

“IT’S BEEN LIKE A LITTLE RAY OF LIGHT”: EXPLORING THE TRANSFORMATIVE POSSIBILITIES OF *DEPORTIGUALÍZATE*

*"TEM SIDO COMO UM PEQUENO RAIÃO DE LUZ": EXPLORANDO AS
POSSIBILIDADES TRANSFORMADORAS DO DEPORTIGUALÍZATE* 

*"HA SIDO COMO UN PEQUEÑO RAYO DE LUZ": EXPLORANDO LAS
POSIBILIDADES TRANSFORMADORAS DE DEPORTIGUALÍZATE* 

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Abstract: This paper explores the transformative possibilities of *deportigualízate*, a critical intersectional feminist curriculum aimed at challenging inequities within a group of Spanish Physical Education-Sport Tertiary Education students. Part of a larger participatory action research project, this study employed qualitative methods (e.g., questionnaires, group interviews, and artefacts, among others) with data analysed using reflexive thematic analysis. Underpinned by “Doing Gender” theory, three themes were generated: (a) Transformative possibilities at the personal level: new embodied approaches, (b) Transformative possibilities at the relational level: empowering relations, (c) Transformative possibilities at the sociocultural level: small wins. These findings highlight the potential of *deportigualízate* to raise awareness of inequities and inspire change across personal, relational, and broader sociocultural domains. The study concludes that integrating critical intersectional feminist approaches like *deportigualízate* into education can foster spaces for reflection, connection, and empowerment. Such possibilities can offer meaningful steps toward broader transformations.

Keywords: Physical Education. Teacher Training. Feminism. Social Construction of Gender

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1 INTRODUCTION¹

*If this kind of intervention had been given in previous generations,
my life right now, and before,
would be totally different.
Óscar, Individual Critical Reflection*

We begin with Óscar's words, a non-normative male student dancer in a Physical Education-Sport Tertiary Education² (PESTE) programme. In his words, we feel suffering and sadness from the oppression he has experienced. Yet, we also sense hope at the realisation that education can (and should) be liberating—a practice of freedom (Hooks, 1994). The 'intervention' he referred to was *deportigualizate*, a critical intersectional feminist curriculum that aims to teach about inequities that persist in sport, with a specific focus on gender. The purpose of this paper is to explore the transformative possibilities of *deportigualizate* in a Spanish PESTE setting. In so doing, we seek to extend and develop on the wave of critical theoretical and pedagogical research in the field of physical education teacher education (PETE).

It is well-documented that PETE programmes worldwide tend to attract students with traditional gendered beliefs (Brown, 2005) and those who have thrived in physical education classrooms and sports in general (Dowling, 2013). This aspect can limit students' critical awareness and empathy towards diverse realities (Camacho-Miñano; Girela-Rejón, 2017), often leading them to reproduce uncritical visions and discourses about physical education. PETE and PESTE programmes, however, have the potential to both reinforce and challenge gender norms (Gerdin *et al.*, 2019). This is important because, for physical education and sports to be potential contexts to engage with and challenge inequities and dominant discourses, teachers and professionals in the field must be adequately prepared to challenge conventional practices (Kirk, 2020). One approach to achieving this is through critical pedagogies (Philpot *et al.*, 2024)

Within Spain, there has been important work on critical pedagogies in PESTE programmes since the 1990s (Devís-Devís, 1990). Despite efforts by several scholars, however, PESTE programmes are often located within sports departments where traditional practices are explicitly (re-)produced at structural levels. By "traditional," we mean practices steeped in heteronormative values that reinforce sex-based differences, often where women are constructed as 'lesser,' among others. The curriculum content in Spanish PESTE programmes is also problematic. In fact, many departments entirely neglect sociocultural (e.g., gender) matters in their policies and curriculum documents (Serra-Payeras *et al.*, 2016). This exclusion often results in the marginalization of women and persons who identify with diverse gender or sexual identities (Vilanova *et al.*, 2022) who enrol in these programmes. In other words,

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² Within Spain, no undergraduate PETE programmes lead to a secondary teaching license. Instead, there are undergraduate PESTE programmes that usually sit within the broader sports and physical education departments and prepare a range of professionals within the fields of health, sports, physical activity and education. The teaching license is gained through a one-year postgraduate programme.

PESTE programmes "perpetuate the role of sports as a social technology for 'doing gender'" (Serra *et al.*, 2022, p. 392). The next section explores how sports, physical education, and PESTE programmes are "a social technology for doing gender."

1.1 DOING GENDER THEORY

"Doing Gender" (West; Zimmerman, 1987) serves as the theoretical framework of this paper because it is considered the hegemonic frame for understanding gender inequity (Connell, 2010) and, despite the year span, remains central to debates on how gender is constructed and maintained (Crawley, 2022). West and Zimmerman (1987) highlighted gender as a relational process revealing how power and inequalities are (re-)produced (West; Fenstermaker, 1995), across three levels of the social system: (a) sociocultural, (b) interpersonal, (c) individual.

At a *sociocultural level*, gender operates as an ideological construct that both shapes and limits individual choices based on societal norms surrounding sex categories (West; Zimmerman, 1987). Physical education and sports are deeply embedded within these gendered norms, playing a significant role in the "social construction of gender as a complex relation of power" (Kirk, 2010, p. 64) thereby perpetuating and reinforcing gender inequities. In PESTE settings, policies and curriculum documents are also constitutive elements of this level, serving as a foundation for how individuals engage with and interpret gender roles.

Building on the sociocultural level, doing gender manifests at the *interpersonal level* through the daily interactions and behaviours that individuals perform, often unconsciously, in line with (or in opposition to) societal expectations. In physical education and sports, these behaviours are influenced by entrenched stereotypes that dictate what is considered appropriate for different genders. For instance, certain sports may be deemed more traditionally suitable for boys, while others are seen as fitting for girls, reinforcing traditional gender roles and expectations. This not only privileges specific behaviours but can also suppress those that deviate from normative gender scripts, thereby acting as a subtle form of symbolic violence (Metcalf, 2018). The interplay between these interpersonal dynamics and the broader sociocultural context is crucial in understanding how gender is performed and regulated in physical education settings, including PESTE programmes.

At the *individual level*, doing gender extends to how people internalize and express their gender identities. Gender is often perceived as a binary and inherent characteristic influencing personal preferences, behaviours, and interactions. In the context of physical education and sports, this internalization shapes how students engage with various activities, often leading them to conform to traditional gender roles. However, many actively negotiate, resist, or subvert these expectations, creating spaces for alternative gender expressions within physical education environments (Azzarito; Solmon; Harrison, 2006). This individual agency highlights the fluidity of gender and challenges the notion of fixed, binary gender roles.

In our study, Doing Gender helped unpack the notion of gender as a social construct, as a way to teach the curriculum. This theory also guided the analysis

process in exploring the transformative possibilities of *deportigualízate* at the different (micro-)levels of our context – a Spanish PESTE programme.

2 METHODS

This paper is part of a larger participatory action research project that explores the development and enactment of the *deportigualízate* curriculum in Spanish physical education settings. First, we will provide a brief overview of the curriculum. Then, we will outline the methods relevant to this study, which are related to the enactment of *deportigualízate* with a class of PESTE students.

2.1 DEPORTIGUALÍZATE

deportigualízate is a curriculum that aims to teach about inequities that persist in sports contexts through critical intersectional feminist pedagogical lens. By critical intersectional feminist pedagogical lens, we mean pedagogical approaches that merge critical (Freire, 1975) and feminist pedagogies (Dewar, 1991; Luke, 1996) whilst integrating intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991). Despite there being multiple forms of feminist and critical pedagogies, some shared characteristics include: (a) raising critical consciousness, (b) dialectical learning, (c) love and care, (d) transformation and praxis, and (e) empowerment (Castro-García; Landi; Kirk, 2023). The *deportigualízate* curriculum is an attempt to use these characteristics, with a specific focus on gender, to inform its development and enactment.

Whilst there is not enough room to explain the curriculum here, we consider it relevant to share that its development was multi-staged and included consultation with young people, PESTE students and faculty, physical educators and equity experts. Further, there were multiple pilots, revisions and consultations (Castro-García *et al.*)³. To clarify the findings, we provide a curricular outline (Table 1). The unit comprised four 90-minute lessons, each aligned with a level of Doing Gender Theory, with class participation and workbook tasks assigned for independent work outside of class.

3 CASTRO GARCÍA, Marina; LANDI, Dillon; LÓPEZ-VILLAR, Cristina; KIRK, David. *deportigualízate*: developing a critical intersectional feminist curriculum for physical education. [forthcoming]

Table 1 - Curriculum Unit Outline

DAY	DOING GENDER	TOPIC	OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES	
				Classroom	Workbook
1	Sociocultural level	Inequities in Society	Identify the inequalities of the different systems of privilege, associated with social stereotypes and the problems they entail to achieve equity.	Privilege walk	Let's reflect on gender equity
2	Relational level	Social Agents: Gender & Social Identities	Become aware of how the socialization we receive is affected by gender and other social stereotypes and how these can augment and limit young people.	#likeagirl	How are we and why?
			Engage with situations and reflect on how different socialization agents (school, family, sports system, media) aid in the social construction of different gendered identities.	I examine the reality	What they want us to believe
3	Relational level	Sport, Gender & Social Identities	Analyse the role of sport in the creation and maintenance of stereotypes about the body and sexist situations in our society.	Who is who?	What do you see?
4	Individual level	Transforming Sport	Propose initiatives that make it possible to promote changes to sport and education to be inclusive of diverse genders and social identities.	We are the change	We enact the change

Source: The authors

2.2 PARTICIPANTS AND SETTING

The study took place in a Spanish PESTE degree programme. Women make up less than 20% of students in the programme. The study took place in an elective class named 'Women and Sport' comprised of 24 fourth-year students aged between 20 and 29 years old. The *deportigualizate* curriculum was taught by Madison (pseudonym) during the pandemic. Despite the course being in-person, there were mitigating conditions such as physical distancing and the wearing of masks. These mitigating conditions forced the in-class activities to be adapted to follow the restrictions (Castro-García; Landi; Kirk, 2023).

2.3 DATA GENERATION

Multiple forms of data were generated for this paper, including:

- Questionnaires (Marshall; Rossman; Blanco, 2016), collected before and, after the enactment of *deportigualizate*. Before, students responded to questions related to their background, experiences in PESTE, and thoughts on gender equity. After,

students provided quantitative and qualitative feedback on their experiences. Only the qualitative feedback was included in this paper.

- b) Reflective field notes (Emerson; Fretz; Shaw, 2011), kept by Madison during the enactment of *deportigualízate*. In these, she reflected on 'what happened,' 'what was learned,' 'what emotions were expressed,' and 'what contradictions were present.'
- c) Artifacts (Marshall; Rossman; Blanco, 2016) collected from class, including students' exit slips, individual critical reflections, weekly submissions from the workbook, and anonymous and voluntary feedback after each lesson.
- d) Group interviews (Kvale, 1996) with 12 students divided into two groups, after the enactment of *deportigualízate*. Questions ranged from their engagement with the curriculum content, to their experiences participating in activities.

2.4 DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis started by organizing the data into two sets: primary and secondary data set. The primary data set was framed as the main data, and comprised 17 pages of reflective field notes, 72 pages of group interview transcriptions and 35 pages of questionnaires. The secondary data set consisted of students' artefacts, including 24 individual critical reflections, 42 pages from the workbooks, and 90 anonymous entries of feedback. The analysis process began with an in-depth collective reading and discussion of the primary and secondary data sets. This collective process included Madison and Caterina (pseudonym), as well as other members of their research team, making this phase an iterative process of multiple meaning-making. A reflexive thematic analysis (Braun; Clarke, 2022) of the primary data set followed this.

Analysis began with our (Madison and Caterina's) familiarization of the data by individually engaging with it. After reading and re-reading the data, initial inductive codes were generated by each of us. Then, we met to discuss our initial coding and begin generating initial themes. Madison returned to the data for a second coding round, introducing deductive lenses and developing the initial themes around the three levels of the Doing Gender theory. She then met with Caterina to further enrich the themes, refining and (re-)constructing them into the findings.

3 FINDINGS

Three major themes were generated around the Doing Gender theory: (a) Transformative possibilities at the personal level: new embodied approaches, (b) Transformative possibilities at the relational level: empowering relations, (c) Transformative possibilities at the sociocultural level: small wins. These themes are explored through critical and feminist literature.

3.1 TRANSFORMATIVE POSSIBILITIES AT THE PERSONAL LEVEL: NEW EMBODIED APPROACHES

At a personal level, students referred to the "affects" generated by the *deportigualízate*. These affects manifested as emotions, feelings, and embodied thoughts. For instance, during the group interviews (GI), students discussed their experience with the "Who is Who" activity, in which they were shown parts of athletes' bodies without any identifying characteristics of their gender and were asked to describe what they saw.

ANA: We're used to seeing normative bodies. So, when I saw the arms of that female canoeist, I was like, oh my God, I loved it! But everyone else was saying, "No, no, no, it's a man," and it turned out to be a woman. It's so embarrassing, really.

PAMELA: Yeah, honestly... it was a big moment.

LUIS: Yeah, I remember in that activity [...] even the students who were more committed said, "No way! How could that be a woman with those arms?"

IVÁN: "This is anatomically impossible," was Claudia's phrase.

LUIS: Exactly. She was all in, and she was shocked [...] But what was great about the activity, I think, was that even when you have training, these biases are still there.

This conversation highlights how students not only reflected on the presence of bodily stereotypes related to sports and gender, but also on how they experienced this moment of significant awareness remembered with feelings of embarrassment and shock. Students, having been moved and "affected," revealed how *deportigualízate* was able to "shake" their preconceived notions of masculinity and femininity in sports. The significance of embodied experiences in "shaking" ideas and fostering student empowerment in PETE settings has been noted by scholars such as Philpot, Smith and Tinning (2021). Similarly, in studies conducted in PESTE (Devís-Devís *et al.*, 2018), students also demonstrated new possibilities for challenging gender stereotypes and social norms through the body, movement, and emotions—embodied possibilities.

Thus, the transformative potential of *deportigualízate* extended beyond simply "shaking" students' preconceived notions. It also encompassed a wide array of emotions—surprise, guilt, shame, and empowerment. It was through these embodied feelings that "cracks" (Walsh, 2015) were opened allowing new ways of seeing society, culture, and sports to emerge—new thoughts and perspectives. For instance, during the GI students commented:

ROQUE: We try to justify what we see using our knowledge.

LUIS: And maybe that knowledge isn't correct.

ROQUE: What we see can't always be explained by knowledge alone.

This conversation is relevant because students reflected on how people often justify stereotypes by relying on their prior knowledge or how that very knowledge can perpetuate social stereotypes. By "opening cracks," *deportigualízate* helped students develop critical awareness of their values, assumptions, and stereotypes. Echoing

Varea and Tinning (2016), students' ability to reflect on and challenge dominant discourses and practices enables transformation. Furthermore, as other studies have noted, this critical awareness needs to be contextualized and made relevant to students' lives, experiences, and biographies (Dewar, 1991).

deportigualízate allowed students to critically reflect on how their socialization in sports influences the stereotypes and biases they hold. This can be seen, for example, in the individual workbooks. When asked to describe themselves using six characteristics, some male students revealed how displaying socially accepted "feminine" traits had caused them personal suffering or humiliation:

NICOLÁS: Personally, I suffered a lot during my adolescence for exhibiting "feminine traits."

ROQUE: This has often caused issues in my relationships because "feminine" traits like fragility clash with others like competitiveness, creating a mix of intense and conflicting emotions, along with mockery from other men who embody the typical roles of being brave or strong.

Other reflections led students to question how and why they possess certain traits, considering how their sport or close environment played a significant role:

PATRICIA: In my case, I realized that the sport I practiced, which is considered "feminine", led me to develop these qualities.

LUCÍA: It's because of the education at home and in school. For example, I was never allowed to be disobedient or irresponsible. They instilled in me the refined values of a "lady".

It is important to note that these stereotypes and biases are not external—they are embodied and, therefore, seem natural. This perception of "naturalness" is precisely what normalizes them. The possibilities of *deportigualízate* must be understood in terms of its potential to question what is often taken for granted. The ability to reflect on one's stereotypes and normalised thinking is the force to challenge and transform hegemonic norms (Espinosa *et al.*, 2013).

In embodying this transformation, students reflected on how they changed in their professional and personal lives. During the GIs, they expressed:

JULIA: I coach a group of boys in athletics. I try to use inclusive language, I also try... I'm more self-reflective.

PAMELA: And you (referring to Carmen) might not realize it, but when you're looking for graphical representation for the task cards, you always search for both boys and girls; and you specifically look for "woman doing something." You started doing it after *deportigualízate*, and I wasn't doing that, and wow!

IVÁN: Yeah, it [*deportigualízate*] also impacted me [...] As a coach, I do focus more than before because I'm transmitting something. I now feel that responsibility for being with 15 kids who will likely develop certain behaviours conditioned by how I act.

From this conversation, we can see how Julia, as a coach, paid attention to her language, ensuring it was non-sexist; how Pamela transformed her way to create task cards; or how Iván identified that as a coach, he felt a responsibility—"I'm transmitting something." Importantly, all these embodied transformations were accompanied by a

process of self-reflection. Therefore, *deportigualizate* allowed students to reflect on their biographies, lives, and places to question the assumptions taken for granted about our world. It was a space where theory and practice converged (embody) to enable them to think about, interpret and create reality differently (Hooks, 1994), consequently underpinning relational transformations.

3.2 TRANSFORMATIVE POSSIBILITIES AT THE RELATIONAL LEVEL: EMPOWERING RELATIONS

When exploring the possibilities of *deportigualizate* at the relational level, two elements arose. First, all relationships were founded on love and empathy. Activities like “*I Examine Reality*,” which prompted students to reflect in small groups on experiences of gender-based violence—whether as victims or perpetrators—across various contexts such as university and sports, fostered empathy by encouraging them to listen attentively to others’ experiences and emotions. In her reflective field notes, Madison noted:

Group 1 (all women): The main difficulty was identifying situations at the university where they had perpetrated violence. Group 7 (all men): The main difficulty was identifying situations where they had experienced violence. Unintentionally, this highlighted how women are often potential victims. Additionally, the group analysed why these challenges in identifying situations of violence arose.

This activity was important in fostering transformations at a relational level, by helping students examine how interpersonal dynamics are often gendered and sexist, acting as a form of subtle, normalized and symbolic violence. Students elaborated on this during the GI:

ISABEL: The activity really helped me reflect and understand why I didn’t notice these things before ... and also to share them, especially the ones from university, so that people could see that these things do happen.

JULIA: Yes, I liked that time we had to talk among ourselves in small groups, and then share it.

Taking this argument further, Guillermo and José expressed the following in their individual critical reflection:

GUILLERMO: I’ve realized that inequality is more pervasive than I imagined. I had never stopped to think about so many examples and microaggressions we live with and perpetuate every day.

JOSÉ: I already believed that inequalities existed before these sessions, but the truth is, they are far more palpable than I thought.

An important takeaway from these excerpts is that reflecting, sharing, and speaking openly helped to “denormalize” violence and understand that we are all part of a larger structure. In other words, this “cross-dialogue” (Espinosa *et al.*, 2013) fostered empathy towards others’ realities and prompted a (re-)evaluation of relational power dynamics, hierarchies, and inequities. This connection legitimised personal experiences and tied individual identity to culture, politics, and history (Hooks, 1994), leading to empowering relationships. Following Espinosa *et al.* (2013), this can also

have a therapeutic effect, dignifying feminist struggles by valuing individual emotions and emphasising collective responsibility, as noted by Pamela during the GI:

PAMELA: I noticed how, when one woman started speaking, another would follow, and then another ... it was like we were supporting each other. In the end, there were things we all agreed on because they had happened to all of us as women. So, if someone shared an experience, another would say, "Oh, that happened to me too," or "That didn't happen to me, but something similar did." It was like ... I don't know, I felt like there was a safety net behind me. And together, we were lifting each other up. I don't know ... it made me feel good.

The power of listening to, and experiencing, other realities seems crucial for developing a more equitable society (Philpot; Smith; Tinning, 2021). Acknowledging the importance of empathy for a more equitable society, however, is not enough; democratic societies also require action. Similarly, Burbules (2016) emphasized that transformative practices should not only focus on critique but also empower individuals to act as agents of change. Aligning with these ideas, *deportigualizate* fostered relational changes among participants. For example, they reported addressing sexist behaviour in their environments, as shown below during the GIs:

PAMELA: This year, I decided not to let those comments [sexist] slide, so every time he [an athlete she coaches] says something like that and I'm nearby, I stop the game ... and he notices, looks at me, and says, "Sooooory ..."

JULIA: In my training group there are all kinds of comments [...] I'll say, "Hey, that's not okay." I try to make them see it, and they usually respond, "Oh, yeah, sorry."

ISABEL: While we were in *deportigualizate*, for instance, I'd talk to my mom or friends and say, "There are a lot of inequalities in education." [...] Now I see them reflecting more.

Pamela and Julia provided examples of addressing sexist and misogynistic comments; Isabel, in turn, shared how she challenged her mother and friends on these topics. Male students also described becoming active agents of change, addressing sexist comments in their immediate surroundings, supporting faculty initiatives for gender equity, and modifying behaviours like their use of language or complicity in sexism:

IVÁN: This year, I'm coaching a team of young children. A new girl joined, the only girl on the team, and the assisting coach said, "Well, that's strange ... at least we have a girl now, but it's so weird ... so weird for a girl to play soccer," in front of everyone. What happens is that the kids start thinking, "Girls don't usually play soccer," and they internalize it. These kids are just 7 years old, and it sticks with them. I told the assistant coach that comment wasn't necessary because neither was correct.

ROQUE: Since *deportigualizate*, I started working with the faculty's gender equality representative. We made a banner, put it up on the noticeboard, and are trying to keep it there ...

CARLOS: Yeah, I've changed a lot [...] maybe a comment that I'd have made before—something that might've been derogatory or dismissive, especially on social topics ... like in group conversations—now I stop myself. Acknowledging that "changes, however small, can ignite and sustain hope" (Ayuste; Trilla, 2020, p. 31), these relational changes expressed by students can be seen as possibilities that could lead to broader sociocultural transformations.

3.3 TRANSFORMATIVE POSSIBILITIES AT THE SOCIOCULTURAL LEVEL: SMALL WINS

As shown in the previous themes, *deportigualízate* provided reflective spaces, fostering awareness by delving into how various sociocultural agents construct gender. Thus, the transformative possibilities of *deportigualízate* combined embodied emotions to enhance critical consciousness, which was contextualized within their cultural knowledge. By reducing the gap between sociocultural realities and classroom content, the curriculum transformed the classroom into a challenging and growth-oriented space that resonated with students' cultural experiences—a crucial aspect of feminist pedagogical practice (Hooks, 1994).

By culturally connecting to students' interests and experiences and linking them to social structures, *deportigualízate* fostered awareness and reflection on specific issues, facilitating potential transformation. A clear example of such transformation was a shift from blaming girls for their disinterest in physical education to analysing this issue through a broader lens. Before participating in *deportigualízate*, students reflected the following on the questionnaires:

JUAN: In physical education, during free time, the girls often sit on the sidelines while the boys play soccer.

SOFÍA: In P.E. classes, girls feel more inhibited and, at times, uncomfortable—especially during puberty and adolescence, when differences between the sexes become more noticeable.

However, after *deportigualízate*, there was a notable shift in perspective, as shown in these individual critical reflections:

GABRIELA: The girls are often treated as though they don't know how to do anything, and it's assumed they won't be able to complete the activities in class. In contrast, boys are given the benefit of the doubt, and their skills are never questioned.

NICOLÁS: Some girls are genuinely interested, but little by little, they become disenchanted because they feel pushed aside by the group. These were girls who show effort and enthusiasm, but over time, the boys—and sometimes even the teachers—would "put them in their place" as women. It seems we unconsciously push women out of sports, and if a woman shows too much interest, she's labelled a tomboy.

This shift, perhaps driven by increased awareness, allowed students to approach the issue from a broader and more critical lens. Students began to recognize the systemic and cultural dynamics that contribute to the marginalization of girls in physical education, rather than blaming the girls themselves. They identified how boys' exclusionary behaviours, teachers' unconscious biases, and deeply ingrained stereotypes contribute to creating a hostile environment for girls. By analysing sports and physical education within the broader systems of values, stereotypes, and oppressive structures, *deportigualízate* became transformative at a sociocultural level.

As Ahmed (2017) pointed out, feminism aims to establish connections between individual realities and those of others in a social context. By forming these connections, new ways of understanding and relating can emerge, contributing to a

collective effort to dismantle oppressive systems. The findings, however, suggested that *deportigualízate* did not fully challenge all forms of gender inequity. For instance, male participants emphasized that changing power dynamics requires effort, persistence, and time. During the GI, they described their journey of transformation as demanding consistent dedication and reflection:

CARLOS: Like anything else [...] through repetition, repetition, and persistence—through hard work—you start to broaden your perspective.

ROQUE: It's really hard for any of us ... maybe during *deportigualízate*, for that hour and a half, we're very aware of all the mistakes we make, of everything we're doing wrong, even beyond the session. But as soon as we leave, we lose that focus on what matters about these sessions because we're back to living our lives, to society. We try, but it's not easy.

LUIS: It's hard to change, even if *deportigualízate* is very emotional and makes us see things differently. I've tried to change some things, and I'm still trying even now. [...] But honestly ... it's tough, it's really tough. I'm not trying to excuse myself or anyone else; it's just that ... it's hard.

This conversation underscores the complexity of unlearning deeply entrenched behaviours and attitudes and, therefore, the difficulty of transforming societies. Their words encapsulated the need for sustained and repetitive pedagogical approaches to reinforce learning and create lasting societal change. Despite the challenges, the students' qualitative feedback on their experiences also revealed the importance of such approaches:

NICOLÁS: I can honestly say, without hesitation, that *deportigualízate* has been one of the most interesting experiences I've had at university and one of the best things I'm taking away from this semester. [...] It's been like a little ray of light illuminating a reality many of us had kept in the dark, as if it didn't exist.

Nicolás's reflection carries very positive views on *deportigualízate*, although they become concerning when analysed from a broader perspective, revealing a critical issue regarding the critical education students typically receive. Building on the importance and positive impact of receiving training like *deportigualízate*, there are striking statements like the one that opened this paper, from Óscars' individual critical reflection after *Deportigualízate*:

If this kind of intervention had been given in previous generations, my life right now, and before, would be totally different.

The fact that a student so clearly and emphatically expressed that critical intersectional feminist education can change people's lives is encouraging and underscores the necessity of such curricula. Despite the findings, however, it would be naive to assume that a single, short-term curriculum could change the practices, values, and thoughts of all participants, leading to social transformation (Philpot; Smith; Ovens, 2019). Nonetheless, it is constructive to view these findings positively, recognizing that progress towards a more democratic and just society begins with "small wins" (Weick, 1984).

4 CONCLUSIONS

This study explored the transformative possibilities of *deportigualizate* within a Spanish PESTE setting, guided by critical and feminist literature. We started and finished the paper with Óscar's words, underscoring the need for critical intersectional feminist approaches to physical education settings, inspiring a reimagining of these spaces as sites for empowerment and change.

Our findings, presented across three interconnected levels—personal, relational, and sociocultural—illustrate how *deportigualizate* has the potential to raise awareness among PESTE students about entrenched inequities and diverse lived realities. By doing so, it promoted the transformation of not only their future professional practices but also the environments they will shape, from sports clubs to physical education classes. Crucially, this study reinforces the link between sociocultural structures and the embodied realities of physical education and sports contexts, highlighting the importance of addressing structural inequities as a foundation for meaningful change.

This work contributes to responding to calls for transformative approaches rooted in feminist perspectives in PE(S)TE (Lynch; Curtner-Smith, 2020). *deportigualizate* also emphasizes how, by fostering a critical perspective, such approaches can encourage students to engage deeply with the complexities of inequity, both individually and collectively, empowering them to create more inclusive and equitable physical education and sports environments. Achieving this, however, requires sustained commitment from educators, institutions, and other stakeholders, as well as further research and pedagogical approaches to challenge existing social inequities. In other words, critical pedagogical approaches should extend beyond isolated or anecdotal initiatives to become integral, continuous, and cross-cutting elements in education.

Finally, as Ayuste and Trilla (2020) remind us, we must value the "experiences, practices, ideas, or lifestyles that, without great fanfare, already make this world a better place for those who inhabit it" (p. 31). It is precisely these "small wins" (Weick, 1984) that *deportigualizate* seeks to nurture. These moments, though seemingly unassuming, carry profound significance, creating ripples of transformation that extend from individuals to broader relational and sociocultural spheres. Drawing on Ahmed's (2017) notion that "to be part of a movement requires we find places to gather, meeting places" (p. 3), this study underscores the importance of creating spaces for reflection, dialogue, connection, and empowerment. It is within these spaces—where transformative possibilities take root—that the seeds of a more equitable and inclusive future are sown.

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Resumo: Este artigo explora as possibilidades transformadoras do *deportigualízate*, uma proposta pedagógica feminista interseccional crítica, concebida para desafiar as desigualdades em um grupo de estudantes de Ciências da Atividade Física e do Esporte na Espanha. Parte de um projeto mais amplo de investigação-ação participativa, este estudo utilizou métodos qualitativos (por exemplo, questionários, grupos de discussão e artefatos, entre outros), analisando os dados por meio de uma análise temática reflexiva. Fundamentado na teoria do “Doing Gender”, foram gerados três temas: (a) Possibilidades transformadoras no nível pessoal: novas abordagens corporificadas, (b) Possibilidades transformadoras no nível relacional: relações empoderadoras, (c) Possibilidades transformadoras no nível sociocultural: pequenas vitórias. Esses achados destacam o potencial do *deportigualízate* para gerar conscientização sobre as desigualdades e inspirar mudanças nos âmbitos pessoal, relacional e sociocultural. O estudo conclui que integrar abordagens feministas interseccionais como o *deportigualízate* na educação pode fomentar espaços de reflexão, conexão e empoderamento. Tais possibilidades podem oferecer passos significativos rumo a transformações mais amplas.

Palavras-chave: Educação Física. Formação de docentes. Feminismo. Construção Social de Gênero

Resumen: Este artículo explora las posibilidades transformadoras de *deportigualízate*, una propuesta pedagógica feminista interseccional crítica diseñada para desafiar las inequidades en un grupo de estudiantes de Ciencias de la Actividad Física y del Deporte en España. Parte de un proyecto más amplio de investigación-acción participativa, este estudio empleó métodos cualitativos (por ejemplo, cuestionarios, grupos de discusión y artefactos, entre otros), analizando los datos mediante un análisis temático reflexivo. Fundamentado en la teoría “Doing Gender”, se generaron tres temas: (a) Posibilidades transformadoras a nivel personal: nuevos enfoques encarnados, (b) Posibilidades transformadoras a nivel relacional: relaciones empoderadoras, (c) Posibilidades transformadoras a nivel sociocultural: pequeñas victorias. Estos hallazgos destacan el potencial de *deportigualízate* para generar conciencia sobre las inequidades e inspirar el cambio en los ámbitos personal, relacional y sociocultural. El estudio concluye que integrar enfoques feministas interseccionales como *deportigualízate* en la educación puede fomentar espacios para la reflexión, la conexión y el empoderamiento. Tales posibilidades pueden ofrecer pasos significativos hacia transformaciones más amplias.

Keywords: Educación Física. Formación de profesorado. Feminismo. Construcción Social de Género

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CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors declare that this work involves no conflict of interest.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Marina Castro-García: Conceptualization; Data collection; Formal analysis; Funding acquisition; Investigation; Methodology; Original draft writing; Review and editing.

Cristina López-Villar: Conceptualization; Formal analysis; Methodology; Writing—review and editing.

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RESEARCH ETHICS

All data were handled confidentially, in accordance with Spain's Organic Law 3/2018, of December 5, on the Protection of Personal Data and Guarantee of Digital Rights, as well as Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council, of April 27, 2016, on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation – GDPR). These standards were followed both in the preparation of participant documentation and in the processing of personal data.

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