

PHYSICAL CULTURAL STUDIES AND FEMINISM ASSEMBLAGE: RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN BODY, GENDER AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

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ABSTRACT: We seek to recognize how feminist knowledge contributes to theoretical-methodological (re)interpretations, based on the production of research/interventions related to gender in the context of physical culture. Based on a qualitative approach, we selected feminist texts from Physical Cultural Studies. As a result, we argue that the texts explore ways of theorizing gender and the multiple operations of social power based on the radicality of the body as the central location of these relationships; point to the self-reflexivity exercised by the researchers when narrating their research

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experiences; and, they point to the political imperative as a basis for progressive social change, engaging with issues that transcend the “gender” category.

KEYWORDS: Cultural studies. Gender. Sport.

ESTUDOS CULTURAIS FÍSICOS E FEMINISMO: RELAÇÕES ENTRE CORPO, GÊNERO E JUSTIÇA SOCIAL

RESUMO: Buscamos reconhecer como conhecimentos feministas contribuem para (re)interpretações teórico-metodológicas, a partir da produção de pesquisas/intervenções relacionadas à gênero no contexto da cultura física. Alicerçados numa abordagem qualitativa, selecionamos textos feministas dos Estudos Culturais Físicos. Como resultado, argumentamos que os textos exploram formas de teorizar gênero e as múltiplas operações do poder social a partir da radicalidade do corpo como local central dessas relações; apontam para a autorreflexividade exercida pelas pesquisadoras ao narrarem suas experiências em pesquisas; e, acenam para o imperativo político como base para a mudança social progressiva, engajando-se com questões que transcendem a categoria “gênero”.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Estudos culturais. Gênero. Esporte.

Introduction

In this study, we seek to discuss the relationships between Physical Cultural Studies (PCS) and Feminism through initial readings that demarcated theoretical approximations between these fields in the last decade (THORPE; BARBOUR; BRUCE, 2011; OLIVE, 2017; THORPE; MARFELL, 2019). Based on this purpose, we engaged with texts by feminist theorists who proposed to think about how gender issues permeated the production of knowledge in Physical Cultural Studies. In this line, contributing to the production of epistemological advances in the relationships between body, physical culture and power relations (SILK; ANDREWS; THORPE, 2017).

This analytical possibility resulted from the visualization of numerous theoretical-methodological claims produced within the field itself for the recognition of the contributions of feminist epistemology in ECF. These claims, positioned at different moments of knowledge production in ECF (SILK; ANDREWS; THORPE, 2017), offered new possibilities for considering the body in the investigative process.

Therefore, reinforcing the commitment to challenging social injustices, as explained by Louro (1997), by demarcating the political role of the feminist movement, experienced by bodies culturally placed on the margins of social reading, notably, through gender identity in physical culture.

Physical Cultural Studies, according to Andrews (2008), emerges as an academic project that enjoys a qualitative sensitivity to social engagement in different places where physical culture materializes. To achieve this, they present different ways of identifying, interpreting and, sometimes, transforming the social injustices that are visualized in the different expressions of the human body in contemporary society (LARA; RICH, 2017). Therefore, it is an approach that seeks to provoke reflections around “physicality” (GIARDINA, NEWMAN, 2011), taking the body as a central element so that readings about broader social phenomena can be understood in their social, political, technological, and cultural layers in physical exercise, in the time-space of leisure, in sports and in other expressions of physical culture (SILK; ANDREWS, 2011).

Physical Cultural Studies emerge as a complementary approach to North American Sociology of Sport, within Kinesiology courses (ANDREWS, 2008). As an approach, it brings together different researchers interested in analyzing and contextually intervening in the power relations that materialize in physical culture (ludic, sporting, recreational, aesthetic expressions, among others). In other words, the ECF and those who integrate this perspective are concerned with producing actions that aim at social change through the identification of the countless operations of power that traverse the body – in its class, gender, of race, sexuality, among others – in the different possibilities of expression of physical culture (SILK; ANDREWS; THORPE, 2017). This happens because they are based on the understanding that these identity

markers contribute to the production of experiences, representations and subjectivities based on processes of social injustice (ANDREWS; SILK, 2015).

From this understanding, we seek to recognize how feminist knowledge, seen as important for the epistemological constitution of the ECF, contributes to its theoretical and methodological (re)interpretations, based on the production of research and interventions related, initially, to gender issues in physical culture (OLIVE; THORPE, 2011; PAVILIDIS; OLIVE, 2013; PAVILIDIS; FULLAGAR, 2014). We start from the understanding of Fullagar *et al.* (2019) when pointing out feminist knowledge as a possibility for social intervention – in/through research, contributing “to the understanding of the power relations involved in the embodied movement” (FULLAGAR *et al.*, 2019, p. 1, our translation).

The interest in the way in which feminist studies compose Physical Cultural Studies did not arise randomly, on the contrary, it is the result of an investigative process of theoretical and empirical approach with and in the ECF, from a particular Brazilian context. Theoretical through incursions into manuscripts of the approach since 2017, at the State University of Maringá, through the Body, Culture and Playfulness Research Group (GPCCL/UEM/CNPq) and institutional research projects, which were reinforced at the University Federal University of Mato Grosso and, later, Federal University of Goiás, through the Body, Difference and Physical Education Research Group (CODEF/UFG/CNPq). And, empirical through immersion in the North American context, through experience in the Physical Cultural Studies Research Group, at the University of Maryland, in the United States, between 2019 and 2020.

Complementary to this, we began to investigate feminist studies within Physical Cultural Studies, more directly, in study meetings in the Physical Education course, at Universidade Federal de Mato Grosso [Federal University of Mato Grosso] – University

Campus of Araguaia. Through readings and the development of the institutional project called “Dialogues between Physical Cultural Studies and Feminism: (re)readings of the relationships between body, culture and power?”, we have dedicated ourselves to a reading program since April 2021. Through this view, we direct efforts to understand the dialogues with feminist studies, with the aim of understanding how these contributions expand and enhance the act of “practicing”, as Andrews and Silk (2011) suggest, Physical Cultural Studies in our local reality, as has been done in different productions (MARANI *et al.*, 2021; MARANI; SÁ; LARA, 2021; SÁ; MARANI; LARA, 2021; ARAÚJO; SOUZA; MARANI, 2022; LARA; SÁ; MARANI, 2023; PEREIRA FILHO; IRBER; MARANI, 2023; SÁ; MARANI; LARA, 2023; SANDOLI; MARANI, 2024; SOUSA; GRANDO; MARANI, 2023; MARANI; FRANÇA, 2024).

Our study proposal is also the result of reading criticisms made of Physical Cultural Studies in the North American Sociology of Sport, as there was the production of an article in which feminist scholars criticized the way in which ECF were announced as an “innovative” approach. The study by Adams *et al.* (2016), entitled “Feminist cultural studies: uncertainties and possibilities”, can be cited as one of the examples of denial of the attempt at academic-scientific structuring of the ECF. Published in the Sociology of Sport Journal, the article brings together individual and collective contributions from eight feminist authors, whose focus was on the authors' criticisms of what they called the lack of recognition of an already existing movement in the field of feminist studies and of qualified productions in this field. scope (ADAMS *et al.*, 2016, p. 75, our translation).

The powerful criticisms of these authors corroborated to tension the relationship between Physical Cultural Studies and feminist epistemology, so that these criticisms were important for ECF scholars to give new meaning to the foundations of the

approach. As a result, the organization of the work *Routledge Handbook of Physical Cultural Studies* (SILK; ANDREWS; THORPE, 2017), demarcates in several chapters the concern with thematizing feminism, both indirectly, as do the texts by Silk and Mayoh (2017) and Evers and Germon (2017), as well as directly, as in the text by Olive (2017). In this theoretical formation, for example, we observe the production of texts and speeches that are attentive to feminist production, repositioning its place within the field of studies (SILK; ANDREWS; THORPE, 2017).

Based on this assumption, this study aims to analyze the feminist path in Physical Cultural Studies, identifying contributions to the process of knowledge production. To this purpose, we structured a qualitative bibliographic review, based on Denzin and Lincoln (2006), under criteria that embrace the transdisciplinarity that exists between the intellectual field of Physical Cultural Studies and feminist knowledge (THORPE; MARFELL, 2019). With this, we selected feminist texts demarcated at different moments, namely: a) “Wandering and Wondering”: Theory and Representation in Feminist Physical Cultural Studies (THORPE; BARBOUR; BRUCE, 2011); b) The political imperative of feminism (OLIVE, 2017); and, c) Feminism and the Physical Cultural Studies Assemblage: Revisiting Debates and Imagining New Directions (THORPE; MARFELL, 2019).

As justification for this selection, we inform that the article by Thorpe, Barbour and Bruce (2011) was the first manuscript that demarcated the feminist proposal within the ECF, being published in the Special Edition of *Physical Cultural Studies*, in 2011, of the *Sociology of Sport Journal*, whose intention was to contribute to *Physical Cultural Studies in the North American Sociology of Sport*. The choice of the second text (OLIVE, 2017) is a book chapter that is part of the “Fundamentals” section of the *Physical Cultural Studies* manual, entitled *Routledge Handbook Physical Cultural*

Studies, which includes feminist bases as part of the foundations of ECF . The third, by Thorpe and Marfell (2019), is justified because it was a response to the criticisms of Adams et al. (2016), achieving publication alongside the dossier *Feminist Knowledges as Interventions in Physical Cultures*, in the special edition of *Leisure Science Magazine*, in 2019, in which the term *Feminist Physical Cultural Studies* appears clearly in the production.

From this, records were developed of texts referring to *Physical Cultural Studies* that address feminism more directly in excerpts from important moments of tension in the approach. In such a way that they express dialogical elements about political issues, social engagement in/through research, the position of the body as central, physical culture crossed by power relations attributed and demarcated based on gender, among others. As a result, we developed topics related to the texts, in order to synthesize the main ideas so that, in the final considerations, we could produce reflections on feminist contributions in *Physical Cultural Studies*. In general terms, the guidelines on the knowledge of the *Physical Cultural Studies* approach, linked to Feminist contributions, can open spaces for future debates/studies on topics little discussed in the area of Brazilian physical education.

Collaborative and Body-Centered Approaches: First Dialogues between Feminism and Physical Cultural Studies

The dialogue between *Physical Cultural Studies* and feminist knowledge begins with the publication of “Wandering and Wondering”: Theory and Representation in *Feminist Physical Cultural Studies*, by Holly Thorpe (University of Waikato/ New Zealand); b) Karen Barbour researcher at (University of Waikato/ New Zealand); and, c) Toni Bruce (University of Auckland/ New Zealand). This paper was the first work

developed in Physical Cultural Studies from a feminist perspective, presenting itself, according to the authors, as a collaborative work that “explores the potential of Physical Cultural Studies for collaborative, interdisciplinary, theoretically informed and reflective research on the body physically active female” (THORPE; BARBOUR; BRUCE, 2011, p. 107, our translation).

The authors used autoethnographic narratives to produce analyzes about their own experiences in the sporting context, given the particularities of their bodies in the different modalities portrayed in the reports. In this process, many demarcations related to gender and sexuality appear, having as an effect the tension of these relationships that is parallel to the questioning of subjectivity, of the constitution of identity, in the sense of being or not a woman, of being heterosexual or not. In this sense, sport as a space for ideological disputes presents the power game that exists between different policies, which, according to authors Thorpe, Barbour and Bruce (2011, p. 107, our translation), can be explored through a “theoretically informed [...] potential” of Physical Cultural Studies, offering apparatuses that involve a collaborative, multimethodological, interdisciplinary perspective, developing political sense and social change.

Thorpe, Barbour and Bruce (2011) develop discussions based on autoethnographic reports, in which they present their contexts of recognizing themselves as a female body in sport. Author Karen Barbour expresses her concerns through waka ama, a type of paddle in Maori culture in New Zealand, while Toni Bruce embraces discussions involving the scope of American basketball (USA) and finally Holly Thorpe engages from the conflicts experienced in Canadian snowboarding. To develop discussions about the female body, based on gender, sexuality, race and sociocultural context, the authors used the feminist theoretical and methodological framework based on the contributions of Pierre Bourdieu's field, capital and habitus. In

this regard, the text is concerned with demonstrating how the sporting space is disputed by naturalized power mechanisms, often enhanced by institutions such as the family, the school and in this case, the sporting institutions themselves, such as federations and confederations of different sports.

With regard to methodology, Thorpe, Barbour and Bruce (2011) used the autoethnographic report to approach the sporting experiences lived by them to the reader, detailing how the category “woman” is invested in power negotiations in the sporting field. Through what they call “triggers”, the authors seek theoretical engagement to understand and question the patriarchal structure, enhancing the discourse and dimensions used in Physical Cultural Studies, which differ from feminist knowledge, but in this case, do not they distance themselves. Thus, they focus on the proximity of the contributions of both approaches to dialogical and democratic study, which advances the pedagogical perspective, having a political potential in which it contests social injustice.

Entering this discussion, Karen Barbour, in her narrative, presents the clash of cultures and how this relationship was strained in sport, questioning the naturalized standard of women, considering that she was in a community of Maori culture and the author was originally from the culture American. Barbour reports that the physical size of the “favorites at Waka” was thin, thinking about the sporting context and the body from an aesthetic perspective, this leads us to question: what is the ideal female body model in sport? Considering that the author raises this question in her report (THORPE; BARBOUR; BRUCE, 2011).

To support discussions in the sporting world, Thorpe, Barbour and Bruce (2011) present, through Holly Thorpe's narrative, how power relations are established and how the active female body is faced with resistance challenges from practitioners of sports.

with male predominance. In this sense, the fact of being a woman and this body that is recognized as female, is attributed numerous sanctions demarcated by gender, with the justification that sport is often something dangerous, for example (THORPE; BARBOUR; BRUCE, 2011).

Therefore, many women who Snowboard, according to Holly Thorpe's report, when incisively questioned, demonstrate the desire to simplify feminine characteristics, such as long hair, for example. This questioning goes beyond sporting boundaries, as women are always questioned, inferior in a certain way, according to Thorpe, Barbour and Bruce (2011), the reading that attributes values to them is made by their actions and their aesthetic characteristics materialized through the body. When these characteristics deviate from the naturalized standard of the female body, these demarcations enhanced by gender are associated with masculinity and this leads to other questions related to gender, such as sexuality, for example. Hence the following reflection: if the attitudes do not fit into what is normatively feminine, does this woman/girl really like men?

Based on these questions, Holly Thorpe reports negotiation strategies with power relations, from the moment she feels safe, she provokes actions that allow confrontation in a positive way, in the sense of questioning the hostile and sexist environment (THORPE; BARBOUR; BRUCE, 2011). This theoretically informed vision is seen in terms of contesting the norm, embodied in sport, extending to the collective in a positive way in the appropriation process. In this sense, it involves using something imposed in a marginalized way and transforming it into something bigger, for the collective, leaving the private sphere towards the collective sphere, as the researcher explains.

In another narrative, Toni Bruce presents discussions marked by gender and sexuality, questioned through the body and its materiality, again aesthetics and in a

certain way even the group belonging to it. The author investigates in detail these embodiments of how the performative impact of the naturalization of demarcations through gender is profound, even in a country like the United States. The way they dress and the way their hair is styled, for example, would be enough to arrive at a complete understanding of that person's sexual orientation, considering that Toni Bruce belonged to an American lesbian basketball team. In this regard, the female sporting experience is unequal in relation to the male one, in the case of Toni Bruce, the training was commonplace, but the training sessions welcomed people to practice sports regardless of their skill level. In this way, it is like a point of encouragement and demonstration of how power is attributed, going beyond discussions to a space beyond academic and sports that aims at competitiveness.

Thorpe, Barbour and Bruce (2011), when addressing these dimensions, project that these discussions go beyond academic borders and the space of the academy, which through what they call intermediation narratives, explore the physical space and the complexities that appear in physical culture, in the sense of:

It would be a mistake, however, to assume that individuals passively embody and practice norms and value systems within the field, and only begin to critically reflect on their experiences upon leaving the field. Instead, individuals often encounter differences and problems within the field that encourage them to engage in day-to-day negotiations of various aspects of their identity (e.g., gender, culture, race, class, sexuality, nationality, age) (THORPE; BARBOUR; BRUCE, 2011, p. 117, our translation).

Thus, Thorpe, Barbour and Bruce (2011) argue that these discussions address the field of negotiations about the feminine, in the face of the body, the power attributed through relationships is negotiated all the time. In this field of negotiations, the sports space, through the study of physical culture, proposes these discussions and, through theory, addresses questioning in spaces that were previously little questioned. In this way, Thorpe, Barbour and Bruce (2011) contribute to promoting Physical Cultural Studies in at least two ways:

In addition to centering the lived experiences of women (active female bodies) and the countless forms of power operating in our bodies, our attempt to blur the divide between researcher and researched, between reflection and experience (THORPE; BARBOUR; BRUCE, 2011, p. 108, our translation).

The importance of this self-reflective exercise for the authors is supported by the following argument:

[...] sharing narratives of our experiences and exploring driving them further with theory offers a good place to start new interdisciplinary conversations that can push Physical Cultural Studies research in new directions (THORPE; BARBOUR; BRUCE, 2011 , P. 106, our translation).

All these discussions project beyond the sporting context, which are places where physical culture appears and opens space for power relations to be observed, questioned and projected for possible intervention, enabling social change (SILK; ANDREWS, THORPE , 2017). According to the authors, the use of feminist studies made it possible for them to discuss their concerns and feminine subjectivities, in the sports spaces where they belong, generating a significant connection in the similarities of their stories, even though they are in different contextual narratives.

The aforementioned article is the result of feminist suspicion about an overly masculine discourse among the first representatives of the ECF, although the efforts to consider contributions from feminist authors to the germination of the study of physical culture are recognized, such as Jennifer Hargreaves and Patricia Vertinsky. From this perspective, the union of the three feminists to produce the collective text that is part of the special edition is based on the understanding that feminist understandings about the body need to be located within the Physical Cultural Studies project.

The Political Imperative of Feminism in Physical Cultural Studies

The bibliography “The political imperative of feminism”, by author Rebecca Olive (2017), explores how research can go beyond what she calls the “ivory tower”, interpreted here as research that goes beyond academic boundaries physically and

intellectually. This publication is part of the Routledge Handbook of Physical Cultural Studies (SILK; ANDREWS; THORPE, 2017). A curiosity about Olive (2017) is that it is located in a fundamental section of the work, where we come across elements that support the approach, such as praxis and reflexivity. In this way, Silk, Andrews and Thorpe (2017) recognize that feminism presents itself as elementary for this intellectual field.

When questioning the “feminist political imperative”, Olive (2017, p. 51, our translation), announces how it is important for feminism and is present in studies of physical culture, in the sense that “questions of theoretical and political research practices are questions of praxis”. Praxis, according to Rebecca Olive, is closely linked to the dimension of research that develops for social transformation, engaging in theoretical research that approaches practice.⁴ For such, efforts are directed to observations of the body, in the field of physical culture and how power relations have effects impacting different spheres that blur the field of physical culture and combine with the social perspective, in such a way that:

Understanding power relations in sport as engaged with cultural, contextual, embodied aspects and relational mobile bodies, helps to explore how sex and gender differences are constructed, understood, experienced and negotiated through subjectivities, participation, relationships, representations and actions in particular sociocultural contexts. As well as criticizing the continued dominance of men and masculinities in sporting and physical cultures, this research also highlights the enabling capacity of power relations, in which women are always disrupting and contesting established discourses and norms (OLIVE, 2017, p. 53, our translation).

Research heading in this direction involves investigating the effect(s) resulting from naturalization on the organization of bodies, governed by the binary that the author calls “established norms”. The historical process that marks bodies is crossed by several

⁴ Praxis is a term that “we understand as rooted in a feminist insistence that knowledge is useful, that understands theory and research as practice” (SILK; MAYOH, 2017, p. 61, our translation). In this way, it proposes a research projected beyond the theoretical and practical dimension, presenting the relevance of a social subversion through some initiative that is appropriate according to the context and the research, it is the production of knowledge that transits according to Olive (2017), in which, the social dimension is crossed by issues that start from gender according to feminist views on physical culture.

categories, which according to Olive (2017), in *Feminist Physical Cultural Studies*, can be leveraged by discussions based on gender. Therefore, by “thinking about theory, culture and experience in embodied terms incites new possibilities for research policies and praxis” (OLIVE, 2017, p. 54, our translation).

As mentioned, the sporting sphere presents this division demarcated by gender and sexuality with intensity, thus throughout the historical process, the power attributed was naturalized to privileged bodies, which in most sports modalities are male, in this regard:

By engaging with theory, these reexaminations have highlighted issues women have faced in participating in sport and contributed important new perspectives that shape how we now think about sport, physical culture, and bodies more broadly. In other words, the praxis was implicit in taking a feminine point of view (OLIVE, 2017, p. 56, our translation).

Self-reflection is a starting point for research engagement, as well as dialogue between researcher and research is a very important element in a study that uses elements of *Physical Cultural Studies* (ANDREWS, 2008; SILK; ANDRES, 2011). The relationship between praxis and self-reflexivity in research, according to Olive (2017), enhances a dimension of *Physical Cultural Studies* called “committed praxis” that appropriates feminist contributions and the tacit dimension of ECF, in the political, pedagogical and theoretical sense.

The perspective presented above is close to the ideas of Silk and Andrews (2011, p. 58, our translation), when expressing what they understand as the act of “practicing ECF”, projecting it as something tacit and parallel to the thought of the feminist imperative, this directs “feminist research is not just a way of thinking and theorizing, but it is something we do” (OLIVE, 2017, p. 52, our translation). This intellectual assumption is present in the approach of *Physical Cultural Studies*, but it is understood that the practical dimension is very complex, which requires a lot of rigor in the sense that “bodies are always actively constituting culture at the same time as culture is

constituting subjectivities (OLIVE, 2017, p. 54, our translation), that is, the individual produces culture, although it is a product of the cultural process, with culture being part of the subject.

In methodological terms, the research appropriates a qualitative post-structuralist study, with the “aim of emancipatory research is to encourage self-reflection and deeper understanding on the part of the people researched, at least as much as it is to generate empirically grounded theoretical knowledge” (OLIVE , 2017, p. 55, our translation). Therefore, considering the context and the elements that compose them, the methodology is followed in accordance with the purpose of the study. The researcher's reflexivity becomes important in a democratic and dialogical path between the researched body and the researcher who identifies through some experience in his/her construction process with that demarcated body investigated, in this case, the marginalized female body demarcated by difference.

This plot is not restricted only to the feminine, but is based on gender or identifications with the feminine, such as the body that, when faced with what Rebecca calls “blind spots”, reflects on its own demarcations that occurred in the constitution of the feminine. its historical process. Self-reflection makes the act of thinking - about oneself and other bodies that share similar experience - go further and “continue to challenge the limitations of our vision by contributing to stronger arguments against continued institutionalized and cultural discrimination and marginalization” (OLIVE, 2017, P. 55, our translation).

In this regard, to reach the social sphere, it is important to democratize knowledge, using forms through the media, for example, making it reach the public dimension, as the author asks: “[c]ultural change in this way is not necessarily quick or far-reaching, but for those it impacts, it can be significant” (OLIVE, 2017, p. 57, our

translation). The female body, marginalized in the spaces where physical culture appears, still faces a lot of disparity in relation to the male body.

These contributions focus “on power relations in everyday, lived, contextual experience, with feminist politics and commitments to praxis and equity” (OLIVE, 2017, p. 55, our translation). Developing an empirical perspective, which challenges and questions established norms, promoting, through research, a voice for female bodies silenced by various relationships that operate power.

[...] research praxis by developing a greater awareness of how my subjectivity limits my research, engaging with intersections of complex subjectivities in my thinking about sex/gender, and keeping research grounded in lived experience continue to be important contributions what we can contribute as researchers and scholars, as well as encouraging us to explore new ways to connect research in the field to contribute to change toward greater equity, through community, policy, fieldwork, and teaching (OLIVE, 2017, p. 59, our translation).

Therefore, Physical Cultural Studies, when appropriating the contributions of feminist studies, provide epistemological apparatus for post-structuralist, qualitative research, with political engagement, which aims for social impact, making marginalized bodies visible. Through this, they observe, from gender discussions, the power relationship that has an effect on these bodies, thus impacting other academic, social and cultural spheres through the development of the study. As previously mentioned, it is necessary to strive to create democratic knowledge that crosses academic borders, appropriating other knowledge, exploring the theoretically based empirical field. Olive (2017) highlights the commitment of research, what she calls “committed praxis”⁵, a theory parallel to practice, which goes beyond the boundaries of academia, reaching the community, the dimension of social intervention.

⁵ Committed Praxis, cited by Olive (2017), comes from the commitment for research to go beyond the walls of the university, in a process of democratization of knowledge. To contextualize it with the Brazilian context, we bring Louro (1997) to the discussion, who also investigates this feminist perspective of academic commitment that reaches the sociocultural context. In this regard, when relating to the ECF and what Olive (2017) asks, committed praxis is the study that is ready to have a commitment beyond the academic, parallel to the social, in the search for the subversion of social injustices from of the genre.

Feminism and the Physical Cultural Studies Assemblage: Paths Taken and New Directions

The academic environment requires some policies for the production of knowledge, as provided by Thorpe and Marfell (2019), this established policy is directed towards a rigor that makes up the production of study and research, paraphrasing the relations strained by various academic currents. The study of Thorpe and Marfell (2019), titled “*Feminism and the Physical Cultural Studies Assemblage: Revisiting Debates and Imagining New Directions*” is located in a dossier promoted by the 2019 Leisure Sciences Magazine. The reference was published in a special edition in which feminist authors who recognize themselves within Physical Cultural Studies organized themselves to democratize research drawn from feminist contributions.

Thorpe e Marfell (2019) are included in this study as one of the fundamental points for the development of this approach, in the sense that this text points out questions for understanding the path in the relationship between Physical Cultural Studies and Feminism. In this context, the authors powerfully announce the relevance of feminist contributions to the intellectual field of ECF.

Paradoxically, the feminist collective published in Adams *et al.* (2016) point out criticisms of Physical Cultural Studies for not recognizing the contributions and importance of feminist studies in many aspects. One of the examples cited by Olive (2017) in this study is the common purpose of both being related to a political imperative that positions research as an important link for social change. The critiques of the eight feminists, Adams *et al.* (2016), moved the field and had an effect on the Handbook of Physical Cultural Studies, because, as Thorpe and Marfell (2019) argue, 45 academic authors were willing to contribute to this aspect of discussions about the feminine, enhancing and recognizing feminist contributions into the field in an engaged

way

In this way, Thorpe and Marfell (2019), when based on a theoretically based empirical dimension, use their experiences to powerfully present the Feminist Physical Cultural Studies approach. This parallels the inquiry into knowledge production by feminist authors who work at what they call “the intersection of feminism and Physical Cultural Studies, in a multitude of ways of understanding the embodied, affective, reflexive and political experience of women in physical cultures” (THORPE; MARFELL, 2019, p. 1, our translation). At the same time, the authors announce the challenges projected by feminism for the field, developing a positive contribution in this development process based on gender discussions and contributes:

While some ignore it less and some reject it outright, others embrace this challenge and have adopted/adapted Physical Cultural Studies in unique ways for their own projects. [...] Today Physical Cultural Studies is a dynamic field with a number of emerging variations (THORPE; MARFELL, 2019, p. 1, our translation).

The purpose of recognizing Feminist Physical Cultural Studies is not to cause delimitations in the field, but to expand it, transcending it and making it possible to use it to support research in different contexts, considering aspects of the female body marginalized in the field of physical culture (THORPE, MARFELL, 2019). Within this scenario, it is important, according to the authors, “to further explore the potential of feminism to connect to Physical Cultural Studies, as well as ongoing territorialization, deterritorialization and boundary markings” (THORPE, MARFELL, 2019, p. 1, our translation). Thus, the reply, related to Adams *et al.* (2016), it is done in the sense that the field of Physical Cultural Studies is not a homogeneous field, but that “sports and physical culture scholars are part of the ongoing discussions and the future of the whole of Physical Cultural Studies” (THORPE; MARFELL, 2019, p. 39, our translation).

Adams *et al.* (2016) still states about the place of speech of the female body in Physical Cultural Studies, thus citing several publications from the 2011 edition, such as

the special edition entitled *Sociology Sport of Journal*, which dealt with Physical Cultural Studies. Thus, Thorpe and Marfell (2019) observed that Adams *et al.* (2016) failed to recognize the studies of Thorpe, Barbour and Bruce (2011), a feminist contribution within the field. This contribution by Thorpe, Barbour and Bruce (2011) is one of the references present in this 2011 edition and, therefore, can be understood as a highlight for Feminist Physical Cultural Studies, being the first manifestation of this perspective in the field.

From this, it is important to present the critical dialogue between approaches and studies “to encourage and theorize gender and the multiple operations of social power in physical culture” (THORPE; MARFELL, 2019, p. 6, our translation). In this regard, the authors still defend the perspective that Feminist Physical Cultural Studies do not emerge with the aim of replacing other feminist perspectives of study, but to enhance expansions on gender, such as, for example, discussions about women in the spaces in which physical culture materializes.

For this academic development, netball, which is a well-known sport in New Zealand, was used by Amy Marfell to be investigated as the object of analysis of the body, in the sense of how this female body is organized, how it is constituted and demarcated in this space, how power relations are operated and how this female body acts. Therefore, Thorpe and Marfell (2019) observe that feminist studies in ECF are promising and have become powerful when using the empirical and transdisciplinarity to approach the research context, seeking to understand how these bodies organize themselves:

[...] through a focus on the relationship between the body, space and power relations, she simultaneously asserted that geography is important that bodies and experiences (and their associated analyses) cannot be removed or thought of separately from the “various spaces” that are constituted- and that the body is central to

the production, reproduction and maintenance of social space and power relations (THORPE; MARFELL, 2019, p. 9, our translation).

Thorpe and Marfell (2019) report that they reach non-sporting scholars, where the field of physical culture appears in the spaces of the body in movement and in the complexities that involve it, for example, the social perspective in sport. In this regard, going beyond thinking about the active body in sport, in this case the subjective female body materialized in sport, self-reflexivity is something already used by approaches with feminist characteristics that occur within Physical Cultural Studies.

Within this line, they enhance the discourse in Feminist Physical Cultural Studies, of an empirical, theoretically based, multi-methodological research, with visibility of marginalized and silenced bodies throughout the historical process, as “fortunately the scholars of Feminist Physical Cultural Studies have a strong lineage of activism and citizenship” (THORPE; MARFELL, 2019, p. 13-14, our translation). In this regard, social change is one of the purposes to be developed in research that uses Feminist Physical Cultural Studies, where researchers perceive the feeling of injustice in their experiences, to think and develop studies that understand this organization of bodies, with the possibility of subverting existing social injustices.

This entire plot is presented as challenging by authors Thorpe and Marfell (2019), from an academic perspective in relation to the tension in knowledge production policies. Finally, Feminist Physical Cultural Studies present interdisciplinary, empirical, sensitive, political, theoretical, self-reflective and pedagogical parameters to consider the context of the study for investigations aimed at understanding and subverting social injustices, maintaining academic rigor by appropriating distinct disciplines that are relate to the research to be developed.

Final Considerations

The observations point to a rich intellectual field of investigation, in which the dialogue still requires to be further explored, pointing out that this investigative niche is broad and many socially disadvantaged contexts still need to be observed. This opens up parameters to blur academic boundaries and enhance the dimensions of Physical Cultural Studies, linked to feminist knowledge. The research presents itself as a link that opens space for the theoretically committed perspective, in which praxis exercises the feminist political imperative that Olive (2017) explains and that Louro (1997) draws attention to the political contribution of feminism.

In this regard, democratizing knowledge and opening space for marginalized bodies, in the case of this study, for female bodies that do not fit into the naturalized and materialized pattern. In order to manifest Physical Cultural Studies as an action, a practice, from different perspectives, such as political, pedagogical, theoretical, transdisciplinary, reflective in its many categories and where physical culture is materialized. The authors Thorpe, Barbour and Bruce (2011) point out how feminist studies contributed to the materialization of theoretical and methodological expansions in Physical Cultural Studies. This thought enhanced feminist manifestations in the ECF, directing “towards collaboration in interdisciplinary, theoretically based, reflective research on the physically active female body” (THORPE; BARBOUR; BRUCE, 2011, p. 105, our translation).

This dynamicity provides materiality of feminist epistemology within the field of Physical Cultural Studies, through the complexities of the female body it inquires into a grounded and collaborative theoretical characteristic. These studies express, discuss and make visible the concerns of female subjectivities, making these issues visible in numerous places of expression of physical culture, such as sport. The

collective of authors presented in this paper points to a direction of dialogue and relationship between ECF and feminist studies, which seek to investigate “lived experiences of active physicality in women and the countless forms of power operating in our bodies” (THORPE; BARBOUR; BRUCE, 2011, p. 108, our translation).

Therefore, we conclude that feminist research is directly linked to action beyond theory, activating praxis and appropriating political characteristics within studies, that is, “feminist research is not just a way of thinking and theorizing, but it is something we do” (OLIVE, 2017, p. 58, our translation). This is very related to the dimensions of ECF when Andrews and Silk (2011) say about “practicing ECF”, considering that the path of knowledge construction is designed in the theoretical, practical and social dimension in the form of praxis through research, committed to academic rigor and the democratization of knowledge, beyond the academic environment. In this sense, it points to the direction that through the democratization of this knowledge, social change may be possible, as well as the process of empowerment/questioning the social structure for previously silenced bodies.

As a result, we observed the constitution of Feminist Physical Cultural Studies, as a possible branch and already recognized by some authors, such as Holly Thorpe and Amy Marfell (2019). These authors report that through praxis, study and sensitive apparatuses, Physical Cultural Studies and Feminism benefit from academic research and by complementing each other, feminist knowledge provides potential for the dimensions of ECF, just as ECF enhances this feminist perspective within the countryside. Our reading also points to how the feminist approach in ECF explores ways of theorizing gender and the multiple operations of social power based on the radicality of the body as the central location of these operations; the self-reflexivity exercised by researchers when narrating their bodies and their research experiences;

and, the political imperative as a basis for progressive social change, engaging with issues that transcend the category “gender”.

Therefore, recognizing the weaknesses of the approach that still need to be further studied and observed by other niches, such as queer, post-colonial, among others. Concluding that Physical Cultural Studies do not emerge with the aim of causing more cracks in the academic community, but of expanding discussions by embracing a transdisciplinary perspective and recognizing the contributions of other academic disciplines, as in this case, feminist contributions. Finally, we understand that the relationships between Feminism and ECF open spaces for theoretical-methodological elements that are still little explored in Brazilian physical education, which could contribute to the recognition of all bodies that, in some way, experience gender-related injustices in their lives. social intersections.

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