Rhode Island. I figured that working in the health and fitness field would ensure that I stayed in good physical condition, and in good masculine condition. And throughout my undergraduate career it worked.

I admit that, in the beginning, I was caught up in the desire for big muscles. I wore sleeveless shirts and used mirrors for more than checking my form. My wife asked me once, “How big do you want to get?”

“I want to look mildly fierce,” I replied.

I don’t know if it was just curiosity about what was on the other side of the steel curtain or if Ivan Drago, Rocky Balboa’s nemesis from *Rocky IV*, had more of an influence than I immediately felt, but I have a fascination with Russia that led me to seek out a Russian history course at URI. I was excited to take this course the last semester before my senior internship. Interestingly, the class was fascinating for reasons I could not have predicted. Namely, it allowed me to learn something about the Kinesiology department. I don’t know the best way to say it, but what I thought then was, “Here are all the ‘normal’ people.” I realized then that since I had spent almost all my time with students in Kinesiology I had gotten used to seeing the fit and the beautiful surrounding me on a daily basis and had come to imagine them as ‘normal.’ In Washburn Hall, I saw smokers, Goths, and overweight students. But these students were different in other ways as well, they were more attentive in class, asked

a lot of probing questions that overlapped with things they had learned in other classes, and read a lot. This apparent contradiction between the Kinesiology students and History students, as well as the apparent contradiction between their bodies and their classroom behaviors tickled my brain like Mountford did.

I remember when I was getting into lifting weights, I felt bombarded with contradictory information. I just wanted to know ‘the Facts.’ Tell me what to do and I’ll do it. In a way, that is how I approached my exercise science classes. While I was known in class to ask a lot of questions, my aim was to get to the truth (with a capital ‘T’) of how the body works so I could best train it. So, underlying my performance as an exercise science student was a body disciplined through thoughts of internal systems, machine metaphors, desires for masculine control, certitude, and authority and a compartmentalized, regimented mind ready and willing to absorb ‘Facts’ and learn exercise procedures. Through this experience, I think I can understand better the pervasive silence coming from many Kinesiology students in a typical exercise science class. It seems their mindset, like mine was when I first decided on Kinesiology as a major is: “What’s to question? The facts are the facts, fill me up please.” For the most part, the values of those students in the Russian History class did not include being hard bodied. It seemed that the focus and aim of their programs of study directed their energies down alternative avenues.

On Paradigms

What I was observing—different majors correlating with different bodies and different ways of learning and coming to know the world—might be called paradigmatic differences. After reading Kuhn (1996) and thinking about his ideas

about paradigms and scientific revolutions, I took from him the way in which paradigms provide a particular way of understanding the world based on certain assumptions, beliefs, values and foci. Paradigms signify the virtues and limits of particular ways of knowing the world while simultaneously, implicitly, foregrounding the way in which ‘truths’ about the world are constructed within them. After reading Kuhn (1996), ‘facts’ and ‘truths’ no longer can be capitalized and self-assuredly asserted by those of learned stock. As particular paradigms sediment into certain social fields, like a department, they also marginalize, if not exclude other, alternative ways of understanding the world. In other words, as a paradigm promotes a particular way of knowing something it simultaneously has a tendency to nullify or diminish desires for alternative ways of knowing that same thing. This way in which a particular paradigm is made dominant in a culture at a given time and place is something which I encountered within the University of Rhode Island’s Kinesiology department.

One goal of this thesis is to illuminate how a particular way of knowing human movement or doing Kinesiology is made to seem like the single, universal, normal, legitimate way of doing Kinesiology and is concurrently given more value within the department in a number of ways. These social norms and values are produced and reproduced every day in the department culture. They are indicative of the paradigm that is dominant in the URI Kinesiology department culture. Yet, they are usually invisible to those who embody and enact these norms and values. Indeed, for those Kinesiology department community members whose professional credentials and beliefs align with this particular paradigmatic view of Kinesiology (what I call a positivist scientific/exercise science viewpoint), the departmental norm of portraying

this particular Kinesiological paradigm of knowledge as the universal and legitimate paradigm of Kinesiology will likely seem commonsensical and natural. But social norms and dominant paradigms never just naturally appear, instead they are constructed by people derived from a political, historical and cultural struggle between competing paradigms within the epistemologically broad field of Kinesiology. By silently establishing one particular paradigm within the broad field of Kinesiology as the universal paradigm of all of Kinesiology—particularly in undergraduate education—our department is privileging certain ways of thinking, questioning, and talking about human movement, while marginalizing other modes of thought, questions and ways of knowing and contemplating the meaning and value of human movement.

In my educational experience as a Kinesiology undergraduate with a specialization in exercise science, science was not taught as one paradigm of specific knowledge with specific assumptions, value judgments, and epistemological limitations within a broader field of competing paradigms of thought within Kinesiology. Instead, positivistic scientific knowledge in the form of exercise science knowledge was very often presented by faculty and discussed by students as a wide range of universal and infallible ‘facts’ about the world that were unquestionably valid and could not be challenged by critical thought or alternative paradigms. My experience resonates with Kuhn’s (1996) assertion that scientists are not taught or trained to understand how the paradigm and practice of positivistic science, like any paradigm of thought (academic or otherwise) is a fallible, partial, limited and limiting means of knowing the world. In addition, he asserts that because scientists are not

often trained in the philosophy of science or the sociology of knowledge they very often are not aware of the way in which scientific knowledge can be infused with popular cultural ideologies of the day; instead, they often consider their positivist scientific way of thinking as the only natural, valid, and legitimate means of knowing the world (Kuhn, 1996). Now, I am not claiming that all scientists because they go by the name of ‘scientist’ are guilty of not knowing how scientific inquiry is what Barthes might call a ‘mythologized social practice.’ I did come across a scientific literature review (St Clair Gibson et al, 2003) that outlined why a particular paradigm was used over another.

“Before examining the mechanisms responsible for the conscious sensation of fatigue, it is necessary to discuss briefly the more general issue of consciousness itself. There are two basic theories of consciousness, which have been debated for centuries. The first is the theory of dualism, which suggests that consciousness is a mental state which exists autonomously and is not dependent on brain structures for existence.^[4] The second is the theory of monism, which suggests that consciousness is a direct product of activity in specific brain structures.^[5,6] While this argument is complex and beyond the realm of this review, the theory of dualism is more difficult to support from a scientific perspective, and remains a philosophical concept (Hallett M, unpublished observation). In this review, we therefore discuss conscious perception of the sensation of fatigue from the monistic perspective. (St Clair Gibson et al, 2003, p 167-8)

The above excerpt does a good job of explaining that there are other ways of looking at the mind/body dilemma, but for this researcher, only one allows for scientific inquiry. Furthermore, what I like most about these scientists’ discussion is that dualism is not disregarded as being less valid even though it cannot be used by these positivist scientists. The excerpt shows this particular positivist scientific researcher has a knowledge of the history of a century-long philosophical debate on consciousness and reveals that by selecting a particular philosophical foundation for

their research, the authors are making a choice, or better yet, *constructing* how they will come to understand “the conscious perception of the sensation of fatigue.” But more importantly, this study shows that scientists can think paradigmatically if they are trained to do so. Clearly, these researchers’ way of knowing fatigue, which acknowledges the particularity or philosophical limits of their viewpoint, is no doubt a product of their education as scientific researchers that taught them not to understand scientific research as the only valid, legitimate, or ideal means of knowing the world.

Yet, even when a paradigm, such as British Cultural Studies newly emerges in a field, like say, Kinesiology, it doesn’t do away with previous ways of thinking and knowing, rather, new paradigms can change how people make sense and give meaning to something like human movement from one historical moment to another, and one culture to another. A shift in ways of thinking can never be totally broken from previous ways of thinking because new ways of thinking are always created out of a shared culture and history (Hall, 1980). While it is fair to say that each subfield comprising a Kinesiology department has its own history to tell, the shared history and culture of URI’s Kinesiology department is an alloy of these competing/overlapping paradigms tempered over time. New ways of thinking, such as a BCS perspective can have subtle impact in the departmental culture, but the previous paradigm still has a lot to say if a new one happens to emerge, mostly because it was the paradigmatic eyewitness of the rupture (Hall, 1980). When Raymond Williams published *Culture and Society* he witnessed just such a rupture. The fundamental break from the Leavis tradition wasn’t because Williams, Thompson or Hoggart viewed the canon of great literature as insignificant, but that the study of those texts excluded studying cultures

like: popular culture, media culture, the lived experiences of working class people in everyday spaces and places, and the politics of culture—cultures they thought were worthy and ripe for academic study.

Much like St Clair Gibson et al (2003) compared the paradigms of dualism and monism to reflect the thought processes behind some of their intellectual choices, I will compare the paradigms of positivists and constructivists to reflect mine.

First, it is important to note that any paradigm can be broken up into three main criteria for evaluation and comparison: ontology, epistemology and methodology. The highest order belief or the one that is overarching is ontology, which in this case, is thought of as our ability to access reality. For a positivist “an apprehendable reality is assumed to exist [beyond the influences of humans], driven by immutable natural laws and mechanisms” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994:109). Because positivists believe the universe is guided by natural laws, the knowledge they produce or epistemology, takes the shape of making a claim on being able to ‘find’ generalizable and universal ‘Truths’ about the world.. This view of ontology is held by positivist scientists who assume that only a single reality exists in nature. They believe this singular reality, which exists with or without human knowledge, is only accessible through application of the scientific method. Accessing truth, for the positivist, is accomplished through using the scientific method which it is believed will ensure objectivity or the exclusion of human bias. Only through use of the scientific method can objective, impartial and direct access to a single external reality and ‘Truth’ can be captured, in the view of the positivist scientist.

As is the case in any paradigm, ontological beliefs inform the methodology a researcher uses; in this case, the positivist uses the scientific method whose values are generalizability, objectivity, internal and external validity, and reliability because of their belief that a single reality exists in nature. This method, then influences epistemology or what knowledge is believed to be. Ontology, epistemology and methodology work together to support each other. Our belief about the nature of reality affects how we go about discovering it. For instance, since science believes in an apprehendable world beyond that constructed by humans, it makes sense that the scientific method would be imagined by positivists as excluding the influence of human subjectivity because human perceptions are assumed to be inherently biased so that they disrupt the process of capturing natural order of ‘reality.’ This methodology—and the cultural authority given to it in Modernity—allows scientists (and lay persons) to (falsely) believe that when they employ the scientific method in their research, the scientific knowledge they ‘discover’ or ‘find’ is an objective, or *the* capital ‘T’ truth, about people and/or the world because they believe the scientific method ensures objectivity and eliminates human bias from the research process. To connect all of this back to my discussion about paradigms, we must keep in mind that if an academic field tacitly puts positivistic science (or any one particular scholarly paradigm) at the center of its departmental culture (whether through curricula, public definitions of what it means to be a member of that department, etc.) then it is only allowing for one certain type of knowledge to be deemed valid; it only asks and investigates certain types of questions, and it only allows certain things to be said and deemed valuable.

Whereas positivists pretend that it is possible to exclude human bias when they execute their research via the scientific method, cultural studies scholars begin their work very often by recognizing the researcher's subjectivity and bias in the final written products of the research and realizing that any form of research (including positivistic research) is necessarily constructed through human subjectiveness. Guba and Lincoln (1994) classify constructivism and critical theory as two separate paradigms, but since my analysis relies solely on these two paradigms I will explain them both separately.

The ontological viewpoint of constructivism is that multiple "realities [exist and] are apprehendable in the form of multiple, intangible mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific in nature (although elements are often shared among many individuals and even across cultures), and dependent of their form and content on the individual persons or groups holding the constructions" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994:110-1). What this means is, from a constructivist position, there is a recognition that there are different ways of viewing, knowing, and experiencing the world and developing a perception of social reality. From this vantage point, all knowledge is understood as being socially constructed and therefore incapable of embodying absolute truth. When a constructivist produces research it is always in part a study of self, because the researcher is understood to be inescapably a part of the social context producing knowledge. Along similar lines, critical theory attempts to make sense of the social structures erected by such social forces as politics, economy, history, and gender that give people a sense of the 'real' world (Guba & Lincoln). The two major tensions between constructivism/critical theory and

positivism, which work their way through my thesis are the oppositional worldviews of the respective researchers and the type of knowledge they produce.

Constructivists/critical theorists understand that the researcher is always present and that knowledge produced through research is always partial, limited, and subjective.

Positivists on the other hand, believe that through the use of the scientific method and quantification the researcher's bias is eliminated and that the knowledge produced is an objective truth.

Through the course of this investigation I am really trying to make visible to others within the URI Kinesiology department the existence of a contested terrain of what constitutes 'real' Kinesiological knowledge, to bring to light the particular ways in the University of Rhode Island's Kinesiology department constructs a particular knowledge hierarchy regarding ways of studying human movement. Highlighting this knowledge hierarchy and the constitutive value judgments and departmental practices that normalize the centering of exercise science knowledge over all others is a means of showing that there is no natural way in which all Kinesiology departments universally or naturally operate. Instead, how Kinesiology study is practiced depends on what meanings a Kinesiology departmental community gives to the various fields of knowledges or paradigms that make up the field of Kinesiology. In more concrete and everyday terms, what gets defined as 'Kinesiological knowledge' is constructed and practiced through classroom relations, undergraduate and graduate curricula, faculty interactions—both formal and informal—and a host of other everyday departmental practices and activities that together produce and reproduce the culture of the URI Kinesiology department. My experience in the department enables me to

understand that both an Exercise Science and Physical Cultural Studies ways of doing Kinesiology can, of course, simultaneously exist in the culture of a Kinesiology department. My critical education as a BCS/PCS student also tells me that neither of these forms of Kinesiological knowledge or ways of doing Kinesiology should be able to claim privilege one over the other in an ideal Kinesiology program.

CHAPTER 3
QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Hour 3: Email

To: Dr. Kusz

From: Justin Payne

Subj: the occasion of chance

Dr. Kusz,

I reached for a book, one that was close at hand to pretend that I was working. I happened to pick up Barker's Cultural Studies and thumbed to a random page. On page 220, dead center was the heading "The postmodern subject." A little further down was one of his check marks of definition or key ideas and this one read: "The decentered or postmodern self involves the subject in shifting, fragmented and multiple identities. Persons are composed not of one but several, sometimes contradictory identities." (p 220). Not much new there, but when I thought about how that relates to neoliberalism and what goes on here in the department I hit upon this thought. Neoliberalism has extraordinary powers of atomizing people. By eliminating the bonds that hold us together socially, we as neoliberal subjects work to legitimize a centralized, hierarchical, and in this instance at least, a corporate power relationship. In a Foucauldian way of looking at it (I think), the atomization redirects our energy from engaging in social goods, to practices that benefit us as individuals. Since the neoliberal subject sees success through economic status and rewards, 'playing the game' means also being a productive docile body. Further, success is visible through the accumulation of material things and professional standing/respect, in short 'playing the game' works. But, and I hope this is where a good thought happened, 'playing the game' also means that some of our identities, desires, and humanity is given up. That is the moment of fracture. While neoliberalism is centralizing, it is also decentralizing as it helps create these multiple identities when we have to separate our desires/identities in order to 'play the game.' What postmodernism allows me to do at least, is understand the why or how the formal/informal public/private identities are constructed. 'Playing the game' doesn't get rid of the other ways of being like before the moment of fracture, so energy gets put into the informal network. Recognition of a centralized power structure stifles what can be said, views that they may not perceive to be in the individuals best interest consensus depending. Perhaps behind the jokes and the too easy laughs—the Stepford niceness—is a collective awareness that around the table are dogs playing

poker. Is it a question of people not wanting to give up more of their humanity than they already have? Does it matter what is said at all? Or, how can my thoughts benefit me? These questions all have something in common, they lack a consideration for broader concerns, more complex concerns. Again, what does it say when the first question stops being asked?

Just below the above quote is one from Hall, "The subject assumes different identities at different times, identities which are not unified around a coherent 'self'. Within us are contradictory identities, pulling in different directions, so that our identifications are continually being shifted about. If we feel that we have a unified identity from birth to death, it is only because we construct a comforting story or 'narrative of the self' about ourselves. (Hall, 1992b:277).

I thought here that Hall may be slightly off, not in the idea, but in how this happens. That thought is unfounded I know, especially since I have read the text surrounding this quote. I just was thinking that maybe it isn't competing discourses that fracture our identities, at least not only competing discourses (this is how I assume Hall would eventually go, by ideology which hails us from contradictory discourses?). I think that in part we are fractured by the way, in this instance neoliberalism, overdetermines signs, language and ideology. Can we also be pulled in different directions by discourses that layer too many meanings on the same symbol? For instance, what it means to be American can be used for so many different qualities that when we are confronted with multiple options that all relate to what it means to be an American we have to choose and in so doing fracture ourselves.

I just wanted to write these down, while they fluttered by my consciousness.

later,

J

Qualitative Research

Qualitative and critical research, since the postmodern turn, place a high value on the idea of researcher reflexivity grounded in the understanding that all researchers, both quantitative and qualitative, scientific and social scientific, produce their research

from their own unique experiences, standpoints, knowledges or paradigms, and historically constituted cultures (Richardson, 1994). While ‘postmodernism’ is by now a well-worn sign that has referred to a historical moment, an epistemological break from modernism, and an art or aesthetic movement among other things, in academia it represents an epistemological orientation characterized by “the *doubt* that any method or theory, discourse or genre, tradition or novelty, has a universal and general claim as the “right” or the privileged form of authoritative knowledge” (Richardson, 1994:517). Additionally, postmodernism urges researchers to be skeptical of all claims to knowledge, particularly, but not exclusively, those that make claims to a singular, universal Truth about human kind or the social world. For Richardson, the ideas of postmodernism have opened up the field of qualitative research to new methods of researching and writing. In the aftermath of the postmodern turn, some within the field of qualitative research have argued for the need to make room for the explicit inclusion of the writer’s voice in scholarly texts (Anderson, 2006, Denzin, 2006, Richardson, 1994, 2002).

It is at this moment where I am compelled as a learner by Richardson’s writing. If researchers begin to include themselves within their work then a funny thing happens to the expectations of what they can claim to know as Richardson explains,

“a postmodernist position does allow us to know “something” without claiming to know everything. Having a partial, local, historical knowledge is still knowing. In some ways, “knowing” is easier, however, because postmodernism recognizes the situational limitations of the knower. Qualitative writers are off the hook, so to speak. They don’t have to try to play God, writing as disembodied omniscient narrators claiming universal, atemporal general knowledge; they can eschew the questionable metanarrative of scientific objectivity and still have plenty to say as situated speakers,

subjectivities engaged in knowing/telling about the world as they perceive it” (Richardson, 1994:518).

Contemporary qualitative researchers influenced by the postmodern turn no longer ignore this inescapable insertion of the human into the process of knowledge production. Indeed, they claim that all researchers are unable to fully free themselves from bias and subjectivity in their research. As Denzin (1994) explains, “the methods for making sense of experience are always personal” (p. 501). This statement is especially true for those whose projects are aligned with British Cultural Studies (BCS).

Following Richardson’s words above, I prefer to execute research and writing on physical cultures as a qualitative researcher who accepts this postmodern belief in the messiness of socially situated knowledge. But, in my experiences in URI’s Kinesiology department when I asked what I assumed was an important and thoughtful question that sought to integrate the knowledges of PCS with those of ES, there seemed to be little awareness of this postmodernist critique of the idea of universal truths with a capital ‘T.’ Instead, my question was met with concerns about quantification and what seemed to be an unwillingness of rigidly positivistic minded exercise science researchers to imagine that human movement could be studied from a non-quantitative and/or non-positivistic approach. Interestingly, more than one exercise science professor commented to me that they believed sociocultural, qualitative research is ‘harder’ than what they do. Paraphrasing one professor, ‘all they [positivistic quantitative researchers] have to do is enter in data to a computer and the results are given to them.’

Beyond my desire to accept these comments as an ego boost, I view sociocultural qualitative research as a vast frontier of exploration that can aid exercise and health researchers to start answering the question of ‘what we can do with it.’ In this instance, I mean how are cultural processes of Kinesiological knowledge production irreducibly intertwined with the social milieu swirling around us at this time in history. For example, why does the Kinesiology department at URI lean heavily toward the clinical applications of exercise science? Why not athletic training, coaching, or psychology? Why was there a shift from focusing on Physical Education to exercise science? These questions, while not necessarily relevant to my thesis, do, if further developed, speak to the underlying politics at local and global levels contributing to a particular kinesiology culture here at URI.

But why is it important to have what Mills (1959) calls a ‘sociological imagination’ that seeks out the above types of qualitative questions? For me, I think it is important to understand how we as researchers are limited in what we can claim to know. Understanding that our knowledge and approach to research is limited by our worldview developed through personal experiences, education, and social position as well as what broader social forces our research wagon can get hitched to (knowingly or unknowingly), leads to a generative, more inclusive conversation and exchange of ideas. It occurs to me at this point that I probably do not need to press too hard to get researchers from various disciplines to buy in to what I am saying. However, I imagine a more visceral and negative response would be more forthcoming from some, when discussing how race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and culture can shape a person’s worldview and how those social norms get institutionalized in part

through the kind of knowledge our research produces. But, my faith in Richardson's beliefs about the value of qualitative research and the illumination of the unavoidable contingencies involved in the production of knowledge, also means that I recognize the limits and contingencies of the scientific knowledges produced by those Kinesiologists who execute their research mainly or exclusively through use of positivist or post-positivist assumptions, the scientific method, quantitative measures and outputs, and statistics. This is a recognition that places me on the critical, constructivist side of the paradigmatic steel curtain mentioned in Chapter 1. It is a recognition that means that I see something that they cannot, do not, will not, or perhaps want not to see. To speak this recognition publicly in the URI department of Kinesiology, especially in a classroom, is to be seen as a heretic surrounded by a church full of believers in the faith of Science with a capital 'S.' Practically speaking, in my experiences, it meant, on more occasions than not, becoming isolated, marginalized, devalued, and discredited when I chose to express these ideas that are commonly accepted by qualitative researchers who have made the postmodern turn.

As a qualitative researcher working after the postmodern turn, I consider it an ethical standard and the responsibility of the researcher to attempt to be assiduously self-reflexive about the process of doing their work; from conception to completion. Being self-reflexive means the researcher can explicitly describe how their experiences, academic training, theories employed, identity, and social location to name a few, influence the way in which the research is approached, conducted, interpreted and represented. The logics of self-reflexivity operate from the belief that all representations of reality are political and influenced by power relations, but in no

way constitute ‘True’ facts. At the same time, BCS researchers realize that despite their best efforts to be reflexive about how their research is influenced by personal biography, cultural politics and the horizons of knowledge of a particular historical moment, they will undoubtedly not be able to account for all of the ways that their research findings may be as symptomatic of the times in which they study and the peculiarities of their own experiences and knowledges as representative of even bounded and humble truths about the cultures and peoples they study.

But, through the implementation of a Cultural Studies theoretical and methodological framework one way culture can be analyzed is as “a discursive formation. . . of ideas, images and practices, which provide ways of talking about, forms of knowledge and conduct associated with, a particular topic, social activity or institutional site in society” (Barker citing Hall, 2008:5). In the instance of this thesis, studying the ‘discursive formation’ of URI’s Kinesiology department centers on critically examining the types of Kinesiological discourses created through the everyday cultural life of URI’s Kinesiology department.

For example, in theory, Kinesiology departments like URI’s do not share a common canon of knowledge across all of its subfields (Physical Education, Exercise Physiology, Exercise Science, Sport & Exercise Psychologies, and Cultural Studies of Sport & Physical Culture). But, in practice, any given Kinesiology department can establish particular ways of knowing human movement or doing Kinesiological research as ‘normal’ (and others as different or abnormal) mainly through something as simple and perhaps inconsequential or unintentional (for members of the normative group at least) as the casual use of their specific, sub-disciplinary languages,

discourses, or epistemological frameworks within formal and informal departmental conversations or the framing of pertinent topics for coursework or research as if they were universal. Within such a departmental culture, the idea or recognition that there is no shared, common, foundational or collectively agreed upon canon to Kinesiological education within the URI Kinesiology department is an important cultural observation because it is something that those whose disciplinary knowledges are positioned as normal don't often immediately recognize. So, I am interested in illuminating how certain discourses and knowledges about the study of human movement are more highly valued and made to appear more 'normal' than others through the everyday life of the department. To struggle against this form of normative power through discourse is to attempt to disrupt how this form of 'common sense' reproduces this power. In my experiences coming up through the Kinesiology department as an Exercise Science (ES) undergraduate and my eventual crossover to Physical Cultural Studies (PCS), the day to day interactions of students and faculty tended to represent ES knowledge as the only imaginable way of knowing and studying human movement. So what I am attempting to make plain is how ES knowledge was constructed as normative for what the study of Kinesiology has come to mean at URI, and to recognize my thesis as a resistive act within this normative culture to attempt to broaden the ways in which Kinesiological knowledge is produced and valued at URI.

In particular, what this thesis attempts to make visible are the common, everyday practices of the departmental community that enable an exercise science view of Kinesiology to operate, in most spaces and times, as the unspoken, common

sense, or ‘normal’ way of understanding human movement in the University of Rhode Island’s Kinesiology department from 2010 through 2012. To do so, I want to tell my own story of how this normalization of exercise science based ways of knowing human movement within the department created a host of additional obstacles, marginalizations, stigmatizations, and negotiations for me as a Physical Cultural Studies graduate student so that my daily experiences increasingly led me to feel like an ‘other’ within the Kinesiology department at the University of Rhode Island.

Becoming an academic writer

“Qualitative research has to be read, not scanned; its meaning is in the reading” (Richardson, 1994:517)

What I like most about doing cultural studies work is how I find new connections, meanings, and so I get to constantly develop new ways of seeing the world as I encounter new forms of information about various social worlds. My initial view of academic writing (before encountering qualitative research and the writings of academics like Denzin, Fausto-Sterling, Lynch, and Richardson) was one of separation and dispassion, mostly because I first learned about it as taking the form of scientific writing. In contrast, writing for me has always been a safe haven defined by personal disclosure, making sense of the world around me, and expressing myself in a poetic manner. In short, writing was the means through which I could express and feel like the person I most want to be. Within the margins of the page, I can have an intimate conversation with another human being. If I am brave enough to reveal myself through the telling of my thoughts and experiences, why then can’t we create at least a hidden space of understanding within each other’s minds.

I admittedly have a strong idealist bent that tends to amplify the wistfulness of my thoughts and writing. I cannot deny that I have fantastic imaginings about the type of understanding I am seeking. But, from a technical standpoint, by ‘understanding,’ I am thinking in terms of postmodernism as “the *doubt* that any method or theory, discourse or genre, tradition or novelty, has a universal and general claim as the “right” or the privileged form of authoritative knowledge” (Richardson, 1994:517). From a more hopeful, if not reasonable, standpoint, I want the reader to be mindful that I am present and going through the joys, pains, and pressures of a human life much like they are. We all have a particular relationship to the world and postmodernism does not locate ‘true knowledge’ in any one paradigm of thought or way of knowing.

How does Richardson get to this point of the need to include the writer’s voice within postmodernism? As I look over the claims she made and that I am now recreating here, I discover that I was again drawn to distraction by discovering the structure of her argument. I forgot to ask the important question of how postmodernism gets us to the point of doubt and opens the door for reflexivity.

Richardson performs this above trick by connecting poststructuralism to postmodernism like so.

“Poststructuralism links language, subjectivity, social organization, and power. The centerpiece is language. Language does not “reflect” social reality, but produces meaning, creates social reality. Different languages and different discourses within a given language divide up the world and give it meaning in ways that are not reducible to one another. Language is how social organization and power are defined and contested and the place where our sense of selves, our *subjectivity*, is constructed. Understanding language as competing discourses, competing ways of giving meaning and of organizing the world, makes language a site of exploration, struggle.” (Richardson, 1994:518)

I have taken the long route in order to make clear why I cannot through my writing dissociate my voice or experience from my writing of this thesis. The simplest reason is that I am using language to understand what I am observing, to construct a written form of an observation, and in both instances the meanings I construct are bound up in my personal experience, limits of theory used, and cultural experiences. Interpretation and representation are linguistic arts I use to say something about the culture of the Kinesiology department during my time there, but by no means claiming to say everything about it.

As I draw this chapter to a close, I come back to the Hour 3 email I sent to Dr. Kusz because it is a good example of what draws me to qualitative research and the self-reflexivity of the postmodern turn. I get to learn a language that helps me at this point in my academic career make sense of the physical cultures as felt through bodily experiences in a creative and academically accepted way.

CHAPTER 4

BRITISH CULTURAL STUDIES

Hour 4: Bitters Wheatley

I used you, Wheatley, as a knife,
Bodies at Risk, slicing the air,
Blood in my ears, this is madness.

The critical fragments of so much theory,
Stuck under my eyelids,
Irritating the delicate lenses.

I used you, Wheatley, as an excuse
To 'other' another 'other'
By cutting you down.

I tried rubbing my eyes, to remove
those sharp shards, tears fracturing
the social into too complex patterns of light.

I was bitter, Wheatley.

British Cultural Studies

It isn't that there are no limits narrowing what I can take BCS to be, but as Hall states cultural studies is a "sustained work of theoretical clarification" (Turner, 1992).

Since a British Cultural Studies [BCS] analyst views every historical moment as being produced out of specific social, political, cultural and economic conditions that intersect and overlap in complex expressions of power and meaning (Barker, 2008; Turner, 2003), in order to make sense of my experiences navigating the cultural landscape in URI's Kinesiology department as I moved between Exercise Science [ES] and Physical Cultural Studies [PCS] modes of understanding human movement. I intend to analyze the URI Kinesiology department culture during my time as a

graduate student using BCS concepts of and a Foucauldian understanding of the normalizing aspects of social power.

Like so many other perpetually occurring social processes, one difficulty in explaining what is meant by the concept of ‘culture’ is where to begin. I guess that is why so often cultural studies texts begin with Raymond Williams (1965) saying culture is “a whole way of life” (p. 63). And perhaps, starting with a history of British cultural studies is the ideal method for helping readers and students to reach an understanding of what it means to study culture, something that for me has been elusive. My tendency before being introduced to BCS ideas about culture has been to think of culture as something that is fixed and exists as this underlying fabric of human experience. But, now I have developed a different way of understanding culture that recognizes that it doesn’t necessarily pre-exist people in a given time and place, but culture is something that people co-create in every time and place out of particular social, historical and political conditions they do not get to choose. What this means is that culture is not really a tangible or fixed thing. And it certainly is not some sort of knowable Truth to which I have direct access. The word that often appears in critical theory is ‘imagined;’ Althusser’s definition of ideology as an “imaginary relationship to the real conditions of existence” (Storey, 1993:118), “imagined communities” (Anderson, 1983), or “sociological imagination” (Mills, 1959). The use of the phrase ‘imaginary’ as it relates to culture is bound together through language; and as Saussure argues, “the function of language is to organize and construct our access to reality.” (Storey, 1993:70).

So, how is culture understood and theorized through a BCS optic? Any description of what British Cultural Studies has to begin by giving an account of how its practitioners understand culture. In fact, according to some histories of the field of BCS, the field of began with Raymond Williams' (1958) publication of *Culture and Society*, which among other things argued for a reconceptualization of the meaning of culture, which would change the way culture could be imagined. Prior to the publication of *Culture and Society*, the idea of culture that dominated in literary criticism circles and was casually held by many lay people was Matthew Arnold's idea that culture represented "the best that has been thought and said in the world" (Storey, 1993:21) or what is commonly described as 'high culture'.

Arnold thought of culture as a means of maintaining social and political order in modern society used by upper classes to promote particular notions of civility and morality canonized in the fine arts to discipline themselves and other social classes (Storey, 1993). These elitist attitudes about culture were promoted by F. R. Leavis⁴, whose paradigm for studying culture dominated literary criticism at the time of Williams' publication of *Culture and Society*. The Leavis tradition, as it is known, insisted only on the study of canonical texts in literature as they represented works of genius and as such offered high moral and intellectual value.

"Extolling, in his phrase, "the Great Tradition," Leavis privileged literature above all other disciplines, as offering a special morally edifying force. In so doing, he followed MATTHEW ARNOLD, who in *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) claimed that the literary canon could provide a civilizing "sweetness

⁴ As someone who has some training in BCS, I read Arnold and Leavis with a sneer. Yet, I was surprised when I learned of Arnold's attraction to the idea of striving for human perfection. When reading this I flashed back to an image of myself in the basement of our rented house in Monson, MA. I set up a card table by the big freezer, where I developed my achievement wall and studied, all with the goal of achieving what I now know as an imaginary perfection.

and light” to society, in effect assuming the redemptive power previously enjoyed by religion.” (Norton, 2001:1565)

Yet Williams believed that this Leavisite approach to the study of culture as only high culture was limited, because it didn’t help in understanding society or the ‘whole way of life,’ of a particular culture at a particular time. For Williams, culture existed anywhere and everywhere. One could study the cultures which shape the life of any individual (particularly working class individuals and the cultures in which they lived), or one could study the culture of a social institution, or the culture that was popular in a given time period and/or social space. As Turner (1992) describes the ideas:

“Emerging from a literary critical tradition that saw popular culture as a threat to the moral and cultural standards of modern civilization, the work of the pioneers in cultural studies breaks with that literary tradition’s elitist assumptions in order to examine the everyday and the ordinary: those aspects of our lives that exert so powerful and unquestioned an influence on our existence that we take them for granted. The processes that make us—as individuals, as citizens, as members of a particular class, race, or gender—are cultural processes that work precisely because they seem so natural, so unexceptional, so irresistible” (2).

The break from the Leavis tradition was not simple, complete, or the work of Williams exclusively. Richard Hoggart (1957) in *The Uses of Literacy* and E. P. Thompson (1963) in *The Making of the English Working Class*, were also advocating for the deep, analytic study of working class cultures and popular culture. For his part, Hoggart helped institutionalize the British Cultural Studies mode of studying culture as the first director of the Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham. These historical moments when literary criticism turned off the Leavis highway represented a paradigmatic shift in thinking about culture and are also relevant to understanding the BCS perspective on studying the specificity of

how cultures get created and reproduced. These moments represent a specific time when sociological, economic, political and historical forces articulated in a unique way, specific to a particular place to produce a new meaning of culture.

For BCS scholars, the study of culture can be understood as akin to the study of language, as “language gives meaning to material objects and social practices that are brought into view by language and made intelligible to us in terms that language delimit” (Barker, 2008:7). Put another way, language is what enables us to think about the world and each other, without it what tools would we use make sense of the world around us? Likewise, it is only through our cultures (and their specific languages) that we develop particular, formative, and foundational ideas about how the world works, who we are, and how we relate to one another. But BCS scholars are also interested in studying culture not only as a language that structures how people make sense of the world, but how the ‘languages’ of a culture change over time, how there can be competing languages that exist in any given culture in a specific time period, and how social power influences which ‘languages’ are made dominant and influential in a given cultural moment/context and which, correspondingly, get marginalized and devalued.

How meanings get constructed socially and change over time is another dominant feature of BCS. Ferdinand De Saussure’s theory of language underpins much of the way a BCS perspective sees the world, “to understand culture is to explore how meaning is produced symbolically through the signifying practices of language” (Barker, 2008:76). De Saussure’s theory of language,

“explains the generation of meaning by reference to a system of structured differences in language. He explores the rules and conventions that organize

language (*langue*) rather than the specific uses and utterances which individuals deploy in everyday life (*parole*). Saussure, and structuralism in general, is more concerned with the structures of language than actual performance. Structuralism is concerned with how cultural meaning is produced, holding it to be structured 'like a language'. A structuralist understanding of culture is concerned with 'systems of relations' of an underlying structure that forms the grammar which makes meaning possible" (Barker, 2008:76).

Though BCS has moved beyond a strictly structuralist perspective, it still values Saussure's assertion that "the function of language [and a culture in which one lives] is to organize, to construct, indeed to provide us with our only access to, reality" (Turner, 1992:13). It is in studying the process through which language and meaning are organized and constructed that British Cultural Studies work is interested. Language organizes and can compel people to act in particular or preferred ways. It can also organize social relations within particular spaces and times. As mentioned above, a unique aspect of BCS work is that it understands the cultural process through which meaning is made to be influenced by very specific political, economic, and social forces and conditions at a given moment in time. Finally, BCS scholars also foreground in their analyses the ways in which power relations are constituted through language use, as well as how social power can be resisted through the creation and/or mobilization of language or counter-language (counter-discourses or counter-knowledges).

Another concept that is important to BCS work is that of signifying practices. Through signifying practices social meanings and power are (re)produced in a culture. A signifying practice can be anything that conveys or produces social meaning (i.e. words, comments, clothing, bodily gestures, etc.). Part of the goal of this thesis will be to make visible the signifying practices [verbal, nonverbal, gestural, social actions,

social relations] through which particular meanings about the various ways in which human movement are studied, valued, normalized, marginalized, or stigmatized in the department within the University of Rhode Island's Kinesiology department.

In most of the classrooms I sat in as a Kinesiology student, a Kinesiological discourse of exercise science was the language or signifying practice in which meaning about human movement was organized, produced, and legitimized. In most spaces of the University of Rhode Island's Kinesiology department, it is the language of exercise science that organizes the way that human movement is discussed, imagined, and understood. This language of exercise science often imagines humans through the metaphor of the body as machine with inputs and outputs; as an organism whose biological and physiological operations are studied in a way that abstracts them out of history, society, and politics, meaning that this way of understanding human bodies and human movement often discursively removes or distances human bodies and movement from the complex social environments in which we live. This mode of understanding human movement prefers to construct its knowledge through quantitative measures, statistics, and classifications or categorizations that have a tendency to turn humans into objects of knowledge that minimize the complex and specific aspects of their humanity.

Conversely, in a Kinesiology classroom where a Physical Cultural Studies language or way of knowing was used the way the body was talked about and 'known' was as a person or social subject embedded in a society, where social conditions heavily influence how humans choose to move their bodies. Physical Cultural Studies practitioners believe that all knowledge is political and the meanings assigned to how

and why humans move are contested terrains where social subjects constantly reinforce or resist social norms at particular times and places. Physical Cultural Studies tries to understand how certain knowledges come to be dominant, whose interests are served by those knowledges and whose interests get marginalized by them. Signifying practices, the cultural practices through which particular meanings are articulated to a social object or a part of the social world, are essential for one to recognize and understand in order for one to comprehend how particular knowledges about human bodies and movement get produced and valued over others.

The key signifying practices of the Kinesiology department that established an exercise science/exercise physiology viewpoint as the taken for granted, unspoken, normative way of defining Kinesiological knowledge were curricula, the use of scientific text books, PowerPoint presentations, and specific modes of delivery of information in classrooms. In most Kinesiology classrooms I have experienced here at URI both as an undergraduate and graduate student, exercise science/physiology-based explanations for how and why human bodies move as they do were established in scientifically grounded textbooks filled with pictures, charts, graphs, and references to scientific research studies that often led myself and my Kinesiology student cohorts to believe beyond the shadow of any doubt in the veracity and absolute ‘Truth’ of this knowledge and to understand it as the foundational basis of knowledge for the field of Kinesiology.

This representation of exercise scientific knowledge as undebatable ‘facts’ and absolute ‘Truths’ about how and why humans move as they do—a positivist-grounded form of knowledge of human movement—was also facilitated through the way in

which PowerPoint slides were constructed and used by professors and instructors. This mode of delivering information by packaging it into neat, succinct, bulleted bits of ‘important’ information that are generalizable, universal, objective, and that apply to ‘the human body’ (or at selective times to ‘the male body’ and ‘the female body’) and delivering these valued nuggets of scientific ‘facts’ authoritatively from behind a podium were complex signifying practices that helped established the imagined veracity of this form of knowledge. Lessons were delivered, for the most part, from professors and instructors through authoritative statements of ‘facts,’ usually backed up with quantitative measures and statistics that conveyed a sense of neat, confident, certitude in this form of knowledge about human movement.

For many Kinesiology students who specialize in exercise science and who value a paradigm that seeks to optimize health behaviors or athletic performance (and does not always attend to the contradiction that exists between these goals), this was the type of knowledge that gives its audiences a comforting sense that the world is ultimately knowable if one simply learned/memorized these nuggets of ‘Truth.’ These assertions of ‘Truth’ were explained to be valid and generalizable to all ‘individuals.’ One exercise science professor did use phrases such as ‘we think’ or ‘we believe,’ or ‘we studied,’ which did suggest some sense of the provisional nature of scientific knowledge of human bodies and movement. But such phrases ultimately did little to disrupt the authoritative manner in which exercise scientific knowledge was often delivered in URI Kinesiology classrooms. As this mode of delivery echoed from speaker to speaker and from room to room because exercise science and exercise physiology classes dominate undergraduate curricula, it simultaneously gave the

impression amongst many undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty that the entire Kinesiology community spoke with one voice, and thought with one mind.

I remember talking with my Biochemistry professor after one class about how it seemed to me that biochemistry had many of the answers that exercise scientists were looking for and s/he responded, “no, we just look on a different scale.” I remember being pulled up short by this response for I was expecting agreement from him. But his reply was immediate, casual, and seemingly drawn out of experience. Yet through this interaction with this biochemist I learned that not all professors of science speak with one voice or give the impression that scientific knowledge is absolute, infallible, without limits, or beyond critique. Perhaps most importantly, I learned that scientific knowledge is also subject to representation. In this case, the biochemist refused to make claims about exercise physiology because s/he was aware of biochemistry’s paradigmatic limits. So, in some instances the seeming unity of a scientific narrative can be called into question.

Likewise, Stuart Hall, one of the most influential BCS thinkers, who also directed the CCCS from 1968-79, describes the epistemological rupture of the study of culture as “untidy” with a “characteristic unevenness of development” (Hall, 1980:57). Hall goes on to emphasize that “what is important are the significant breaks—where old lines of thought are disrupted, older constellations displaced, and elements, old and new, are regrouped around a different set of premises and themes” (Hall, 1980:57). Hall’s comments here echo the notion of paradigm shifts espoused by his contemporary, Thomas Kuhn. Williams was also known to cite Kuhn specifically when he wrote, “paradigms are never simply abandoned. Rather they accumulate

anomalies until there is an eventual breaking point” (Brantlinger citing Williams citing Kuhn, 1990:34).

It is important and fitting to note the overlap of ideas between Williams and his BCS contemporaries and those of Kuhn, working in the US, within this historical period of the late 1950s and early 1960s. Though the idea of paradigms has been taken up by quantitative and qualitative researchers alike, the credit for the focus on scientific paradigms is given to Thomas Kuhn in his pivotal book that was first published in 1962, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. According to Kuhn, everything we know, understand or explain about the world around us is framed through paradigms. Qualitative researchers Guba and Lincoln (1994) define a paradigm as a particular way of “defin[ing], for its holder, the nature of the “world,” the individual’s place in it, and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994:107). The logic of Kuhn’s notions of ‘paradigms’ and epistemological breaks parallels Foucault’s notion of discourse and method of genealogical analysis that looks for epistemological ruptures. For Foucault, “discourse constructs, defines and produces the objects of knowledge in an intelligible way while at the same time excluding other ways of reasoning as unintelligible” (Barker, 2008:20). Held within these descriptions of discourses and paradigms are ideas of the political and provisional character of knowledge, the particular subjectivities that knowledge produces and are produced by, and the relational positions of the individual to the world. This idea that particular ways of knowing the world are confined to particular historical moments and societies is also vital to the way BCS conceptualizes culture. In writing *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Kuhn dispelled the notion

that scientific discovery has been a consistent linear progression throughout time, much the way Foucault did with his *History of Sexuality* (1976, 1984), much the way Williams did with the meaning of culture in *Culture and Society*. Kuhn argued that there had been many upheavals along the way, where a particular phenomenon could not be explained or included within bounds of a popular theoretical paradigm, thus, a new paradigm gets developed that reimagines how a particular natural or social phenomenon can be understood. The paradigms in which we now see the world have a political, historical, and cultural beginning, as the works of Kuhn, Williams, Hall, Foucault, and the history of BCS illuminates.

CHAPTER 5

REVISIONS

Hour 5: “Maybe you need therapy”

I began writing *Learning the art of patricide* in the later months of 2009 with the new realization that I had been going through life motivated by a desire to seek the external validation of various father figures in my life. As part of the requirement to write an autoethnography about one’s experiences in a physical culture for KIN 578, I tried to read ‘*Patricide*’ to the class. I didn’t get through page one before being overtaken by emotion. I sobbed in front of my grad school classmates and could not continue.

A couple interesting things happened as a result.

First, it was suggested that I seek professional counseling. Second, the moment seemed to be erased from the minds of the graduate students who witnessed my breakdown immediately after it happened. On several occasions, I would mention it to them and was met with a silence so profound I almost questioned whether it actually happened. The following are some excerpts from this emotional experience.

Birth

“What does it mean to be a featherless, two legged, linguistically conscious creature born between urine and feces?” Cornel West

I have a fascination with a black man, his embodiment of masculinity and his performance as a knower of truth. His rhythm and cadence make the podium seem like a pulpit, the words appear to transcend language as if he is embodying the Holy Spirit himself. I watch him on YouTube giving speeches in suits that bring to mind Frederick

Douglass. The afro and suit seem to work together to represent a lineage of thinkers with a “blues sensibility,” which I take to mean, thinkers that have had to struggle to have their humanity recognized and who recognize that there are social forces and conditions out there in the world that constrain and limit some while privileging and benefiting others. His voice, dramatic through crescendos and whispers, singing like a siren to my desire for inclusion in a culture of people who see and experience the world as I think I have begun to recognize just now in my life. But, as I am drawn, compelled and inspired by West, I wonder how and why he hails me. If I am honest, I have to admit my imagined performances, in which I emulate him, are motivated by that hegemonic masculine value of having people put me on a pedestal to approve, respect, and follow me. Even as I intellectually enjoy his ideas, what I reach for most is his affect, his ability to be so masculine as to come down on humanity with love⁵.

West views physical birth as inescapably the most humble of beginnings, but what happens during the “journey from womb and tomb” as he says, is worth examining. Along with our physical birth is the birth of self, the mixing of biology and

⁵ The phrase, “come down on humanity with love” drew the following comment from Dr. Kusz: “Why is this masculine? ‘to come down on humanity’ is an awkward phrase for a man whose performance attempts to position him as no better than any other human, so would he come down to humanity, or say, ‘commune with humanity with love.’?”

My response to this comment was as follows: “I am attempting to show a tension here as to the complexity of masculinity. I am viewing West coming from a very hegemonic masculine standpoint, even though I am sure his investment and performance is different. The tension, for me, is that I see such confidence and authority in his performances that it is hard to reconcile the community aspect. My ‘natural’ tendency is to think of confidence and authority as a hierarchical and exclusive subject position. This idea is relevant to Hour 1 and how I positioned you. The “Patricide” piece was a way to work through this tension. At the end, I hint at the realization that maybe knowing that my performance as a father to my son could result in my own metaphysical death. It was a way to ‘come down’ to humanity. The goal is to make this transition with love, rather than despair.”

ideology, but also the death of any hopes of true self-determination. My birth certificate documents my height, weight, time and type of human I start off being. When the doctor announced to my mother “it’s a boy,” my metaphysical self was conceived.

Even through the death of his father, Hamlet could not escape his Kingly reach, where, as a ghost he haunts the castle walls compelling Hamlet to expose his killer. Although, in the case of Hamlet the ghost is visible, I find throughout daily living my actions are directed by the invisibility of a masculine ideology purveyed by father figures in my life. As I came of age, more and more fathers wove their threads about me, binding and building my relationships to the world in a tapestry of need and fear. My black father tells me, “education is learning how to die.” But, maybe it is also learning how to kill the fathers that bind...

...my mother had three boys, of which I am the youngest. Before I was old enough to go to kindergarten, the television took part in my daily education. During the day, when my brothers were off at school, I would settle into my own routine, a routine that now seems odd because I do not remember being supervised. In the morning, I would watch the Incredible Hulk. What I remember most about the show is when David Banner turned green and kicked ass. I was always a little scared during the transformation because I never knew what the Hulk would do when he was angry. How do you behave against an unpredictable, overpowering force? I did get the sense that being feared was not necessarily a bad thing. I would think about all the things of which I was afraid. Maybe in my young mind I understood that fear can also make you small and weak.

Long before I learned the manly art of burying my fears, I feared snakes. As a young boy growing up in Texas, I remember being taught by my mother that snakes are poisonous and to always be on the lookout for rattlers and water moccasins. I remember walking around the outside of our company-owned, brick, ranch house in a constant state of vigilance for big reptilian killers. One day as I made my way around the house to eventually enter the car port through the back door, out from under the deep freeze slithered a green snake. In horror, I threw down my grape soda, plowed through a chair and ran yelling toward the front office where my parents worked. When I finally reached the office, my mother and step-father, who had been watching the approach of this cotton-headed boy, no doubt made aware of imminent doom by the sound of screams, were waiting for me. Between panting breaths, I explained about the scary snake in the car port. My step-father escorted me back to the house where I happily pointed out the offending snake with a courageous finger passing on a sentence of execution. My step-father's gaze followed my finger to rest on a thin sliver of emerald against the gray concrete and immediately erupted with laughter. I pondered the riddle for a while wondering why following my mother's advice had made me the target of his laughter.

Around the same time, I had an overweight Uncle James. He used to come around the campground visiting with my mother and step-father. It occurred to him once to tease me by holding his pocket knife upside-down to my ear and with a sawing motion pretending to cut it off. I felt cold steel on the soft flesh where my ear meets my head and instead of laughing, or running away, I launched myself at him with extreme prejudice. With little fists of rage, I rained down shock and awe on his back

and body. My step-father had to pull me off the man, this four year old, angry and green...

...My father in-law chose not to fight in the Vietnam War. Indeed, I could never imagine him holding an M-16 walking through the jungles of Southeast Asia. He was a quiet admirer of thought and argument. Often conversations turned philosophical and his openness to my thoughts was met with happiness and wariness. Further, his performance of manhood was such that compliments were common and all the while underpinned by the desire for me to succeed. In the beginning, his willingness to focus on the good and offer praise revealed a suspicion of male praise in me. I kept wondering what his goal was and if he was softening me up for a blow.

Over time, he became an example of how alternatives to hegemonic masculinity⁶ exist and can foster love and approval, even if that form of love and approval is different. When he died suddenly, I found myself not sad, but angry. I selfishly blamed him for the loss of my future with him. I realized how many of my actions were motivated in large part by the thought of his reaction. The stories of his friends and family were not heroic and filled with the knightly deeds, they were more about community and gentleness, about how he greeted you when you entered a room like he had made a wish and it had come true...

...My thesis advisor says my thesis will be judged by where I am at in my thinking. Wouldn't knowledge of that location be nice? If I were to guess, I am somewhere between a critical nightmare and a lotus flower. Everyone seems to be a

⁶ Hegemonic masculinity "embodi[es] the currently most honored way of being a man, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically legitimated the global subordination of women to men" (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005:832).

Father that knows better; a teleology glaring down saying you are not quite there yet. They tell me the shape my mind should take pressing the cookie cutter down, severing the possibility of unquantifiable shapes. I find resistance in questioning the invisible. I am learning to chant Nam MyoHo Range Kyo to reach the 10th world⁷; I wish to be the flower and seed in a single instant of time. I wonder what drink quenches a childhood desire for uncovering mysteries. The excitement my son sees in lights inspires him to point out every one and exclaim “Ooh, light.” Soon he will push up the sun so far and discover how small he is; a tiny vibration in the matrix of the universe. How melancholy will be his song of dying significance? As I try to accept the coup d’état of other values governing the way I walk the path from womb to tomb, who will I be when I see my own death in my son’s eyes?

I have spent most of my life in a classroom.

So it comes as no real surprise to me that the classroom has played a significant role in the development of who I am and what I know of the world. The real surprise and what I find as the joy of the critical sort of education provided by a British Cultural Studies lens is the unexpected twists and turns that led to unexpected experiences like the writing of this thesis. It is something I never would have imagined doing before walking into Kinesiology 278: *Physical Activity, Cultural Diversity, and Society* in the summer of 2008.

⁷ I went to a Buddhist philosophy seminar at the local community center and the presenters talked of the tenth world as that of enlightenment.

Yet even how I have come to see a classroom, has changed through the experience of my cultural studies education. It is more than just desks, chairs, teachers, and students, where concepts and information is packaged—hopefully within some form of intentional pedagogical strategy—and delivered to students for their intellectual enrichment. Hidden within and amongst those material objects (at least to eyes not trained in socio-cultural analysis), I can observe a place where specific cultures are produced and experienced out of institutional and individual practices co-created by students and professors. Some experience the social practices and relations that get constructed in a class as events that happen ‘naturally,’ unproblematically, and automatically, ‘just as anyone does,’ they might say. People who share this view often believe this because the subject matter and its associated ontological and epistemological underpinnings correspond with the world view with which they arrived at class.

Meanwhile, another student may experience the same class in a radically different manner; she may wonder why no one is questioning the professor, because the knowledge presented runs so counter to her experience of the world. I witnessed an example of this during a Philosophy of Science course, where a student was speaking out about his experiences with severe ADHD and the medications he was required to take in order to be able to function from day to day. In this case, the professor was expressing a generality that children today are too quickly diagnosed with and medicated for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Though this exchange was not contentious, it did make me more wary of accepting generalities about social issues. In other words, a classroom is never simply, nor

straightforwardly, just a site of learning. Through the use of BCS ideas, I have come to see and recognize in my own experiences in the URI Kinesiology department the way in which a classroom can function as a site of struggle, a contested terrain where various groups struggle over whose ideas about the world are allowed or made to count, and whose get marginalized and/or overlooked. More specifically, I now recognize a classroom as a site struggle over of what constitutes ‘legitimate’ knowledge about human movement. And depending on which side one is positioned, the dominant or subordinate, a classroom can be experienced as comfortable or uncomfortable. The point is that this thesis is not merely a simple personal choice made in a social vacuum, but is itself a product of culture.

My experiences in the summer 2008 led me on an intellectual journey that drew me to cross over from originally wanting to become an exercise scientist as an undergraduate to wanting to become a Cultural Studies analyst as a graduate student. While the explicit project of this thesis is to examine how various forms of Kinesiological knowledge are valued within the everyday construction of the departmental culture, in a sense it is also my attempt at beginning to unpack, make sense of, and come to terms with, the story of my academic crossover and the experience of what it was like navigating the intellectual landscape as the sole PCS graduate student in an ES dominant Kinesiology department.

BCS work makes visible how cultural practices are shaped by overarching, specific socio-historical conditions, social contexts, institutional norms, and power relationships that are often invisible and too abstract for most people to recognize (Barker, 2008; Turner, 2003). Through every day, habitual institutional practices that

people perform everyday, social power is formed within a given social context such as a Kinesiology classroom. From a BCS perspective, the production of culture is inherently a political process (Barker, 2008; Hall, 1985; Turner, 2003). The formation of social norms in any culture always privileges those who embody those norms or whose social interests are served by them, while it simultaneously marginalizes alternative viewpoints and ways of being that do not reflect or willfully resist the cultural norms that organize social action in that given cultural context (Rabinow, 1984). The takeaway here is: cultural practices are socially constructed by people out of the material conditions available to them, including the social contexts and power relations that organize that context (Barker, 2008; Storey, 1993; Turner, 2003).

For instance, when I entered Dr. Kusz's KIN 278 class in the summer of 2008, I understood human movement *solely* to be a product of physiological, biochemical, and biological processes located within an individual's body because this was the way of understanding human movement—the positivistic science mode of understanding human movement—that was made normative in the majority of the classrooms of the URI department of Kinesiology when I arrived. This way of understanding human movement is, of course, dominant in part because science has been socially constructed in the Western world as the dominant way to understand how the world works (Denzin, 2001, Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). But I had also learned to adopt this positivist interpretive framework for understanding human movement as the foundational means through which a Kinesiologist *should* understand human movement because all my previous Kinesiology courses were founded on this epistemological view of human movement created by the ES-trained faculty in the

department. It must not be overlooked how this view of human movement is not a pre-determined or ‘natural’ aspect of a Kinesiology department, but rather a product of a social process; an undergraduate curriculum was created by Kinesiology faculty through an ongoing social process of evaluating the content of departmental curricula annually, which is unavoidably political as well (as I will explain in the following chapter).

So up to that point in my undergraduate education, it seemed ‘natural’ to me that what constituted the ‘real’ knowledge of human movement was based on a positivistic science standpoint, a viewpoint and way of knowing produced in the Kinesiological ES subfield. Yet these ideas about human movement, so often treated as the common sense way of knowing human movement in the URI Kinesiology department, came to shape what I believed to be the foundational knowledge of the field of Kinesiology by the time I entered KIN 278. But, in that class, this seemingly fundamental ‘Truth’ about how to understand human movement was subtly contested by Dr. Kusz and the physical cultural studies viewpoint he taught to our class throughout the semester. The result of this contestation for me was a broader, more inclusive view of what could be considered Kinesiological knowledge. This shift in my thinking—a shift in the meaning of what constitutes Kinesiological knowledge, and how I valued that knowledge—was a productive force that ultimately led me to change my focus from wanting to become an Exercise Scientist, to becoming a cultural critic trained in BCS.

What I did not know at that time was that this change in my Kinesiological specialization was not simply a shift from one way of knowing human movement to

another, but it involved a significant existential and identity shift as well. A shift not only confined to my identity as a Kinesiologist, but that, most unexpectedly, forced me to reimagine my social positions as a straight, white, American, male as well. This shift, in retrospect, was not something for which I was fully prepared. But this shift has been one of the most formative parts of my education as a graduate student, person, and citizen.

In particular, as I shifted from an ES student to a PCS one, I went from being a privileged member of the departmental community as an exercise science subject, to becoming a marginalized PCS/Kinesiological ‘other’ within the space of the department. Stated differently, my subject position within the departmental community shifted from being a part of the culturally dominant normative and majority group within the department to becoming a member of PCS subgroup who are a small minority in the department and whose way of knowing human movement is not only different from, but at times oppositional to, the positivistic science view of human movement that is cast as the normative way of doing Kinesiology in the department through small, daily acts of silent assumption and/or assertion. As this example tries to illuminate, culture is a dynamic social process that is unavoidably political and has real effects on the identities, experiences, and social relations of members of a cultural community.

Pre-URI: A Prior Self, Exploring Massachusetts

My family moved around a lot in the early to mid-1990s, when I was between the ages of 12-16. The change in scenery also came with a change in socioeconomic status from middle class to working class, a distinction most apparent the year we

lived on Cape Cod. It was there that I first listened to music from a CD while at a friend's house and was made aware by others of how I dressed differently. I wore mostly hand me downs from my two older and much larger brothers. In fact, at the time I was shorter than six out of the seven other members of my family. So, I am sure I looked quite funny in wrinkly button down shirts that swallowed my arms. Though, my experience living at the Cape has forever altered my choices in clothing. I would like to say that my 'choice' to dress down was a form of resistance, but as I look back it was more of an attempt to regain a sense of control over my inability to win the category of 'best dressed.' I carried this to an extreme when a few years later, I showed up at my brother's high school graduation dressed in the shabbiest clothes I could find, drawing the ire of my mother. The most significant realization I had at the Cape was how I went from being known on the whole as being a smart kid *and* an athlete, to being a smart kid that tried but failed to make any of the school sports teams. For the first time, I was the small kid who got bullied in the halls. This experience was the first noticeable split in the seamless notion of self I had previously carried with me from place to place.

Little did I know then that these experiences would help me to make sense of some of the feelings and experiences I encountered after announcing my allegiances to PCS over against ES.

We lived in Cape Cod for only a year before we moved to Monson, MA, the site of my fondest memories of high school. Even in hindsight, I hesitate to interrogate too thoroughly my time there. I hold it tightly as an example of my best self, when I had really great friends who loved me, when I set ambitious personal goals and

worked toward them, and when I started to learn about the rewards of building communities rather than hierarchies. I am comfortable critically mining my Monson memories to the extent that I can recognize how the lessons I learned about being different and getting bullied for it while at the Cape were something that stayed with me. Those lessons informed my interactions with my classmates, especially the social outcasts, at Monson and later in Barre, MA. Yet, it was in the basement of our rented house in Monson, MA that I fell in love with thinking, connecting, and creating, through the uncovering of new ideas. I read about Phineas Gage in Antonio Damasio's (1994) book, *Descartes' Error*. I read about black holes, time warps, and parallel universes. I was drawn to the transformative magic of ideas. For me, reading the thoughts of others was an intimate human connection, a form of telepathy that traversed social and historical contexts (times and places).

After two and a half years in Monson, our landlord decided to sell the house we were renting. In 1995, after nearly four years we made our way to Barre, MA the place we initially left for Cape Cod. I was back, yet it was all different, the people, the school, and me. While I could write much about this particular time, marked mostly by my confusion of sorting out what I wanted to do versus the pressure of living up to other's expectations of what I was supposed to do, the key development for me was not just that the head could be separated from the body as it was in Cape Cod, or that we have only a limited control over the turns our lives take, as in the case of Monson, but that our notions of self can be multiple, fragmented, and even contradictory.

Instead of a senior prom we had a formal dinner dance. Since I had moved to Barre, I was involved in Navy Junior Reserves Officers Training Corps (NJROTC).

By my senior year I was the company commander, the highest ranking student in the program. Yet, all year I had been telling the Navy recruiter that I wasn't interested in pursuing military service, even though I took the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB), a military placement exam which assesses the skills in a variety of technical categories of the test taker and determines which jobs s/he is qualified for in the military. At the time, I imagined that I had two distinct parts of my identity: the warrior and the pacifist. I viewed the warrior as my more base, less evolved, though essential nature as a person and the role of the pacifist in my psyche was to keep the warrior in check. I associated the pacifist with the intellectual, moral, and human side of me. Looking at it now, I can see how the mind body split manifested itself into two identities struggling to establish a coherent sense of self.

Getting back to the dinner dance, my oldest brother now in college and working at Filene's Basement offered to buy my outfit for the dance using his employee discount. While I was standing on the box getting fitted, my brother's co-worker asked me if I was going into the service like my brother. Matt answered for me, "No, he's a pacifist." It is hard to imagine that a few weeks later, I would be signing the papers for active duty in the US Navy.

I'll have that label back, please.

Hour 6: Thanks to COM 540

"Virtual Father"

I am still playing games
waiting for you.
To perform the action of my thoughts.
Like the comfortable days before the navy,
After high school, before cancer shut you down.
We found understanding there,

In that virtual world of Tomb Raider.

You labored like in life over the controls,
I puzzled over the tombs, hesitant at first with clues,
Laura Croft, our gaze, our manipulation, the womb
Giving life, finally to a 16 year relationship.

Sitting side by side on the couch,
But meeting for the first time inside the game,
Somehow things made sense there,
Well defined, yet surprising roles.

You let me guide you in this reality,
The skill and confidence in your hands
Leaping, crawling, and pushing
by my direction, solving the riddle.

I couldn't explain to you how I knew what to do,
it frustrated you, at first, the not knowing.
But I never wanted the controls when you offered,
I just enjoyed going through it with you.

Through the years I had too many questions
For your authority to last.
You tried to be everything, an unassailable monument.
I tried to be an iconoclast.

Yet, in the imaginary, bound by the interface,
We could abstract ourselves from history, context, and hierarchy.
Who we were individually became a seamless stream of impulses
That was right or wrong and ours.

Now hidden in those tombs is a memory of us,
Where the game brought an 'us' into being
Not as a singular artifact, but an ongoing process,
Beautiful moments of becoming.

I think of this and you now as my son sits on my lap,
Directing me to "catch the fish" in Sonic the Hedgehog.
He presses his cheek to mine,
It took 4 years for him to meet you.

Gladiator: The rise of Turkeyfist

I served from January of 2000 to June of 2004 on board the fast attack nuclear powered submarine USS San Juan (SSN 751). During my tour of duty, I experienced the military's response to the 9/11 attacks and participated in the 'shock and awe' opening of the second Gulf War. Needless to say, my experiences on the San Juan were varied and many. I will forever be proud of my membership in the submarine community and, in particular, as part of an outstanding crew. But, for the purposes of the account that follows, I had two aliases on the boat; Tommy Tough Nuts and Turkeyfist.

At first, the wrestling was playful, a way to mess around and pass the time. At least that is how I perceived it, but looking back I can see it as a way for squids to figure out the pecking order; one after another, people started testing me. Slowly, I developed a reputation within my division as a strong fighter. If I could describe one act that summed up the construction of my fighting reputation, it would be punching the iron bar.

Joey and I, for some reason, were the only ones in radio at the time, and we started going at it in the normal 'brotherly' manner. He picked up a four-foot, one-inch thick steel rod and was holding it with both hands out in front of him. The bar was held vertical, parallel to his spine. I am not sure what he was planning to do with it, but I didn't give him the chance to try anything. I snapped out a left jab and knuckles met steel. He wasn't expecting this so his grip on the rod was relatively loose and my jab was enough to knock it into his lips. At the time, I can't tell you what I was thinking. I don't know if I planned it out beyond the initial punching of the rod. But, I

do know that I never thought of saying, “Whoa, that’s too far.” Honestly, I am not trying to sound tough, but I think it is such a good illustration of the limits of paradigmatic thought; how employing certain modes of thinking determines the methods in which problems are met and simultaneously ignores solutions outside that mode of thinking. So, when I punched the bar, my solution to the problem was predicated on the logic of competition and masculine toughness and strength, which I eventually figured out is not as flawless or natural of a philosophy as it first appeared to me.

In the shipyard, I didn't interact with other divisions that much, so my reputation stayed local for the most part. When the San Juan finally got out of the shipyard and started going underway, things began to change. Boredom is the most common side effect of an underway, so there is a lot of fighting and wrestling around. When we deployed in Sept '02, I had achieved a certain stature. We fought in the absence of malice (though the consequences for the winners and losers were very real) almost daily within the division, but that was just practice for Saturdays.

Every Saturday we had to give the boat a thorough cleaning. Each division had an assigned area; ours was a bunk room called 21-man, which we affectionately re-christened the Coliseum. Sometimes we would have about 20 guys piled up down there going at it. I had allies in the A-gang division and we would pretty much destroy sonar and fire control on a weekly basis. What I started noticing was there were two types of guys on the boat. One type would hear of me and challenge me. The second sort would hear of me and roll over. I didn't know which one repulsed me more. Ironically, what I was really repulsed by was that I viewed each as being externally

motivated choices. It seemed weak on the one hand, to have to prove how tough one is and on the other hand, to submit to another so easily. The ones that wouldn't even try to challenge me, I respected less.

The whole impromptu weekly 'fight club' kind of snowballed on me. And I swear I was never consciously thinking of competing through fighting as a means to build my identity and status on the submarine. But, at the same time, I could have let others win, withdrawn from the situation, or found any number of other ways of crafting an identity for myself. At that time, I didn't even consider those alternatives. That shows how ingrained the desire to win the approval of other men—by trying to become 'The Man'—was in me. The first moment that drove this all home was when a guy offered a reward of \$500 to the person that would punch me in the face. I was looking over my shoulder a lot then.

What would you be thinking at this moment if were you me?

I was thinking about how to respond without losing my position as top dog. And there is the trap. When you begin to succeed at playing this game of performing hegemonic masculinity and your sense of self is derived solely from this sort of masculine contest, once you get to a certain point, it sure seems as if you have little choice but to keep playing at any cost. People are always coming for you, so you keep fighting. I could have let someone win, but I would have lost that prized look I got from them, I would have lost that manly respect.

But, at the same time, this game of competing to be 'top dawg' never satiates and extinguishes the male anxiety that led me to fight/compete in the first place. I learned this lesson when I actually became a leader by rank and title. I wanted to be a

good leader and have people follow me for my positive and supportive leadership style, but I could never determine if they followed me out of fear of physical harm or because they thought I was someone worth following.

Hour 7: The women in my academic life

When I think about Monson, it is the friendships I had with a group of young women that authors the sad smile as I relive what seemed like perfect moments. And I know, when I look back at my graduate experience, I will have some similar feelings toward Lisa Lynch and Kim Hensley Owens.

Lisa Lynch (2004) in writing *My Life in Football*, helped create one of the most memorable Kinesiology classes I ever took in KIN 475: Gender Issues in Sport and Physical Activity. Dr. Kusz had been trying to teach us some of the Foucauldian concepts of power, including the role of the examination and the panopticon in Foucault's theory of disciplinary, normalizing power. This article of Lynch's, a collection of narratives of her personal and familial experiences in relation to football, inspired an in depth discussion in which most of my classmates enthusiastically participated. In that discussion I learned a few things.

First, narratives that do not explicitly call upon theory or claim to advance a particular agenda can be a useful pedagogical tool to allow students to test out theoretical wings. One student identified with Lynch's subtle resistance to her brother's presumptive ownership of the toy National Football League helmets that came with their IHOP breakfasts by partially peeling off the sticker insignias that came with her meal. Then we all tried to figure out what was the meaning of Lynch's streaking naked across the Yale football field at night? Second, I learned about the

many layers of meaning that can be accessed through critical cultural study and through writing personal narratives. Reading *My Life in Football*, through the lens of Foucault's theoretical ideas, gave us access to a different layer of meaning to Lynch's writing. It made me think about all the novels and poems that I have read and how much of those same novels and poems I have never seen. Similarly, Lynch's provocative autoethnography⁸ taught me how the critical study of culture, enacted through a BCS optic, opened up and illuminated new layers of meaning in my everyday experiences both at URI and beyond. It allowed me to recognize that there really is nothing 'common' within a logic simply and straightforwardly described as 'common sense,' especially when one is in the midst of a heterogeneous social group. What gets defined as common sense is always specific to particular spaces, times, perspectives, people, and social interests.

And finally, I wanted my thesis to be informed by these new insights; she hailed that creative writer part of me.

I was a little worried when I first ventured outside of the Kinesiology department to attend Dr. Kim Hensley Owens' WRT 512: *Introduction to Rhetoric* class. I was painfully aware of my lack knowledge particular to the field of Rhetoric. To make matters worse, I cared a lot about my identity as a writer and feared being exposed as a wannabe by those that make writing their area of expertise. Yet what I encountered was without a doubt the most rewarding class I have ever taken. With

⁸ Autoethnography is a qualitative research method that finds alternative ways to say something about culture and society by using autobiography, narratives, self-reflexivity, and critical theory (Denzin, 2006).

that being said, I feel it is necessary to justify what I mean by rewarding. While I wasn't transformed by my experiences in WRT 512, like I was in KIN 278, 475, 478, and 578, it was the first time I was able to freely discuss PCS ideas and understandings of the world without having to argue and defend their validity. The students and Dr. Owens were particularly welcoming and excited by the idea of having someone from outside their department to offer a fresh perspective. This experience exposed to me in a way in had not clearly seen before the all too frequent reluctance in far too many of my Kinesiology colleagues to welcome and warmly embrace alternative ways of knowing about human movement, especially if these viewpoints challenged the orthodoxy of a positivistic science epistemology that gave them comfort, identity, status, and authority.

Specifically, I remember vividly a moment that really sums up why this class was such a good experience for me. I was commenting on reading Bahktin and being reminded of digital logic and components, specifically AND/OR/NOR gates, where the output of a gate is dependent on circuit conditions which act as inputs. As I was saying all this, I noticed that Dr. Owens was taking notes. This was also the class where I first heard the phrase, "intellectual crush." The phrase still brings a smile to my face every time I say it. It dawned on me then that I was among 'my people,' those that are still on fire for knowledge, the intellectually uninhibited.

I constructed this chapter around several organizing themes. While some themes, such as my investment in hegemonic masculinity, identity struggles, and contesting the idea of self-determination both in circumstance as well as the limiting

effects of my assumptions about the world are fairly evident, others may not appear as noticeable. A sense of movement runs the entirety of this thesis, where often the movement is in a circular pattern and with each pass a new layer of understanding is added. By starting with ‘Hour 5’ I am circling back to my history with the intention of developing a more complex understanding my how I perform my gender.

Also, looking at this thesis on the whole, I circle back to the beginning (Hour 1) to revisit the classroom followed by a reintroduction of BCS. At the physical level, I use personal stories as a child and teen of moving from place to place and learning from those experiences as a means of symbolically highlighting the educational value of my moving around campus to other departments. Again, I circle back in ‘Hour 6’ to find a new way of seeing and finding common ground with my step-father. All this movement between places, socioeconomic statuses, ideas of masculinity, academic disciplines, and subject positions serves as a useful metaphor of the rhizomatic labor that can go into doing cultural analysis that requires making articulations between seemingly disconnected and unrelated social events and memories in order to construct new ways of seeing and knowing the world, and in creating new realities and identities. Also, there are several instances where I touch on the invisibility of aspects of one’s cultural experiences, whether that is the invisibility of my white culture, masculinity, or of ideas that are deemed to be ‘common sense.’

But, it is through the application of these ideas to my life experiences and perceptions that I have developed the skills needed to analyze how various forms of Kinesiological knowledge are valued in the URI Kinesiology department because they all provided me with experiences and feelings that enabled me to make sense of my

differential treatment upon declaring myself a PCS master's student. For example, a key element of my experiences changing my specialization from exercise science to PCS is that I was rendered invisible and silent in the eyes of many with strong investments in exercise science ways of knowing. To put it bluntly, difference—in the form of different ways of understanding human movement—is not recognized and validated by the positivistic science oriented majority in the Kinesiology department at URI. And I will examine further in chapter 6 the times I experienced an active normalizing process that came to the fore when I would attempt to offer PCS inspired viewpoints in various public conversations both in and outside of formal Kinesiology classrooms. Of course, this was a normalizing process that, in most cases, was invisible to those social actors performing the disciplinary work.

CHAPTER 6

ANALYSIS

Hour 8: Ones and Zeroes

In September of 1990, I wouldn't have
Taken much notice of the world around me.
Meaning that the unique blue of a late summer sky
Cloudless with a feeling of gentle but firm forever
A canvas setting off the middle aged maple leaves,
Would have been just that, a background.
The sounds of the playground, rhythmic,
pah-ting of a bouncing basketball
metal squeaks of protest
from swing sets,
muted focus.

Sixth grade,
first day remembrance
boys shoulder to shoulder
Individuals at every angle of the arc
Chins to chests comparing and admiring
The Bo Jackson's or Jordan's, the newest
That Nike and Reebok had to offer.
No two pairs the same,
Standing out was in
Unspoken norm

Action shots from the barrel of a Canon
Recasting and reaffirming the American white man,
As a ruggedly sophisticated cowboy cityslacker
Andre Agassi, "The image of a rebel"
The extraordinary in the ordinary
With the new autofocus feature,
Elevating amateurs to artists
Image being everything

In September 2010 I'm looking while
Standing in line at Bagelz, absorbing
mixed aromas of coffee, pastries and
toasted bread goods. I feel sorry for
the baristas? sweating and straining
To serve, and hear consumer orders
Amidst whirring caffeine machines.
Stretched out before me a queue of

college women, dressed in uniform
North Face fleece, stretch pants, and
Ugg boots. It is hard to tell two apart
All these ones in a row with chins to
Chest, working with their phones
Processed individuals, being told
how to invest their life's energies
by an adorable e-trade man baby.
Andre Agassi long since lost those
rebel locks. But, I can still through
Instagram make a past hyper-real.

Analysis

In the analysis that follows, I use a British Cultural Studies (BCS) as well as a Foucauldian optic to illuminate and critically examine everyday practices, discourses, and attitudes that undergird or give a distinctive and discernible structure to the culture of the URI Department of Kinesiology. One notable goal of the BCS mode of studying culture is to shed light on the complex social process through which a set of everyday cultural and discursive practices produce a specific hierarchy of knowledge and power (Barker, 2008; Storey, 1993; Turner, 2003). I argue that power relations in the URI Kinesiology department are inextricably related to struggles over meaning and value given to specific forms of knowledge and ways of being of a Kinesiologist. More specifically, I want to use BCS ideas and concepts to examine the question: What counts as 'real' or legitimate Kinesiological knowledge in the URI Department of Kinesiology in 2010-2011? Or, stated differently, what are the everyday cultural practices that enable specific ways of 'doing Kinesiology' to be more highly valued than others? And what are the social effects of this invisible value structure on the relations between various members of the Kinesiology community, particularly, someone like myself—a Physical Cultural Studies (PCS) master's student—whose

way of ‘doing Kinesiology’ was often treated by other community members as being less valued than the dominant way of doing Kinesiology within the department—those oriented by positivist, quantitative science, and grounded in physiological, biological, and biochemical bases?

For many people who belong to the normative social group in a given cultural place, the everyday discursive and cultural practices that enable certain relations of power between community members to be produced may be invisible. Because these relations of power are often invisible to those who are a part of the normative or dominant group, much of my labor as a cultural critic in writing this thesis has been spent trying to create a clever enough argument and amass evidence to convince the normative social group, which I argue is the members of our departmental community who identify with the specialization of exercise science and exercise physiology, that my interpretations of the implicit knowledge-based norms of our department are valid.

Denzin (1994) describes the resistance to qualitative studies as follows:

The academic and disciplinary resistance to qualitative research illustrate the politics embedded in this field of discourse. The challenges to qualitative research are many. Qualitative researchers are called journalists, or soft scientists. Their work is termed unscientific, or only exploratory, or entirely personal and full of bias. It is called criticism and not theory, or it is interpreted politically, as a disguised version of Marxism or humanism (19).

In fact, I find Denzin’s quote here particularly informative because when I began scheduling interviews at the start of this project, one exercise scientist quipped, “Are you going to try and turn us all into Marxists?” Of course, I could have chosen not to concern myself with trying to convince exercise scientists that BCS ways of knowing the social, historical, cultural and political forces and conditions influencing human movement and qualitative methodologies such as autoethnography should be taken

seriously in the study of human movement, and that they should be something they value if they truly seek their goals of promoting health and physical activity among populations deemed ‘unhealthy’ or ‘unfit.’ But, following an ideal of BCS work, I was compelled to study the politics of knowledge construction in the URI Kinesiology department because I am interested in promoting social change and justice, which in this case, I conceptualize as trying to construct a bridge across that paradigmatic steel curtain that invisibly, but materially seems to organize the department’s intellectual culture (Andrews, 2008; Barker, 2008; Denzin, 1994, 2001, 2005; Kretchmar, 2008; McKay, Gore, and Kirk, 1990; Richardson, 1994).

The tensions felt across the various subdisciplines, which comprise Kinesiology departments in unique arrays across the United States was the focus of Kretchmar’s (2008) work, “The Utility of Silos and Bunkers in the Evolution of Kinesiology.” In this article, Kretchmar offers a history of how Kinesiology departments became organized into ‘silos’ and ‘bunkers.’ They did so in order to legitimize and add depth to a field of study—sport, exercise, ‘gym,’ and today, human movement—that traditionally wasn’t as highly valued within academia because it was often focused on studying bodies and leisure activities often deemed to be ‘not serious’ (as they are imagined in opposition to work) in relation to fields that focused on ‘real’ and ‘serious’ topics related to work and being oriented around ‘the mind.’ McKay, Gore, Kirk (1990) note in another account of the historical evolution of Physical Education departments to become Kinesiology departments, that many Physical Educators, in a move made to attempt to achieve more academic credibility for their field, often attempted to connect physical education research and teaching

with positivistic, quantitative science and its professional status and capital. Today, the sociology of sport and its subfield of PCS faces a crisis of survival due to the ever increasing value placed on the positivistic quantitative mode of studying human movement within Kinesiology departments and universities as a whole (Andrews, 2008).

In the face of the ever expanding ES silo within the Kinesiology department, it is important to consider how everyday discursive and cultural practices that enable certain relations of power to exist between community members are rendered invisible, because people will more and more regard these practices as being ‘just the way things are done.’ As Storey—borrowing the ideas of Barthes—explains, everyday cultural practices within a given place, like an academic department, can work to mythologize particular ways of being and relating to the world that are considered ‘normal’ in that cultural place.

In passing from history to nature, myth acts economically: it abolishes the complexity of human acts...it organizes a world which is without contradictions because it is without depth, a world wide open and wallowing in the evident, it establishes a blissful clarity: things appear to mean something by themselves. (Storey citing Barthes, 1993:82)

The important process at work for Barthes is how the historical and political struggles over ways of knowing and being get lost, or ‘mythologized,’ as one naturalizes the everyday acts and relations of institutional life and asserts that those acts ‘mean something by themselves.’ Part of the work of cultural criticism is to demystify the process through which particular forms of Kinesiological knowledge are made to matter through the everyday labor and ‘common sense’ discursive and social relations of departmental members, faculty, students, and staff.

Stories of the history of the URI Kinesiology department

Through conversations with long standing faculty and staff members, I have learned there is a rich history and evolution of what sorts of knowledge were held as normative or dominant in the department through the years. As these stories have been told to me, early on, the study of human movement took place in a department segregated between Physical Education for men and Dance for women. Over time the two programs merged, but not without friction. Exercise science later emerged as a new related academic field to Physical Education and for a time was marginalized in relation to the still dominant Physical Education faction of the department. But, as a sign of the growing stature of ES within the department, the hiring of more ES faculty, and the growing recognition within the culture of the department that teaching and researching about exercise science was different in significant ways than teaching and researching about physical education, the department was re-named, “Physical Education & Exercise Science.” Later, as the story is often told, a new cohort of human movement scholars in Tootell Hall agreed to change the name of the department to what it is now known as, “Kinesiology,” in order to better align our department with a trend in the field where former Physical Education programs were choosing to identify themselves under the multidisciplinary field of Kinesiology.

When one looks at this longer history of the department is it quite easy to reveal that everyday, habitual acts, social relations and discourses within a culture do not just naturally occur, nor are their meanings self-evident. In fact, these everyday aspects of the departmental culture are a product of a long historical social process that makes a culture day after day, as seemingly mundane social practices are repeated,

reproduced by others, and usually go unquestioned as simply ‘the ways things have always been done.’ In other words, members within a cultural community like an academic department construct a particular way of being in the world and of knowing the world—what Barthes might call a myth—that operates as the cultural ‘common sense’ or what many come to know as a ‘natural’ way of being in a given space and time.

For members whose social interests and ways of knowing and being are affirmed and recognized by the social norms of that cultural place, they may rarely notice, identify, or even be able to verbally detail and explain the very existence or specific content of these ways of knowing and being because they simply regard them as ‘common sense.’ For them, these social norms are most often described as just ‘the way things are.’ BCS practitioner, Paul Willis states this idea more eloquently when he writes, “It is one of the fundamental paradoxes of our social life that when we are at our most natural, our most *everyday*, we are also at our most cultural; that when we are in roles that look the most obvious and given, we are actually in roles that are constructed, learned and far from inevitable” (Willis, 1979:185).

Yet, for those who participate in a culture but do not represent or always fit within its dominant social norms or value system, this form of common sense is not so ‘common,’ nor is it invisible or imperceptible as they exist on a day-to-day basis. In fact, for these members of the culture, they often bump into and experience social, cultural, or political ‘friction’ when their comments (ways of knowing) or actions (ways of being) interrupt, challenge, or rub up against the ‘invisible’ boundaries that

constitute, and are constituted by, this particular form of common sense and its attendant social norms and values.

For a BCS analyst, the goal of critical cultural study is to illuminate the social norms and values that people within a culture make meaningful (Barker, 2008; Turner, 2003; Storey, 1993). It is assumed that the norms and values of any given culture are always produced out of complex social interactions and cultural histories, themselves always already the result of past and on-going political struggle (or a struggle over finite resources or specific ways of representing and imagining the world). The norms, values, and common sense that are created within a culture by its members usually serve the social interests of some (those who then enjoy social advantages and benefits) over others. These dominant norms and values can also frame what gets said, where it gets said, and how it is allowed to matter within a culture.

As an exercise-science-undergraduate-turned-physical-cultural-studies-graduate-student in the URI Department of Kinesiology I have experienced from a particular, unique position—at various times being a part of the normative group and then becoming an ‘other’ within the department—how a culture’s ‘common sense,’ norms, and value structure can enact social inequities, whether intended or not. More concretely, my unique experience travelling through my URI Kinesiology education has revealed to me the uneven ways in which particular ways of knowing human movement and of ‘doing Kinesiology’ are more highly valued than others.

As these norms and value structure of the department are enacted through everyday discursive and relational practices performed regularly and unknowingly by most members of the community, I want to reiterate that I believe this cultural milieu

is largely produced without conscious or ill intention. But in the spirit and hope of promoting greater inclusion and equity in how the various ways in which URI Kinesiologists ‘do Kinesiology,’ my critical analysis here of how our department culture is produced and reproduced daily hopes to make key aspects of this social process visible so that community members might recognize the dissonance that exists between the department’s official representations in 2010-11 which suggest a warm embrace and full inclusion of the epistemological variety that goes under the umbrella of Kinesiology,

Kinesiology is an academic field where several disciplines intersect to comprehensively study all aspects of human movement—from the cellular level to the level of global physical cultures.

Whether it involves answering the present obesity crisis by promoting healthy exercise habits across the lifespan, teaching lifetime fitness to youth via physical education, making participation in physical activity more inclusive, or cultivating sport’s capacity to unite people across perceived cultural differences and social barriers, the Kinesiology faculty are working with others across academic disciplines and professional fields to create and disseminate the knowledge needed to meet the health-related challenges facing our global community today and in the future (University of Rhode Island Department of Kinesiology, 2014)

and my experiences as a ‘minority’ member of this department as I transitioned from being an Exercise science student to a Physical Cultural Studies one where I experienced having PCS ideas ridiculed, marginalized, and challenged at every utterance by fellow students and even some faculty. So, one goal of this thesis is to raise community members’ consciousness of the more subtle ways in which the everyday practices of many, including those who identify with the PCS subfield, in the URI Kinesiology departmental culture serve to make a positivistic scientific/exercise science oriented way of doing Kinesiology the unspoken, taken for granted, and ‘real’

or legitimate way of performing Kinesiological academic work, so that the normative means of producing Kinesiological knowledge might be disrupted and modified to be less one sided in its orientation.

But, in the analysis that follows, I offer my reading of the URI Kinesiology department crafted largely from my own observations and experiences as an Exercise Science-undergraduate-turned-Physical Cultural Studies-graduate-student. This reading focuses on how Kinesiological work and knowledge is imagined and constructed in the formal public and informal private spaces of what is known as ‘the URI Kinesiology department.’ My analysis is organized in part spatially by examining how a particular way of ‘doing Kinesiology’ emerged through people’s actions in various spaces including the departmental common areas, Kinesiology classrooms, and offices of Kinesiology faculty, staff, and graduate students.

Let me be crystal clear from the start that my goal is *not* to critique individuals within the department for their actions. I make every effort to maintain the anonymity of the community members whom I’ve interviewed and with whom I’ve interacted. Instead, and consistent with the premises and goals of BCS work that analyzes the politics of cultural discourses and their social effects, my aim in this analysis is to illuminate the unspoken norms, knowledges, and values of the URI Kinesiology department as they get enacted and materialize through the everyday cultural practices of the various members of this community. I argue that it is through the unspoken, habitual practices that are largely overlooked, taken for granted, and largely invisible to many members of the URI Kinesiology community that Kinesiology at URI is practiced in a narrow and only superficially inclusive manner so that a particular ES

way of ‘doing Kinesiology’ gets established as the default and normative way of imagining and practicing Kinesiology in the department.

I perform this analysis here out of a felt-need of trying to exist in a departmental culture where I have observed and experienced personally how a critical socio-cultural mode of studying human movement is regularly downplayed, diminished, ridiculed, or even dismissed. Indeed, I have observed and experienced how it is difficult for a Kinesiologist trained in a PCS perspective to live comfortably as a member of this community, to have one’s perspective acknowledged, and to be equally valued as a member of the department. To be a PCS Kinesiology student in a Kinesiology department that may superficially appear to be epistemologically inclusive, but whose everyday norms are constituted through a particular positivist scientific view of human movement that is largely ahistorical, asocial, and apolitical is to experience life as constantly swimming into the current, constantly having one’s ideas or values uncritically questioned, ridiculed, discounted, or even ignored. In sum, my existential experience of being a Kinesiologist whose knowledge of human movement is predicated on the premises of critical, self-reflexive, radically contextual, qualitative research (the premises of the work of PCS) shares much in common with the experiences of members of any non-normative or subaltern social group—alienation, frustration, self-doubt, and anger that comes from recognizing and living in an alternative social reality than the dominant or normative social group; an experience marked by seeing most clearly and obviously that which is invisible to all those who consider themselves to be part of the ‘normal’ or dominant social group.

Hour 9: Rhetoric of Tombstones

From a distance I regarded two cars speeding,
Along a thin slip of dirt cutting through the cemetery grass.
Following the sedans with bewildered eyes
Headstones wraith-like in their blur as dust clouds rise,
Choking off both rest and peace.
I sensed elemental unease as
a fundamental law of the cosmos'
No speed above solemn, was being broken.

I wonder at the irreverence shown,
the reckless escape of a place of permanent destination
In which everyone has a headstone with which to collide.
A place to deposit our own memories,
In brown earth leaving the rest
To posterity and the rhetoric of tombstones.

Driven is the man who stares at the wall,
Meticulously hung scientific publications,
The silver eyes of thumbtacks reflecting back
While holding the past in place.
deeds forming ranks across the bulletin board,
each a trophy, each highlighting
the empty spaces of an incomplete row.
Each a whisper of fleeting relevance,
As the march of progress inexorably speeds away.
He's satisfied with being unsatisfied
Reaching down to apprehend the bones of reality
Articulating himself to the world.

Is it happiness? Why I'm sitting here.
Is it joy? That I sit in idleness.
How much is my choice? That this place
This little office has become sacred.
Talking with my Socrates and brick by brick
Erecting my own tomb in the catacombs
Writing on the wall these precious thoughts
hiding in the safety of an assured if only imagined future.
Yet, it is only here
where certain parts of me are allowed to live
to all the world's unknowing.
My bones will hold only a small amount
of my story's marrow.
The rest is breath not stolen by the wind.

On Sacred Ground

I lightly knock on Kyle's office door as a preamble to attempting to push down on the door handle. I've come to expect the handle to be unyielding as it tends to be in a perpetually locked state. Trying to be polite, I quickly insert my key into the lock so he doesn't have to get up to let me in. I have become self-conscious about inconveniencing folks in the department, which wasn't always the case. I used to think nothing of walking into a professor's office to ask a question or run a thought by them. That was before though. Before, I 'went to the dark side,' as one faculty member put it, and seemingly forfeited my claim to be intelligible to those who occupy what I have come to understand as the privileged norm; the exercise science norm. It occurs to me then, that displaying my access to his private space may not be polite in the least.

But, in a way, I feel as though this is my space too now and I don't want to be locked out of it.

We greet each other in practiced casual tones as neither one of us are willing to admit to retreating behind a locked door. Yet, we are subtly and not so subtly corralled here by the entrenchment of a way of thinking antithetical to our own. This way of thinking also erects a social structure that over time, step by step, brought Kyle and me together.

Just prior to me knocking on Kyle's door a member of the Kinesiology staff member asked me if I was "going into the tomb?" I replied. "What do you mean?" "You and Oliver go in there and don't come out for hours!" she exclaimed. "That's because it's our sanctuary," I replied. It isn't one of our own choosing though.

Speaking of PCS

A discourse is a recurring pattern of language about a phenomenon; it is a portrayal of reality, a world view that becomes part of the normative understandings that frame and shape how the phenomenon is to be understood. Dominant discourses tacitly and explicitly construct reality by governing what is said and what remains unsaid. Thus, privileged discourses sanction specific human interests and regulate human actions because once a discourse becomes institutionally privileged, others are effectively marginalized. Those who dominate political discourses have considerable influence on social policies and practices. (Sage, 1993:154-5)

The first day of class in KIN 278, Dr. Kusz asked us to write on an index card what we had heard about his class. I wrote down the only thing that I had heard; that he didn't believe in the obesity epidemic. At the time, I could only guess at why he had us do this exercise. In my experiences at URI both before and after KIN 278, it was the only time a professor seemed concerned about what was being said about her/his class to the extent that s/he found it necessary to identify and confront the gossip of students. What I would later learn as I made my way through my undergraduate and graduate work in the Kinesiology department and especially as I turned from ES to PCS, that much of his labor is spent arguing the validity of a PCS perspective due to the normativity of ES knowledge within the Kinesiology department. Ironically, validity does not fit into a PCS way of seeing the world. Instead, qualitative researchers like Kyle have different methods for "evaluating their work, including verisimilitude, emotionality, personal responsibility, an ethic of caring, political praxis, multivocal texts, and dialogues with subjects" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005:12).

The Kinesiology department normalizes ES and at the same time 'others' PCS through the assertion and assumption that ES knowledge, constituted by the hard

sciences, and a methodology with its emphasis on quantification and causality is the only way to know and study human movement in the field of Kinesiology. My first encounter with the normative force of ES knowledge in the URI Kinesiology department was when I tried to add an extra layer onto an existing ES and Nutrition study being jointly run by an URI Exercise Science professor and a Nutrition professor. I was recommended to the study's Principal Investigator (PI) by a Kinesiology lecturer to be a research assistant. Just prior to the beginning of 2008 academic year and just after taking KIN 278, I asked the PI if I could write a paper investigating whether or not the methods the study used to effect weight loss by the participants would be economically feasible for the target population. I readily grant that at this time, I had a limited sociological imagination, but I was doing my best to integrate the knowledge I had gained from all my Kinesiology classes in a way that set me apart from my peers. I naively thought that the professors and lecturers teaching and researching under the umbrella of Kinesiology all drank from the same well of knowledge. So, I was surprised at the response, "I don't know how you would quantify that."

This response was unexpected. I thought I would be seen as a go-getter and given the green light. I thought: what did the PI have to lose, since it would be my labor? The PI's speech act was the first time I had rubbed up against the ES norm of what constituted valued knowledge within the department, although I didn't realize the implication of the response at the time. But looking back I am struck, not by the assumption that one must quantify research findings in order for them to be valid and intelligible, but that I wasn't steered back to Dr. Kusz for advice. In contrast, when I

would ask the same Exercise Scientist questions about muscle fiber types, I was directed to another Exercise Scientist, “who had forgotten more about muscle fiber types than this professor had ever known” who could better answer my questions.

In this example, ES knowledge was represented as a sort of community knowledge within the department that was valued and shared albeit unequally depending on the specializations of fellow ES faculty. But, my question with its inherent social underpinnings revealed certain limits in this one Kinesiology faculty member’s training as to what counts as Kinesiological knowledge. I don’t imagine for a minute that the response, “I don’t know how you would quantify that,” was said with the intention of erecting barriers to my budding sociological imagination. I think it was a statement of the type of knowledge—in this case, exercise physiological and quantitative knowledge—that was meaningful to this particular ES professor. Moments like this—which were rather ordinary—I think, reveal how certain Kinesiological knowledges are valued differentially within the department. Questions about exercise science topics and/or positivistic, quantitative science issues offered to faculty or fellow graduate students frequently led to more questions and social connections within the department, while socio-cultural, political, or historical questions died on the vine and left one rather isolated with their ‘unusual’ or ‘unique’ thought. One Kinesiology professor used a strategy of ‘devil’s advocate’ to police the boundaries of which types of knowledge were considered legitimate.

After a presentation on Freeman’s (2010) article, “No Child Left Behind and the Denigration of Race,” I had to answer multiple questions focused on the veracity of the arguments Freeman made, which in and of itself wasn’t an uncomfortable

moment. But, the ‘devil’s advocate’ strategy was seemed to only be employed when PCS grounded research was presented. The questions focused mostly on the qualifications of the researcher to make the claims Freeman made. Such questions as “How can he know that?” worked to discredit and devalue this type of PCS knowledge I presented. In contrast, positivistic quantitative science oriented presentations, where discussed with questions such as, “How could this study have been better?” and “What would you have done different?” These questions do not call into question the legitimacy of the type of research, but were seen as teaching moments to aid students in thinking about and presenting scientific journal articles.

These experiences are some of the informal and subtle ways that a knowledge hierarchy was constructed on an everyday basis within the department. This sort of experience can have a lasting impact on the type of knowledge to which students of URI’s Kinesiology department are exposed and which knowledges are portrayed as most important or crucial. But, it seems that the failure to refer or redirect me to speak with Dr. Kusz about my question is a symptom of the paradigmatic steel curtain that exists within the department so that the study of human movement remains oriented by the ontological and epistemological assumptions and starting points of the exercise science positivists.

The normativity of an ES view in the department was also frequently established in speech acts that used humor to make light of PCS ideas, assumptions, and viewpoints. The first time I witnessed the use of humor as a marginalizing force downplaying the value of a PCS perspective was during my first semester as a graduate student. Oliver Rick, the very first URI Kinesiology PCS graduate student,

was giving a presentation about his thesis project in a graduate class. Part of his presentation covered the constructivist notion that multiple realities exist in the world; the idea that an individual's understanding of reality is based on one's perspective, itself the complex product of one's experiences, education (both formal and informal), standpoint, and culture. This basic premise—that the social world is constructed by people, including even how we are taught to perceive the world through the limits of language and discourse—that for a PCS student is foundational for understanding how 'common sense' in a culture gets socially constructed, was met by a Kinesiology professor commenting, "In my reality I don't have credit card debt, so I guess I don't have to pay them."

This casually dismissive response of a basic premise of qualitative research and social and cultural criticism might be easily overlooked or understood if it had come from a fellow graduate student experiencing anxiety as s/he encounters a new epistemology. For instance, I recall a moment when a fellow graduate student told me, "you Foucault-ed my ass!" when I attempted to relate some of Foucault's ideas to our conversation topic. But when this sort of response comes from a tenure-track Kinesiology faculty member it needs to be understood in a different light, as carrying a heavier weight and meaning. I argue that the comment needs to be understood as a means of staking out or establishing the normative boundaries for what sort of knowledge can be constituted as legitimate Kinesiological knowledge in the URI Kinesiology department. It should be noted that this comment was the only such 'joking' comment to follow any of the students' mock thesis presentations that took place within this class that all of my graduate student cohorts were required to take.

All of the other thesis presentations—all made by students whose training was grounded in exercise science—were met with serious, respectful discussion about the projects.

Another interesting part of this moment and interaction was the way in which the PCS student, Oliver, responded, almost defensively, by feeling compelled to take more time to lay out this basic idea of social construction of reality which grounds his thesis project so that it could be better understood by those primarily trained in exercise scientific ways of knowing the world. This moment illuminates the extra work required of PCS students and faculty to have their ideas and perspective taken seriously within departmental relations. It also shows how students, in this case, graduate students subtly learn from this professor that the validity and value of PCS scholarship can be questioned and even ridiculed. Finally, the moment also reveals how exercise science research premised on positivist and empiricist assumptions is the ‘real’ or ‘legitimate’ Kinesiology research in the department.

Perhaps this joke was made by this Kinesiology professor because the ideas of Oliver’s thesis were outside his/her area of expertise, so s/he could not offer any thoughtful commentary on his thesis topic. But this seemingly mundane act, likely made without any ill intent or malice, is an excellent starting point for exemplifying how PCS ways of doing Kinesiological study are marginalized, dismissed and diminished publicly through mundane, everyday acts, and thereby enable positivistic science ways of ‘doing Kinesiology’ to be established as the ‘common sense,’ real, legitimate, or authentic way of ‘doing Kinesiology.’ Little did I know then that the

incident was a foreshadowing of what was in store for me in the next year when I would begin my process of executing and writing my PCS thesis project.

September 1, 2010: Prelude to the Faculty Meeting Presentation

This morning I altered my route to the graduate office because I didn't want to walk by all that glass. I have become suspicious of windows ever since I learned about Foucault and surveillance in KIN 475. The conference room in Suite P at Independence Square has a wall of glass that filters out most sound so that the gaze becomes the primary and unavoidable means of communication between those in the conference room and passersby. So, I refused to participate in the awkwardness of walking by a field of eyes with forced ease. A consideration that still feels new for me. It was only last year when in my excitement of starting a new year that I skipped up and down the very same passageways.

For a long time, when I entered the building I would turn left and head up the adjacent, main stairwell and walk through the front door of the office suite for the department without hesitation. I looked forward to the happy greetings—in and of itself a productive normative force, made all the more powerful by the good feelings they invoked in me—to which I became accustomed as an undergraduate ES student and presumed ES graduate student who, several times, was marked by Exercise Science faculty as a 'top student' or "my, yes man," as one faculty member once called me affectionately. The latter exchange ended on a sour note, because I took the label of 'yes man' differently than it was intended. It was supposed convey the excitement this ES professor felt for having me as his teaching assistant (TA). But, I

took it to mean he thought I would just go along with whatever he wanted me to do, a response I regret and partially attribute to my rising anxiety regarding how I would be perceived once I made known my intentions to pursue PCS for my graduate study.

But, today, like more and more of my days since declaring myself to be a PCS graduate student, was different. I can best relate the experience to the anxiety, uncertainty, and fragile confidence I felt and attempted to manage before warm-ups for my high school basketball games. Then, I would not take any outside jumpers in order to avoid developing any preconceptions of whether I was ‘on’ or not. This time, I purposefully avoided my normal route because I was anxious and afraid of what I might read in the body language of those who represented the departmental norm of positivistic and quantitative exercise science through the glass. Similarly, I didn’t want to present to the faculty thinking they are with or against me. Yet, this angst I felt on this day and that I attempt to describe here is itself a product and symptom of the normalization of ES knowledge in the URI Kinesiology department because an ES graduate student wouldn’t have had to make a presentation to the faculty to seek their approval for the nature and method of inquiry.

I would like to say I was prepared and ready for anything on the day I had to present my thesis proposal to the department. In hindsight, I can see the shaky suppositions on which my confidence was founded. I can see that my preliminary grasp of PCS and neoliberalism was strong enough to have great meaning to me, but I lacked the dexterity with the ideas that comes with experience to express in palatable terms the types of connections I wanted to investigate between the popularization of neoliberalist ideologies in American society and how they were manifesting in some

of practices, norms, values, and ideologies of departmental matters, especially to those for whom PCS and neoliberalism were unfamiliar topics. Also, at the time, my wife was out of state for work leaving me to host my Dad visiting from Texas and take care of our 2 year old son. So, it was easy for me to convince myself that I was just going through the motions of due politics, where my being asked to explain my study was just a matter of performing a form of academic professionalism necessary to get to their questions and concerns and their vote on whether or not I would be able to pursue my proposed study. More importantly, I still thought that I was held in high esteem by the faculty, so some of the flaws in presentation might be overlooked, which they were.

I sat outside the conference room awaiting 10am the scheduled time for my presentation; I was apprehensive about how it would be received. So, I wore my western shirt untucked, a conscious attempt to dress down, to remember that masculine working class background. I wanted to show resistance to the corporate culture I perceived as organizing the dominant culture of the department particularly as I recall how I used dress to own my working classness in Cape Cod. But more than that, I wanted to reclaim at least symbolically my masculinity, which I felt was threatened by the feminization of PCS and to put a face on it, Dr. Kusz, in the department. In this case, I am using feminization to mean, made lower than, submissive to, and open to public ridicule and criticism from students and faculty alike, sometimes in the presence of both. I carry guilt for not defending him in these situations, as I still sought their approval.

Perhaps, this fear I carried with me is a projection of Dr. Kusz's own feelings about how my project will be received. But, after last semester's failed attempt to merge exercise science and cultural studies under one project and the appeal not to take the traditional research methods class oriented around quantitative measures and the scientific method, I knew enough to be worried.

To be or not to be committed

I wish I could say that once I made my initial decision to pursue the PCS track in graduate school, that I was steadfast in my decision. But, I wasn't. I knew I wanted to be different from my peers, though not necessarily outside the circle of ES graduate students and work. I made a conscious effort not to declare too loudly or too publicly that I had selected something other than ES on my graduate application. I say 'something other', because when I was filling out the online application there wasn't an option to choose PCS, so I selected psychosocial aspects of physical activity as the closest representative of my intentions. Getting back to my point, I wasn't 100% sure that I was going to stick with my initial decision, partly because I enjoyed the weight and authority of being known as a scientist, an ideal that was reinforced through the Kinesiology department's privileging ES knowledge above all other ways of knowing and learning about human movement and partly because I wanted to use cool stuff like the electron microscope. I remember liking being surrounded by sophisticated devices in the Nutrition lab when I was learning to process blood samples as an undergrad. But, mostly I kept quiet about my choice of a PCS specialization because I was scared of the consequences for studying with Dr. Kusz, whose views and research were openly ridiculed by students and often openly dismissed by faculty.

The frustrating thing about writing about whether or not the Kinesiology department's faculty and students dismissed the ideas of PCS was that it often was done in subtle ways like ridiculing some of the non-normative PCS ideas Dr. Kusz expressed within the department—whether formally in his classes, or informally in conversations with other faculty and students. Or, it could take place through a moment of intended praise for Dr. Kusz—which I actually only heard once from an ES professor--“He’s really respected in his field, isn’t he?” Or, it emerged as I embarked on this thesis project when one a senior faculty member advised me that I tell folks that I am not a mouthpiece for Dr. Kusz if I hoped to be able to interview Kinesiology faculty. All these examples highlight the subtle ways I learned through my socialization within the department to downplay my association with PCS ideas and even, at times, Dr. Kusz. While these moments are some concrete examples of how PCS ideas can be dismissed and made suspicious, they don’t capture the more frequent pauses in speech, silences, or endings of a conversation that took place when I attempted to introduce PCS ideas into a formal or informal conversation with faculty or fellow students. They also don’t fully capture the utter silence of PCS work that I encountered in all Kinesiology spaces except his classrooms and office. So, instead of just doing what I love, PCS with an emphasis on Science and Technology Studies, and finding a place where I could excitedly try out and discuss these new ideas I was learning to apply to my work and life, I had to try to find other ways to fit into the department. And I often retreated into the ‘the Tomb’ to seek out conversation, community, and relief.

So my interest in ‘bench top’ science coupled with my hidden desire to have a too-good-an-opportunity-to-pass-up excuse for switching to an ES specialization led me to ask some Kinesiology department faculty members during a meeting of graduate assistants for more opportunities to develop these skills. One exercise scientist responded by saying, “Why would you want to do that? It’s boring. You do that when you are working on your PhD.” Another exercise scientist told me that s/he was afraid I was going to ask to do a study utilizing the electron microscope, which would have been expensive to use. I was disappointed in these reactions, but looking back I can see it as a pattern of interactions in which I consistently tried to find ways of proving my uniqueness, intelligence, and superiority over my fellow graduate students, even as I was wavering in my PCS decision, not out of a lack of passion, but a felt lack of acceptance. This quest to be unique as well as accepted fed my conviction that a master’s thesis could be world changing for me.

Like the scientist in my poem *Rhetoric of Tombstones*, I am compelled to do more, be more than, and make my mark on the world. I can’t point to any one reason for it, other than to consider it an amalgamation of my life experiences and identity as an American white man who is heavily invested in the heroic. The part of me I like the least, and try the most to hide is my arrogance in believing that I am like Cool Hand Luke, “a natural born world shaker.” So, when fellow graduate students and PhDs would say, “It’s only a master’s degree.” I took it as a challenge to prove them wrong. Later, I would go so far to ask Dr. Kusz to treat me like a PhD candidate in my writing and thinking, which turned out to be quite humbling.

So, when an exercise science professor came to me near the end of my first semester of graduate school asking me if I would like to help coordinate a study, I saw an opportunity. First, the fact that this exercise scientist approached me about coordinating an exercise science study meant that word hadn't gotten out about my chosen PCS specialization. Second, it felt good to be sought after by someone I perceived as a rising exercise science star, because of the multiple funded studies in which s/he was involved and the number of graduate students s/he employed. Finally, I felt that my relationship with this exercise scientist and his/her belief in my abilities would work in my favor in order to try something that I thought would be groundbreaking.

I wanted to combine both ES and PCS into one thesis. In a way, the following is my "I can eat fifty eggs!" statement to the Kinesiology department as it outlines a never been done before thesis. Here is how my proposal read:

“Justin Payne & Kyle Kusz
Kinesiology Department
December 15, 2009

Recasting the Paradigm

Personal Statement:

"The whole of science is nothing more than a refinement of everyday thinking." Albert Einstein

Throughout my undergraduate experience I was consistently aware of the compartmentalization of knowledge in the various departments of study. Few if any of the classes comprising my undergraduate education were explicitly interdisciplinary or addressed the possible application of knowledge across disciplines to address 'real life' issues.

In my view, there is immense potential in producing more complex forms of scientific knowledge through the combination of the ideas of the life sciences and critical theory.

Both academic fields have ostensibly the same goal— understanding the relations between the biological and the social, with the body as the site of such inquiry. But, of course, the methodology is what separates the two. Science seeks to eliminate subjectivity, adopt a position of objectivity, and quantify findings in an attempt to isolate and discover effects of variables. In contrast, critical theory rests on the idea that every optic is a subjective one (even Science’s viewpoint) while it uses qualitative methods to describe and analyze how social, economic, political, and environmental forces and conditions of a given historical moment produce social actions, relations of power, and the ways we think about bodies, identities, and everything in the world.

By producing a Master’s thesis that combines both approaches, I believe it will be possible to create a unique and novel form of interdisciplinary research that respects the virtues of both approaches while also exposing their limits. The bold goal of my project here is to contemplate how Kinesiologists emanating from disciplines of exercise science and physical cultural studies—disciplines which may not share common epistemological or ontological assumptions—might produce a unique and novel piece of interdisciplinary research greater than the sum of its parts.

Possible aspects of study within thesis:

- *First and foremost, execute the study as it would be performed by a typical Exercise Science Master’s student, being sure to maintain the integrity of the study’s intent as conceived by the PIs*
- At the same time, examine the institutional structure and conditions (structures created by funding agencies, contemporary universities putting a premium on grant money as new revenue stream in these ‘leaner and meaner’ times of higher education) shaping the way scientists develop and produce knowledge through a specific study
- Analyze the genesis of the inclusion of Tai Chi as exercise intervention (historicize the appeal of Eastern cultures in contemporary increasingly globalized, Western societies like the US)
- Analyze social process of training Western (white, American?) novices to execute exercise intervention (What happens when an Eastern martial art is divorced from its’ home culture and re-appropriated in a Western society for a Western scientific study?)
- Examine the social process of executing the study (relations amongst researchers, researchers and participants, and between participants; social dynamics of the recruitment process—How does this process work here at URI, with its internal specificities, social location, etc.?)
- Examine assumptions made by researchers regarding gender (how are intragroup differences managed? Gender results explained via

biological determinist argument? Via interactional model between the social and the biological)

- Utilize Foucault's theory of modern power as disciplinary and normalizing to examine the role that Kinesiologists perform in the everyday production and application of modern power
- Utilize audience reception theory to determine how scientific knowledge is taken up and redeployed by kinesiology students

Possible Thesis Format:

Part I: Introduction

Brief introduction to goal of study—oriented by British cultural studies and grounded in the theories of science studies (Kuhn, Latour, Fausto-Sterling, etc.), this study will examine the process through which contemporary scientists grounded in a Life Sciences orientation develop knowledge about bodies, culture, and possibly even obesity.

Among other things, this study will take an in depth look at the social, political, and economic forces which implicitly orient the funding of scientific research studies are funded, whose interests are served and the goals of the scientists involved. Interviews of PIs, research assistants, and even participants will be done. Outline of the history of the development of field of Kinesiology as well as the contemporary social moment when grant-driven research is highly valued at URI (and in contemporary academia).

Part II: Scientific Thesis

This part will look exactly as a stand-alone thesis typical of the Master's thesis format produced by students of Dr. X and Dr.Y.

[This part would be evaluated by Drs. X and Y at the defense, but not by Dr. Kusz and other faculty whose inclusion would be due to an expertise in Science Studies, Sociology of Knowledge, or Philosophy of Science].

Part III: Analysis of Social Process of Executing a Diet and Exercise Intervention Study

The study will observe, detail, and then examine the social process through which scientific knowledge from the life sciences is produced. How this knowledge is produced through interactions between PIs and their training, as well as their decisions throughout the conception and execution of the study may be discussed. All interpretations of this social process will be discussed and clarified with the PIs and others associated with the study throughout. As is standard today, ethical ethnographic work involves a cooperative process between researcher (Justin) and subjects (all those involved in the study) in the production of the final research text (in this case, thesis) so that all parties have a voice in producing what would be considered a fair representation of the social process of the production of this scientific knowledge. Concerns about

interpretations of this social process are expected. Reflections by the PIs regarding possible interpretations will be discussed any time they would like. I promise that my interpretation of the social process of producing this scientific knowledge will not focus on personal issues, but positional ones.

Possible chapter- Utilize audience reception theory to determine how scientific knowledge is taken up by kinesiology students

In this chapter volunteers from an Exercise Science course will answer questions about the lessons they've learned about sex differences through readings of their exercise physiology text. Possible differences between the way the knowledge is encoded by the authors and decoded by the students will be examined.

Part IV: Conclusion- This chapter may be a contemplation on the process of doing this unique form of interdisciplinary research. What were the difficulties faced when researchers not sharing common epistemological and ontological starting points attempt to collaborate on a scientific study? What are the potential virtues and difficulties of combining critical theory with positivist science?

[Parts I, III, & IV would be evaluated by Dr. Kusz and other faculty whose inclusion would be due to an expertise in Science Studies, Sociology of Knowledge, or Philosophy of Science at the defense, but not by Drs. X and Y].

Thesis Committee:

From the Graduate Manual:

8.42.2. Thesis Committee. Each student enrolled in a master's degree plan that requires a thesis must have a thesis committee. This committee is usually composed of at least three members of the Graduate Faculty, including the major professor who serves as chairperson. The second member of the thesis committee shall be in the same discipline and/or department as the major professor, or from a closely related department. The third member of the committee is from an outside area unless specifically approved otherwise by the Dean of the Graduate School. (URI Graduate Studies Manual)

The thesis committee can be more than three members and I would have Drs. X, Y, Z, and Kusz, and at least one other member whose expertise lies in science studies, sociology of knowledge, or philosophy of science on my committee.

I sincerely appreciate your consideration, affording me the opportunity of exploring the complexities of interdisciplinary approaches to research and hope my thesis will demonstrate the value of broadening philosophies of knowledge production.”

The above outline was the product of my desire to bring together two academic disciplines that I thought complemented each other by picking up where the other left off. I was excited about this opportunity. It seemed to be the answer to the agonizing question of which specialization to choose, ES or PCS.

Do both.

Indeed, my decision making would have been much easier if I hadn't already developed a sense from being in the department for close to three years that PCS was viewed negatively by the Kinesiology department's faculty and students. But, this moment in my graduate studies turned out to be one of the most generative in that it revealed the presence of that paradigmatic steel curtain in the Kinesiology department at URI.

I was hopeful, naïve, and an admittedly more than a bit idealistic that I would be allowed to pursue my proposed study. Dr. Kusz later wrote an email to me stating:

I do remember being a bit pessimistic that the project would ever get off the ground. But, if I really thought there was no possibility of the project coming to fruition then I wouldn't have allowed you to spend time trying to make it happen. So, I guess I was cautiously optimistic about the endeavor. Aware that it probably wouldn't take place, but hopeful for you that it would.

In retrospect, it is interesting to read Dr. Kusz's thoughts about my proposal because, at the time, I didn't really consider what his expectations of the proposed study were for a couple of reasons. One, my desire to position myself as a unique student, thinker, and person within the department didn't allow me to consider the possibility that my proposal would not be well-received. Second, PCS work, Dr. Kusz once said to me was, "a do it yourself project," meaning that the object of study, methods of study, and the theory used are largely based on the social problem or issue being

addressed. And thirdly, it seemed that much of our (Dr. Kusz and I) energy back then was focused on trying to develop strategies to convince ES minded faculty and students that there are alternative ways to study Kinesiology informed by a critical ‘sociological imagination’ that were equally important, and could, perhaps, be married to the positivistic quantitative and biologically based ways that dominated the department.

The meeting between the two PIs, Dr. Kusz, and myself was held on December 18, 2009 in the Exercise Physiology lab and it lasted for an hour and a half. I realize I was trying to add an element to a pre-existing, funded study and so there may have been other practical research protocol which may have made it difficult or improbable to annex my proposed thesis to their study. But, if it was impossible due to the provisions of the funding agreement to marry my project to theirs, it was never mentioned in this initial meeting.

But, the meeting between the two PIs, Dr. Kusz, and myself illuminated other underlying epistemological, ontological and methodological obstacles that proved to make my effort to merge ES and PCS under one thesis insurmountable. There are two exchanges in this meeting in particular that I think are important to examine more critically. They are good examples of how the normativity of positivistic, quantitative science organized around exercise science content manifested as a relation of power between ES and PCS subjects within a Kinesiology setting.

As our meeting took shape Dr. Kusz and I began to try to explain how the PCS part of my thesis would study their research process as a social practice/process. They didn’t seem to understand what this would mean. So Dr. Kusz attempted to explain, as

an example, how a socio-cultural study of their research practices might address their use of Tai Chi in the study. This might mean examining what happens when a Chinese health and fitness practice is appropriated by Americans and dislocated from its cultural history. The follow-up questions of one PI seemed suspicious that Dr. Kusz viewed this dislocation of Tai Chi from the culture of origin as negative. Although, Dr. Kusz tried to assure this PI that it wasn't necessarily negative. Here, it is interesting to see how the language and ideas of PCS seems to be read by these positivist scientific-trained researchers as negative or to be regarded with suspicion. In all honesty, I remember feeling the same way when I read PCS informed journal articles for the first time in KIN 278. Indeed, this suspicion regarding sociocultural ideas also surfaced in a later meeting with these PIs when I was working as a study coordinator on their Tai-Chi study and the topic of how we might better motivate the participants to lose weight was being discussed. I suggested we educate the participants about the subtle ways in which food choices are influenced by the placements of more unhealthy food choices at waist level at grocery and convenience stores. This was an idea I had learned about in KIN 508 *Physical Activity Promotion: Theory and Practice*. It seems to be another case where my attempt to integrate knowledges learned from various Kinesiological disciplines was met with a disbelieving chuckle at the idea that we are not always fully aware of the choices we make by the PIs. Here the basic PCS notion that culture and norms invisibly influence the choices many people make in their lives even if in ways they may not be fully aware elicited laughter. What became apparent to me then was that to those not trained in PCS ideas, the notion of being absolutely in control of one's choices is taken

for granted as absolutely true and questions about the limits of one's control over their choices are met with suspicion, dismissal, or even anger.

But, in this case of studying their research practice, for these positivistic researchers, it seemed their concern or suspicion was based on a belief that Dr. Kusz or I would insert a certain bias or value judgment into the study—and one they might not want associated with their work—by asking questions about the cultural meanings that emerged through the American researchers' use of Tai Chi. I think their suspicions, at least in part, were a product of their disbelief that there was anything to learn from studying their research as a social practice or process. This disbelief is, I think, a product of their training as researchers where they are not familiar with (or have chosen not to give credence to) critiques which highlight how the preferred method of positivistic science—the scientific method—is still a social practice created and executed by humans, and thus, fallible, subjective, and partial in the knowledge it produces even if it represents itself as objective and unbiased.

During another moment in this meeting, I remember one of the PIs rubbing his/her temples in what seemed to be an attempt to figure out how to translate the PCS viewpoints and methods into terms of measurement and validity. As our conversation continued, one PI expressed concerns regarding whether I, as a Master's student, was qualified to make 'valid' and informed qualitative observations of researchers and study participants. This concern immediately followed a point in our conversation when one of the PIs cautiously admitted that it seemed to him/her that men in this professor's classes generally take a test of quad strength more seriously and competitively than most of the women. I then suggested that perhaps this was due in

part to how the Keiser machine might be read as a masculine piece of exercise equipment and the history of limited restricted access of women in weight lifting settings. The PIs looked baffled by my response, one that introduced the idea that the machines weren't simply machines, but cultural meanings, indeed, gendered meanings could be articulated to, and stick with, them. I then responded impulsively and argumentatively, "What qualifications does a first semester ES grad student have to be able to coordinate a funded ES study?" Little did I know that my impulsiveness would generate a telling admission from one of the PIs when s/he said: "They just have to follow procedures."

The questions about my qualifications as a student learning how to do qualitative research brought to the fore how a positivist way of performing research was made to be the gold standard—having the highest value—for how to do Kinesiology research within our conversation. Part of the (re-)production of this normativity of positivist science in the department in this moment seemed to entail the expression of a deep suspicion of qualitative research and an overwhelming silence or lack of awareness of the social constructedness and limits of positivistic, quantitative scientific work. Together, this suspicion and silence combined to enable positivistic, quantitative work to be re-established as the legitimate, authoritative, and yes common sense means of doing research within the department at a time when it could have been disrupted.

More specifically, the PI's comment reveals their positivist assumption that any ES graduate student can administer an ES study because 'following procedures' through the employment of the scientific method automatically ensures

the study will be objective and absent of any bias. Interestingly, the two graduate students tapped to work on this study, me being one of them, played no role in the construction of the study's research questions and objectives, ostensibly rendering the social process by which the study was conceived invisible to us. I am reminded here of a time when an ES professor confided to me that, "what you do [PCS research] is harder than what I do [ES research]. All I do is enter data into a computer and it tells me the results." In comments like these, if they are to be taken at face value, reveals the idea that this Kinesiologist believed that the positivistic and quantitative mode of producing Kinesiology knowledge was as natural and objective as to not be human at all. But more importantly in terms of showing how positivistic quantitative science was made normative in the department in this moment, this view seemed to be asserted in this meeting in order to police the boundaries of what counts as permissible Kinesiological research, especially when I tried to marry these two paradigms together. Here is where the way in which the PIs' suspicions and anxieties surrounding my ambitions to integrate qualitative methods and critical theory with a traditional ES master's thesis impacted me personally. It was hard to have my desire to incorporate PCS ideas into a project that was essentially the work of two master's theses—something I thought I would be lauded for because I was pursuing a more ambitious course of study than that of a typical Kinesiology master's student—be met with suspicion that was partially expressed as a challenge to my qualifications. Ironically, my proposal was addressing ideas, issues, and questions of epistemology, ontology, and methodology that the ES graduate students, and perhaps even these PIs or other Kinesiology faculty, did not even contemplate in their training. Yet, rather

than be rewarded and valued for asking such questions, my research questions and ambitions were regarded with suspicion and my qualifications were called into question. Again, this seems ironic given the PI's admission that the ES graduate students needed little in qualifications to run one of their research studies.

In the end, I discovered through this experience that the ontological, epistemological, and methodological divide was too large to bridge—at least in terms of this sort of project—within the department in 2010-11. I came away with a new purpose, that of trying to analyze how and what knowledge gets produced and legitimized in the Kinesiology department. And, I rededicated myself to PCS.

The Physiognomy of URI's Kinesiology Department

As a means of understanding of how ES knowledge gets institutionalized within the URI Kinesiology department, the analysis that follows focuses on the specializations of the faculty and the undergraduate curriculum. The goal is to illuminate how structurally an ES normativity gets established through the makeup of the faculty and curriculum.

The Kinesiology department labor force at URI from 2010 to 2011 consisted of 14 faculty, 1 staff member, and 5 graduate assistants. Of the 14 faculty members, 9 identify their area of expertise in an area of exercise science, 3 in physical education [PE], 1 in psychosocial/behavioral aspects of physical activity [PSB], and 1 in physical cultural studies [PCS] (University of Rhode Island Department of Kinesiology, 2012). At the time of this study, there were 3 full professors within the department, all of which came from the exercise science specialization. There were 4 associate professors, one from exercise science, and one each from PCS, PSB, and PE.

There were 3 assistant professors, 2 of which were from PE and the other from exercise science. Lastly, there were 4 lectures that taught almost exclusively ES based courses. In one way, the ES normativity gets established by being the numerically dominant labor force in the Kinesiology department. Also, at this time, the senior members of the department all specialize in ES and all of them frequently publish research founded on a positivist and quantitative scientific orientation. During this time, the size of the undergraduate major population in Kinesiology has consistently increased and more faculty have been hired as a result of this increased popularity of the major. Interestingly, all of the new hires of tenure-track faculty and instructors have been made from the broad area of ES.

URI Kinesiology Undergraduate Specializations & Curricula

In 2010-11, the Kinesiology department at URI offered 3 undergraduate major specializations to the nearly 600 students matriculating through the program: exercise science, health and fitness, and physical education. The exercise science specialization overview provided on the Kinesiology website reads as follows:

This specialization prepares students to analyze physical activity, exercise, and sport in a physiological context, with an emphasis on basic science courses. Students are trained to assess, design, and implement exercise programs for individuals who are apparently healthy and those with controlled disease. Students learn to evaluate health behaviors and risk factors, conduct fitness assessments, write appropriate exercise prescriptions and motivate individuals to modify negative health habits. The exercise science specialization provides students with more than 25 credits in basic science courses in areas such as anatomy, chemistry, and physiology. The rigorous curriculum provides a strong foundation for advanced study in the allied health professions, including exercise physiology, cardiac rehabilitation, physical therapy, physician's assistant, chiropractic medicine or occupational therapy. (University of Rhode Island Department of Kinesiology, accessed June 25, 2012)

As one examines the rhetoric of the above overview of the exercise science specialization one should note how it gets established as a ‘rigorous’ area of study by locating its’ epistemological foundation in the knowledges of the basic biological sciences and with its clinical and health care/medical professional aspirations. As I will detail later, in comparison with the Health Fitness Professional overview, the exercise science overview goes out of its way to establish its worthiness as a major by associating itself with the prestige often given to the biological sciences, with their faith in positivism and the scientific method, and as an alternative route for students interested in working in the allied health field. Anyone familiar with the history of physical education and its later iteration, Kinesiology, knows the field has always had to contend with the prejudicial treatment of physical education, exercise, and sport in higher education as being inferior to other ‘more serious’ disciplines (Kretchmar, 2008).

It is important to note that the type of exercise science that is represented in the above overview is a medicalized version of exercise science training that emphasizes preparing students for clinical careers, so much so that the Kinesiology department employs its own Clinical Internship Director. Many of the exercise science members of the department’s faculty are affiliated with the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) and they often convey a message of valuing this affiliation with students, or one quickly learns informally from other students that becoming a member of ACSM is a valued status by many within the department. Indeed, many exercise science faculty members and some of their graduate assistants attend the annual regional and national conferences.

Educated in this departmental culture as an undergraduate who specialized in exercise science, I picked up on the value placed on biological and physiological based knowledges of human movement and physical activity and on obtaining a medicalized, professional credentialism to substantiate one's status in the departmental community. In 2008, as an exercise science undergraduate student, I paid money and took an exam to become an ACSM certified personal trainer in order to enhance my social status in the department relative to some exercise science professors and students. Looking back critically on my own actions as I experienced the departmental culture, I picked up—in a way I can only articulate in hindsight and after learning a contrasting mode of studying human movement—the subtle cultural cues that placed an implicit value on positivist science as the basis of knowledge of human movement and on credentialed professionalism as a means of making one a Kinesiologist.

Another sign of how a particular medicalized mode of exercise scientific knowledge was subtly valued and normalized in the URI Kinesiology department culture was through a prominent faculty member including a platitude from an ACSM initiative (American College of Sports Medicine, 2012) “Exercise is Medicine” on the name plate outside of the member's office. The reason I point out this subtle sign of the normativity of the exercise science mode of doing Kinesiology is because it is an example of how exercise science ways of knowing are casually asserted and assumed to be ‘the common way of doing Kinesiology’ in the department at URI. This medicalized exercise science view is thus constituted through this and other similarly infused speech acts and cultural practices of its community members. For example,

one of the centralizing themes through many of my undergraduate Kinesiology courses were the ACSM risk factors for heart disease. These risk factors include among others: hypertension, fasting glucose levels, and cholesterol levels. In order to obtain this information one would have to visit one's doctor and get blood work done. Another example is how developing an exercise plan for a client/patient is described as an exercise 'prescription.' So, when they occur, such acts imply that there can be a particularly, legitimate way to be a Kinesiologist and it is usually constituted through a scientized and medicalized language.

The cultural legitimacy given to this medicalized and positivist scientific mode of Kinesiological study is, of course, overdetermined by American and Western cultural histories of valuing positivist scientific ways of knowing above all others. But such an implicit assertion belies the fact that Kinesiology is a unique field of inquiry that cuts across multiple disciplines like education, psychology, sociology, history, philosophy, and indeed, the biological sciences. So any act or statement that masks, dismisses, minimizes, or erases this multiplicity in how one can do Kinesiological research can be understood as a political act that establishes a discursive field in which lines of power can be drawn a particular regime of truth normalized, and in the case of the Kinesiology department at URI, the way that alternate or opposing viewpoints about how human movement is studied get 'othered.' But if the actors that make up a departmental community do not believe that there is one, singular, and essential way of studying human movement, then, at least in theory, competing ways of knowing human movement should be considered equally valid and valued. In fact, the best way to assess whether or not such values were practiced would not be to look only at the

rhetoric of departmental philosophy on the website, but to examine the everyday normative cultural practices of the department; for example, to look at things such as: how various forms of Kinesiological knowledge are valued in the specific undergraduate specializations offered, how curricula are constructed, and how valued resources are allocated within the department.

The health and fitness specialization (HFS) overview provided on the Kinesiology website reads as follows:

This specialization trains students to assess, design, and implement individuals and groups exercise and fitness programs for individuals who are apparently healthy and those with controlled disease. Students learn to evaluate health behaviors and risk factors, conduct fitness assessments, write appropriate exercise prescriptions and motivate individuals to modify negative health habits. There is an emphasis on applied sciences, with coursework available in the areas of health promotion, nutrition, communication, and human development. This specialization prepares competent Health Fitness Professionals for careers in corporate fitness and wellness, personal training, community fitness, and hospital-based fitness and wellness centers. Students also use this specialization to prepare for graduate study in exercise science, health promotion, and wellness. (University of Rhode Island Department of Kinesiology, accessed June 25, 2012)

According to the above overview, the end product of being educated through the health and fitness specialization is to become “competent Health Fitness Professionals” (University of Rhode Island Department of Kinesiology, accessed June 25, 2012). While this overview shares some of the same language as the exercise science overview, there are some interesting differences in the overviews; specifically, three words: “analyze,” “rigorous,” and “strong” appear in the exercise science description, but are absent from the health professional overview. The exercise science overview uses as part of its description “prepares students to *analyze* [emphasis added] physical activity, exercise, and sport,” (University of Rhode Island

Department of Kinesiology, accessed June 25, 2012). The use of the verb “analyze” here seems to indicate deeper level of intellectual development can be expected when compared to the HFS overview. To further the point, the exercise science specialization promotes itself as “a rigorous curriculum” that offers a “strong foundation for advanced study” (University of Rhode Island Department of Kinesiology, 2012). Now compare ‘rigorous’ and ‘strong’ to ‘competent.’ Why isn’t the HFS curriculum promoted as rigorous?

While both the ES and HFS specializations promote and incorporate positivist and quantitative scientific modes of understanding human movement, they are by no means on equal footing in the department. Looking at the curriculum sheets, there are significant differences in the types of courses students are required to take. Within their Kinesiology determined areas of study, ES students are only required to take one class that is not quantitative and positivistic science based. The specialization electives are also mainly oriented around positivist and quantitative science-based classes. The science requirements for HFS students are only marginally different, they have two classes that aren’t necessarily classified as quantitative science based. The difference in curricula between ES and HFS comes in the specialization electives. HFS students are offered courses in business, communications, and other classes from the ‘softer’ social sciences where knowledge production isn’t always as closely or solely aligned with positivistic, quantitative scientific work, but can also be qualitative, critical and social constructivist. These programs of study, with their core and specialization requirements place what students come to know as Kinesiology almost solely in the realm of the quantitative sciences, helping to promote a view of

health and physical activity as being influenced primarily via factors found within an individual's body. This biologically inward gaze takes the body out of social and historical context, out of the realm of culture and society, and thereby limits or eliminates alternative, more sociologically and historically informed viewpoints on health and physical activity.

Even the potential career paths for ES and HFS are often discussed by faculty, staff, and students in hierarchical in terms of academic rigor and earning potential. For those that choose ES as a specialization, it is an expectation that an advanced degree or professional certification will be in one's future. The above stated careers for ES students are exercise physiology, cardiac rehabilitation, physical therapy (a doctoral program), physician's assistant, chiropractic medicine or occupational therapy. These positions are knowledge workers that 'analyze' and 'assess' health, as well as are more closely aligned with medicalized notions of health intervention. The work of the head. Compare these to the corporate fitness, personal training, and wellness center careers listed for HFS, careers which for the most part take place outside the clinical settings. The work of the body. HFS careers tend to be more manual in their labor and do not afford the same value to expressing and demonstrating scientific knowledge.

As an example of this value system at work within the department, I remember when I met with the academic advisor to choose my undergraduate specialization, after being informed of my options, I knew I wanted what I perceived as the more rigorous science-based specialization of ES. At the time, I got the sense that HFS was

given a lesser status by some within the department and was a good fit for those that did not have an aptitude for science.

Conspicuously absent from either of these specializations is any explicit mention of—or value placed on—learning about how people and physical activity are socially and culturally situated. Both specializations espouse training in assessing, evaluating, and measuring the health and fitness of ‘individuals’ based on body-centered scientific knowledge. The role of the social, cultural, historical, economical, or political forces and conditions that enable and limit any person’s choices and social opportunities relative to exercise and health aren’t given enough value to garner a mention in the website information about each specialization. Additionally, exercise scientists have a penchant for regarding people as ‘individuals.’ This discursive designation works in such a way so as to fail to acknowledge people as cultural beings and instead turn them into ‘individuals’ who are largely abstracted from their historical, social, political, and cultural contexts. Moreover, the exercise scientist and health fitness professional tend to locate unhealthy behavior and health risk in the individual and in the physiological, with little to no mention of how an individual exists within and interacts with a social or cultural environment in which these behaviors and risks have been socially constructed.

The Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) specialization overview on the Kinesiology website reads as follows:

The Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE) program is committed to preparing students as successful teachers of physical education for all grade (K-12) licensing in Rhode Island. Reciprocal license agreements allow students to teach in most other states. Cognitive course work, teaching methods, educational foundations, and skill acquisition are part of the educational process. The program is enhanced by a variety of practicum

experiences in school settings. Students of the PETE program will learn how to communicate with students of varying ages, abilities, and backgrounds and to apply scientific knowledge to physical education practice (University of Rhode Island Department of Kinesiology, accessed June 25, 2012).

Because of the external curricular demands of the School of Education and teacher education accreditation bodies, the PETE program is not as easily comparable to the ES and HFS programs, even though it shares the same Kinesiology core requirements as the other specializations, while differing in the specialization requirements and electives. Yet, in the description of the PETE curriculum, one of the explicit goals is to “apply scientific knowledge to physical education practice.” But notably absent in this description is any emphasis on learning about the social and cultural contexts which shape physical education opportunities, resources, and preferences, or any mention of how social and historical conditions could influence the populations and schools in which some PETE students may live and work. In short, PETE students, like their ES and HFS counterparts, are being trained to view health, fitness, and physical education, mainly, or foundationally, on an individual level, where that individual is analyzed and assessed at the biological level. Additionally, they are being socialized to believe that the cultural authority of Kinesiological knowledge rests on its scientization, its focus on the body, and its ability to be quantified.

So then, the knowledge foundation embedded in the current form of the curricula for the URI Kinesiology major specializations has been socially constructed by faculty and staff and is perhaps chiefly responsible for the way the department transmits and normalizes to undergraduate students the idea that exercise science knowledge and ‘Kinesiological knowledge’ are synonymous and that quantitative and positivistic science is the primary and legitimate mode that Kinesiological knowledge

takes. Stated differently, it is through faculty choices in the types and number of undergraduate Kinesiology specializations the department offers and the specific classes that get formally defined as ‘requirements’ and ‘electives’ that biological and physiological ways of understanding human movement, produced through scientific ways of knowing that are positivistic, quantitative, in their form get established in the minds of the majority of URI Kinesiology undergraduates as the dominant or even sole, legitimate, or ‘real’ way of explaining and understanding how and why human bodies move the way they do. This is especially true in 2010-11, a time when the overwhelming majority of URI Kinesiology undergraduates identify their major specializations as either exercise science or health fitness.

Analysis Highlights

The preceding critical analysis of URI’s Kinesiology department, which called on experiences from 2008-2011 attempted to situate the struggles over what gets counted as legitimate Kinesiological knowledge within a broader historical context and how the everyday practices (re)produces the normalization of ES. By calling on the works of Andrews, 2008; Barker, 2008; Denzin, 1994, 2001, 2005; Kretchmar, 2008; McKay, Gore, and Kirk, 1990; Richardson, 1994), I argued that internal tensions between the various academic specializations under the umbrella of Kinesiology have developed as the meaning of what it means to study human movement is contested. Indeed, the upheavals within Kinesiology departments for the past 50 years, are echoed in the oral history passed down to me from senior staff and faculty members of URI’s Kinesiology department.

Primarily, my analysis deals with the norms, discourses, and cultural practices that worked to value certain types of Kinesiology knowledge over others during my time as a student. Specifically, I drew on my experiences in classrooms, public and private spaces within the Kinesiology department, as well as pivotal encounters with students and faculty members.

Through the use of a PCS/BCS optic and qualitative methods which drew heavily on the work of Richardson and Denzin, I critically analyzed the moments when I felt I had hit the paradigmatic steel curtain. These moments often involved my asking PCS informed questions of the ES faculty, questions which were met with at times suspicion, silence, or a ‘devil’s advocate’ strategy. During these cultural moments, when the normalizing power of ES knowledge was most noticeably enacted by ES minded Kinesiology faculty, I felt like an outsider. I have a unique perspective on the culture of the Kinesiology department, because I have played in both sand boxes (ES and PCS). I once was a valued member of the ES normative culture, which made my diminished status as a PCS practitioner felt all the more.

When I tried to bring ES and PCS together under one thesis project, I learned much about how the way one comes to think and know the world is inextricably lingual and therefore cultural. The language barrier that so frustrated Dr. Kusz and my, revealed how positivistic quantitative trained scientist in the Kinesiology and Nutrition departments had a hard time conceptualizing a constructivist world view. Indeed, even having the language to ask the questions they felt bubbling below the surface, reminded me of how I had a hard time expressing certain ideas about my

identity prior to KIN 278. Unfortunately, this language barrier also seemed to inspire suspicion in Dr. Kusz and I's motives for wanting to examine science in action.

The attempt to combine ES and PCS methods of research also highlighted a difference in thinking about the role of the researcher. The study's PIs were not comfortable with my qualifications for making cultural observations about social influences of race and gender as it was viewed as biasing the study because there was no objective means to evaluate my claims. On the other hand, during the exchange it was mentioned that ES graduate students only had to follow procedures, which maintained the integrity of their objective claims. This divergence in thinking about the subjectivity of the researcher illuminated to me how certain modes of producing Kinesiological knowledge gets (re)created through everyday cultural practices.

I also, did a discourse analysis of the formal structure of the department, particularly what types of specializations are represented in the Kinesiology department's faculty and the undergraduate curriculum that make up program specializations. In looking at the faculty it was clear that those that specialize in ES were in the majority. I argued that the Kinesiology department privileges a medicalized version of ES knowledge through their affiliation with the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM). The influence of the ACSM is also closely associated with many of the undergraduate core curriculum giving URI's Kinesiology a clinical authority. Moreover, I argue the ES is the most highly valued for of Kinesiological knowledge through the discourse used to talk about ES and HFS programs of study.

It is important for me to acknowledge that, in the end, I was given access and authorization to study the culture of the Kinesiology department. So, while I argue for the normativity of ES forms of knowing and studying Kinesiology, my thesis project was still able to exist, though not necessarily on terms and conditions of my choosing.

CHAPTER 7

THE ELEVENTH HOUR

Hour 10: Being John Cage

One of my undergraduate free electives was a wonderful music course taught by George Kent. From this class, I first learned about American composer John Cage and his unique and eccentric works. Professor Kent described one piece Cage composed by overlaying a map of stars onto sheet music and then writing in the notes where the stars lined up in the underlying bars. In short, it was a piece of music that was produced out of a method or procedure. The art appeared to be in the process rather than the end product. So, I produced a poem out of a method I constructed.

The following poem was created by lighting the book *Fahrenheit 451* on fire and letting it burn for thirty seconds. I then took page 4 and wrote down every 4th word in 4 word lines. Lastly, I took page 51 and constructed the stanza by taking every 5th and 1st word to create a 5 word line followed by a 1 word line. What I like about the last part of this poem is that it is so close to having meaning. I like the yearning for meaning.

“The carbon reduction of *Fahrenheit 451*”

Page 4 thirty second burn

Away turned Montag grin
Singed by that to
Might a corked later
He fiery by in
Never smile went as
Hung beetle-colored jacket and
in fire moment hands
the heels fire fist.

Page 51 thirty second burn

Be if my job give
Up
Years of some woman should
Have
Nothing to had books she
Should've
Hate her and next be
Out
Nothing didn't see be something
Can't
Imagine stay in something there
nothing

The Eleventh Hour

I am in the eleventh hour of this thesis project and somewhere in the previous ten I became uncertain of who I am and what I want to be. So, I took a walk. Walking has always helped me think. When I was in high school, if I wasn't at home in the evenings, chances were good that I was walking around the center of my rural hometown of Barre, MA. I considered myself a poet then, one that focused on seeing the everyday sights and actions of people as profound and beautiful if I observed them just so. I cannot separate the pleasure in moving my body from the pleasure of thinking, connecting, and creating as preparation for writing. My highest aspiration back then, when in the state of writing, was to be a thoughtful person writing about the good things in being human.

But, somehow in the previous ten hours I forgot about the pleasure of moving my body, thinking, connecting, and creating. I even forgot about humanizing those I critiqued. Thereby rendering them sociologically speaking hollow.

I watched online Emily Levine (2002), a comedian-philosopher, give a TED talk, in which she talked about "holding thoughts lightly" (Emily Levine: Theory of

everything, 2002). I felt something shift inside me while watching Levine speak, perhaps it was the unclenching of my mind.

I have been holding on too tight to make this thesis important, scholarly, and impactful. Levine went on to talk about the trickster from Lewis Hyde's book, *Trickster Makes This World: Mischief, Myth, and Art*, as an agent of change, as someone who crosses boundaries. I have not read Hyde's work, so I hesitate to identify myself as a trickster. I am too preoccupied with acceptance, even though I am curious about the edge. To hold thoughts lightly allows trespass between territories of thinking. I cannot separate the pleasure of movement from the pleasure of thinking, connecting, and creating.

So, as I said, I went for a walk, up one of the side streets in my neighborhood.

This walk was a response to the words of Levine and the unclenching of my mind; an exercise of agency. Like an old comfortable sweat shirt, I held my thoughts, and I felt warmth in my poet's heart for the first time in a long time. Up a hill, I saw a large maple tree, stretching leafless limbs like inverted roots into blue soil. It reminded me of the *Bodies* exhibit I saw in New York City, where somehow all the arteries, veins, and capillaries were extracted out. Yet, the human shape still discernible, just looked fuzzy and sponge-like from a distance. Beside the maple, standing in contrast to the nonlinear form of the tree was a rigid telephone pole planted to hold wires steady and safe; extracted purpose. I smelled cow manure from a nearby dairy farm, the unique musky smell of horse, and the exhaust of a passing car. I heard a mourning dove lament and the tolling of a dump truck bed as a rock bounced out. I walked in and out of the shadows cast by the trees, history, and society.

In the opening scene of James Gleick's (1987) *Chaos: Making a New Science*, Mitchell Feigenbaum is "prowling around in the dark, night after night...heading nowhere in the starlight that hammers down through the thin air of the mesas" (P1). I was reminded of that imagery of a solitary man walking the border between loner and eccentric, on the brink of new discovery. Though the idea of a solitary man out on the frontier, unencumbered by social constraints, developing unique and world changing ideas appeals to my sense of manhood and individualism, I loosen my hold on those notions of grandeur as they tend to pull me away from thinking, connecting, and creating, into daydreaming about the imagined result of those pleasures. As proof, I have a couple emails to Dr. Kusz transcribing the dialogue of my future thesis defense. Walking through the shadows of the trees, I began to understand that I was reformulating the *boy's* dream of saving the girl in the likeness of a classic western plot (Wright, 1994), the girl in this case being the Kinesiology department. The great irony of telling myself this story is that it was a way to recapture my masculinity from the subjugated realm of Physical Cultural Studies. In a weird way, in this fantasy, I was the hero and the saved at the same time. For through the act of saving, I would gain acceptance. One of the drawbacks I have noticed when exploring alternative territories of thought, no matter how lightly you hold those thoughts, is how social institutions and practices attempt to fix you in place. I was either in shadow or not and I got swept up in the political struggle over my own representation and validating cultural studies research as legitimate, which seemed to be interdependent. The more forcefully I argued the ideas of cultural studies, the more sensitive I became to what

the silences, lowering of voices, avoidance of eye contact, and the overt politeness I encountered in the department meant.

Somewhere in these ten hours, I forgot why I came to be here in the boundary land.

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