

Book Review

Critical Pedagogy, Physical Education and Urban Schooling, by K. Fitzpatrick, New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2013, 262 pp., US\$38.95 (paperback), ISBN 978-1-4331-1740-4

Critical Pedagogy, Physical Education and Urban Schooling is the first book by New Zealand researcher, Katie Fitzpatrick. In it, Fitzpatrick presents a critical ethnography of “Kikorangi High,” located in the socio-economically-disadvantaged and ethnically-diverse South Auckland suburb of Otara. Through her ethnographic research, Fitzpatrick explores the contribution of health and physical education in the school to the reproduction and contestation of social, cultural, economic and educational inequalities based in class, place, gender and ethnicity.

The book is organised into two sections that collectively consist of nine chapters, a prologue, and an epilogue. It features mostly prose, but also comprises a small selection of poetry and photographs produced by the author during her fieldwork. Section One introduces the background of the study by:

- Addressing the author’s ethnic, gender, class, and occupational positioning within the study in relation to her participants;
- Presenting a rationale for using health and physical education as a space for investigating inequalities associated with schooling;
- Justifying the value and historical contribution of critical ethnographic studies of schooling to the investigation of inequalities, and;
- Discussing the political, ethical and methodological issues associated with the data collection and reporting processes.

Then, in Section Two, Fitzpatrick presents her critical ethnography of health and physical education classes at Kikorangi High. Across the six chapters and the epilogue that make up this section, Fitzpatrick explores:

- The politics of place and poverty as they concern both the spatial abjection and cultural vibrance of the Otara community;
- Health and physical education as a space in which neoliberal imperatives manifest in everyday classroom practices;
- The complex intersection of ethnicity, corporeality and education in the lives of the students studied;
- The construction and performance of gender and sexuality in health and physical education, and through schooling more generally;
- One teacher’s concerted efforts to deploy critical pedagogies in his health and physical education classes, and;
- The lives of her participants in the two years following her study.

Throughout Section Two, Fitzpatrick continually emphasises the ways in which schooling works to reproduce class-, place-, gender- and ethnicity-based inequalities, as well as the efforts of her participants to contest, resist, critique and re-imagine education and life in Otara. In doing so, Fitzpatrick draws predominately, though not exclusively, on the work of Pierre Bourdieu. Geographer David Harvey is one scholar, among others, whose work Fitzpatrick

also deploys in presenting her analysis. Fitzpatrick's use of these conceptual and analytical tools adds to the depth and clarity of her descriptions and eschews deterministic or totalizing explanations of social and cultural reproduction.

Critical Pedagogy, Physical Education and Urban Schooling is indicative of the rich vein of critical scholarship in health and physical education that has been done since the early- to mid-1980s, in the Antipodes and elsewhere. As Michelle Fine and Jan Wright both note in their testimonials for the book, Fitzpatrick is a fine writer, a gifted ethnographer, and a thoughtful scholar with a strong command of critical social theories. It is, therefore, unsurprising that this book was awarded the 2013 North American Sport Sociology Society's Outstanding Book Award. Through the interweaving of analytical critique (*logos*), the voices of those who experience injustice (*thymos*), and the personal voice of story telling (*mythos*), Fitzpatrick illustrates what Tinning (2002) approvingly refers to as a "modest pedagogy." Furthermore, to the extent that Fitzpatrick chronicles the ways in which her participants resist, challenge and sometimes transform the *status quo*, this book is also pedagogically optimistic.

In sum, *Critical Pedagogy, Physical Education and Urban Schooling* is worthwhile reading for all teachers, teacher educators and educational researchers. It is not just a book for those among the health and physical education community who are critically inclined. Fitzpatrick's insights on the complex intersections of corporeality, class, place, gender, ethnicity and schooling cut across subject boundaries. One of the complexities that Fitzpatrick addresses so adroitly is how the dualistic mind/body distinction between "academic" and "nonacademic" subjects interacts with norms and expectations associated with gender and ethnicity to position students and teachers in a variety of advantageous and disadvantageous ways throughout the school. The picture painted is necessarily but elegantly "messy." An account less messy would have made a mess of describing the realities encountered (Law, 2004). I encourage both newcomers and those well-versed in these issues to engage with this book.

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References

- Law, J. (2004). *After Method: Mess in Social Science Research*. London: Routledge.
- Tinning, R. (2002). Toward a "modest pedagogy": Reflections on the problematics of critical pedagogy. *Quest*, 54(3), 224-240.