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PROFESSIONAL GROWTH AND STRUCTURAL CHANGE IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHER EDUCATION: A STUDY OF THE INFLUENCE OF A CRITICAL CURRICULUM ON STUDENT UNDERSTANDING

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

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Degree of

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STEPHANIE CANADA
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PROFESSIONAL GROWTH AND STRUCTURAL CHANGE IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHER EDUCATION: A STUDY OF THE INFLUENCE OF A CRITICAL CURRICULUM ON STUDENT UNDERSTANDING

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP AND ACADEMIC CURRICULUM

BY

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Acknowledgements

The Instructional Leadership in Academic Curriculum Ph.D. program has been a transformative intellectual and emotional journey for me. As Maxine Greene refers to the notion of "I am, but, I am not yet" a sense of always becoming, this journey has truly provided a daily step toward a new way of seeing, and knowing, the world. I am truly grateful for the cognitive dissonance, challenges, struggles, and joy, I have experienced in this Ph.D. program. In particular, I will forever be grateful for Dr. Houser's kind and thoughtful guidance mentoring me through this journey. His Socratic method of teaching, and his enduring pursuit of excellence in though and action will forever be a touchstone of my professional life. I would also like to thank my gracious committee, who helped me ground my path and move toward completion.

For this fantastic journey, I must first thank my sister, Stacy Reeder, who led the way into education, for myself, and my younger sister. Had it not have been for her, I would not be where I am today. She has been the backbone of my experience, my tough-love advice giver, and one my many, cheerleaders. During the process of this journey, I met my husband, Mike Phillips, who has been my rock of support, every step of the way. Further gratitude and appreciation goes to Dan Reeder, who is my loudest cheerleader and supporter. Last, but not least, thank you to all of those in my life who supported and believed in me along the way, my sister, Shelly and brother-in-law Reggie Jordan, and my College of Education and Professional Studies and Kinesiology and Health Studies family.

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Abstract

Like many within the profession, my own beliefs and practices have been impacted by personal and professional struggles and experiences (Palmer, 2007), as well as the historical influences of physical education (Kirk, 1986; Fernandez-Balboa, 1995 & 1997a; Tinning, 1997). As a result, I naturally wondered how similar factors might impact my students' perceptions. I suspected they might have influenced what my students' believe and how they learn. Additionally, since many of my students' biographies are similar to my own, it seems likely that they, too, may struggle with professional identity challenges as they prepare to enter the teaching profession.

Following up on these notions, I began to help my students, future physical educators, reflect upon their own biographies and identities to better understand how such factors might influence their teaching, their students, and our society. Together we reflected on who we are, and who we want to become as teachers.

Numerous scholars have addressed similar issues. Decades ago, Jean Piaget (1972) established that learners' efforts to reconcile cognitive dissonance, or disequilibrium, are essential to their intellectual development. Scholars such as Paulo Friere (1970) and Maxine Greene (1988) promoted the idea of disrupting dominant assumptions to create the necessary social, psychological, and emotional spaces for learning to take place. Numerous others have explored what is required to promote dissonance, safety and critical reflection in the classroom in the service of ongoing growth (Kirk, 1986; Fernandez-Balboa, 1995 & 1997a; Palmer, 2007; Tinning, 1997). These beliefs contributed to my development of a critical curriculum for my physical education students.

In light of my personal experiences and concerns, and with the assistance of many who have gone before, I developed and implemented a critical curriculum designed to disrupt my students' perspectives of physical education and, in particular, their perspectives of teaching physical education, to help them challenge their own identities. For my dissertation, I developed a study to determine my students' perceptions of the influence of this curriculum on their personal and/or professional development and understanding. Following up on the creation, implementation, and study of my curriculum, I sought to develop a practical take-away from this experience, thus creating an additional paper written for practitioners. These components make up three of the five chapters of this non-traditional, publication-ready dissertation.

Findings from this case study revealed that my critical curriculum did have, to an extent, some influence on my students' personal and/or professional development and understandings. These findings support the continued implementation and utilization of critical curricula, provide insight for my future teaching, and yield recommendations for other physical education teacher educators.

Chapter One: Introduction

My Personal Background and Teaching Experiences

I am a forty-five year-old Caucasian female, and I live and work in the same State where I was raised. I grew up in a rural community, where I attended public school. I did not know it at the time, but we lived in what would be considered between poverty and lower middle class.

My first twelve years of life were spent on our family farm where I explored, played, created, and developed a love for sports and competition. I recall wanting to be the best, to beat my sisters and neighborhood kids at whatever we did, to catch the most or biggest fish, ride my bike the fastest, create the best fort, win every race, or win the latest game we were playing.

At the age of twelve my parents divorced. This tumultuous time pushed me to find something for myself and galvanized my love for competition and sports. While I participated in many sports growing up, I particularly loved and excelled in basketball. For me, there was no second place, only first place, and I only for myself, accepted being the best. Basketball was the perfect venue for me to win.

During my high school years, my basketball coach, who also became a surrogate parent, helped me see something greater for myself, to set personal goals and begin to dream. At this particular point in my life, I had no idea about my future or college. Since neither of my parents, nor anyone else in my immediate family, had even been to college, higher education was not talked about in my family. However, my coach helped me see a future through basketball as a pathway to attending college. From that moment on, my goal was to attend college on a basketball scholarship. In my mind, to

do this, I had to be the best, work the hardest, and win!

While I made it through college as a successful athlete and education major, my only desire was to coach basketball at the collegiate level. Receiving a degree in education was just a step to becoming a basketball coach. My dream job was realized upon graduation, and I coached for several years at the college level. After several years of coaching, I grew tired of the ups and downs of winning and losing and my life being held hostage by the outcome of a game. The gradual realization that maybe there was something more for me in life prompted my thinking of a change in vocation. So I decided to change my path.

Although one of my roles when coaching involved teaching a methods course to future physical educators, I had never actually taught physical education in common education. Therefore, while I knew a lot of theory around physical education, I had no true teaching experience. Nevertheless, this experience led to an opportunity to teach physical education to elementary students.

Embarking on my first 'real' elementary teaching experience, I was hired to teach physical education in an urban/rural school district in a low socio-economic area. In this position, I had, on average, 400 students per year. I knew that I wanted to be a 'good' teacher. For me, 'good' was defined as being a teacher who did not privilege her physically gifted students, but who helped all students find joy in physical activity. It also meant helping students develop competency and proficiency to aid in a lifetime of enjoyment and participation in physical activity.

My ideals of physical education reflected the basic goal defined by the Society of Health and Physical Education of America, or SHAPE: "The goal of physical

education is to develop physically literate individuals who have the knowledge, skills and confidence to enjoy a lifetime of physical activity" (Courturier, Chepko & Holt-Hale, 2014, p. 11). SHAPE provides further insight into the goals of physical education through its five basic standards (Courturier, Chepko & Holt-Hale, 2014, p. 12):

> *Standard 1* - The physically literate individual demonstrates competency in a variety of motor skills and movement patterns.
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>
> *Standard 5* - The physically literate individual recognizes the value of physical activity for health, enjoyment, challenge, self-expression and/or social interaction.

These standards, learned in college, informed my thinking around physical education and helped guide how and what I taught as a beginning elementary physical education teacher.

In elementary physical education, I found myself functioning as a teacher, consistent with my vocation and calling. However, while teaching provided fulfillment, and at times true exhilaration and joy, it also provided heartache and sometimes challenging interpersonal growth.

Like most first-year teachers, I dealt with my share of issues and problems. While many of the challenges were part of my interpersonal growth, such as unpacking my own unexamined privilege as a white female athlete, other struggles dealt with

outside influences. Mainly, I grappled with two issues. I struggled with blending my conceptions of what physical education should be to best serve my students while wrestling with and fending off external expectations and conceptions of physical education. Additionally, like many within the profession I struggled with both confidence and efficacy, lacking a real sense of my teacher "self" or identity (Green, 2008; Friere, 1970; Palmer, 2007).

One of the external expectations with which I dealt was the idea that physical education was simply an introduction to competitive athletics. Most often when students came to class they expected we would play a competitive game or sport. Very often their parents had these same expectations of physical education class. For example, in some schools in the community where I worked, third graders participated in basketball seasons with scheduled games and multiple tournaments during school. In these schools, the "physical education teacher" was essentially the coach. Consequently, these were common expectations of many students, parents and community members.

Another external expectation I dealt with as a physical education teacher was exposing and disrupting gender biases. Gender bias revealed itself in various ways, including the ways students communicated and participated in class. Many times, I overheard both girls and boys calling modified push-ups "girl" push-ups. Additionally, in any sport that required strong or quick movements, boys typically participated more readily than girls. Conversely, when activities required rhythm or more refined movements, girls more readily participated. Yet, if a girl stepped into a perceived "boy's" role, or vice versa, students reacted by calling them names such as 'girly boy'.

Yet, another external conception was the idea that my students were, in a sense,

viewed as ‘products’. On many occasions, when speaking with community leaders or legislators, I heard variations of the following narratives referring to the aims of physical education: “These are the kids that will be working to pay your retirement; don’t you want them to be healthy and educated?” or “We can’t afford the impact of diabetes or obesity as a state/nation; we need healthy students (citizens).”

Furthermore, I grappled with the external conception that physical education seemed to be perceived as less important than other content areas. Typically, funding for physical education was either lacking or non-existent, and there was no established curriculum framework for the discipline within my state. These conceptions and conditions were reflected in the common labels I was give as an elementary physical educator. I was called a “coach”, “gym coach” or “gym teacher” rather than simply a “teacher”.

Along with these conceptions of physical education, I also struggled with finding myself as a teacher. Truly becoming an elementary physical education teacher did not happen for me upon arrival the first week of school. I struggled with my teacher identity. I had been a competitive, win-at-all-cost athlete and college basketball coach, so who would I be as an elementary physical education teacher? I wondered: Am I a coach? Am I an elementary physical education teacher? Am I still an athlete? Am I all three, both, or just one? Moreover, who do I need to be for my students, and to be a ‘good’ teacher?

These tensions caused disruptions, prompting my journey to find solutions, to figure out who I should be as a teacher. In my journey to find my teacher “self”, to be the teacher I felt my students deserved, I sought further opportunities to learn. One

example of the learning opportunities I sought was pursuing my National Board Teaching Certificate. I followed up in subsequent years by pursuing a doctoral degree in curriculum and instruction. Upon entry into the doctoral program, I took the opportunity to join the teacher education profession, where I continue to teach in the same state in which I was raised.

Introduction to my Dissertation

Currently, I teach at a Midwestern State College consisting of around 17,000 students. My physical education classes range from 18-30 students per semester. The course I teach – Introduction to Physical Education and Health– is an entry-level class open to any student on campus. Normally, the class is made up of 50-70% physical education majors or students who may be interested in learning more about the major. The remaining students come from a mix of academic majors offered on campus, ranging from business administration to sociology.

Most often, students enter my class to discover more about physical education teacher education as a major. Those who are interested in majoring in physical education teacher education are mainly drawn to the course because of their backgrounds in athletics and a desire to coach in the future. Most of my students come from within the state, and several students are college athletes.

Like many within the profession, my own beliefs and practices have been impacted by personal and professional struggles and experiences (Palmer, 2007), as well as historical influences of physical education (Kirk, 1986; Fernandez-Balboa, 1995 & 1997a; Tinning, 1997). As a result, I have naturally wondered how similar factors impact my students' perceptions. I strongly suspect they have influenced what my

students believe and how they learn. Additionally, since many of my students' biographies are similar to my own, it seems likely that they, too, may struggle with professional identity challenges as they prepare to enter the teaching profession.

Following up on these notions, I began to help my students', future physical educators, reflect upon their own biographies and identities to better understand how such factors might influence their teaching, their students, and our society. Together we reflected on who we are as teachers and who we want to become.

Fortunately, in focusing on the development of teacher identity, I have not had to create everything from scratch. Numerous scholars have addressed similar issues. Decades ago, Jean Piaget (1972) established that learners' efforts to reconcile cognitive dissonance, or disequilibrium, are essential to their intellectual development. Scholars such as, Paulo Friere (1970) and Maxine Greene (1988) promoted the idea of disrupting dominant assumptions to create the necessary social, psychological, and emotional spaces for learning to take place. Numerous others have explored what is required to promote dissonance, safety, and critical reflection in the classroom, in the service of ongoing growth (Fernandez-Balboa, 1995 & 1997a; Kirk, 1986; Palmer, 2007; Tinning, 1997). These beliefs contributed to the development of my critical curriculum for my physical education students.

In light of my personal experiences and concerns, and with the assistance of many who have gone before, I designed and implemented a critical curriculum to disrupt my students' perspectives of physical education and, in particular, to help them challenge their own identities. Maxine Greene (1988) states, "We want to discover how to open spaces for persons in their plurality, spaces where they can become different,

where they can grow" (p. 56). However, while creating space for such disruption in class, it has been crucial to support, acknowledge, honor, and recognize the personal narratives of my students' (Greene, 1988; Palmer, 2007).

To create a balance between dissonance and safety in my class, I designed the course to hold what Palmer (2007) refers to as a paradoxical tension. One of Palmer's examples of paradox utilized in my lesson development was the idea that "space should be hospitable and charged." Palmer goes on to explain "the learning space should be hospitable – inviting as well as open, safe and trustworthy as well as free" (pp. 76-77). With this in mind, I wanted my students to feel safe in our learning spaces and know they could trust me to hear their truths and support their growth.

In light of all of this, along with the creation of a critical curriculum for implementation in my Introduction to Physical Education and Health course, I wanted to follow up and determine if there was a reason to continue. Did it work? Was there an influence? Ultimately, I decided to study my curriculum to determine whether it influenced my students' personal or professional development and understanding. This dissertation is a culmination of these ponderings and efforts.

Organization of this Dissertation

The particular format for my dissertation is a publication-ready format. Rather than using a traditional dissertation format, I have attempted to write three publication-ready papers which constitute chapters two, three, and four. Chapters one and five, on the other hand, correspond fairly well with traditional dissertation chapters that introduce the topic of study and consider implications for future work. Below, each chapter will be discussed and their organization will be explained.

To begin, Chapter One introduces to the study, and the three papers. Chapter Two is the first publication-ready paper. The intended audience for this paper is other practitioners and scholars in higher education. The focus is on the critical curriculum that I developed and used. Here, several theoretical and historical issues are explored This is similar to what might be found in chapter two of a traditional qualitative dissertation that outlines an interpretive lens or theoretical framework. Chapter Three is the second publication-ready paper. The intended audience for this paper is other academics. This paper identifies the research question and methods, presents and analyzes the findings, and discusses implications for theory and practice, components normally found in chapters three, four, and five of a traditional dissertation. Chapter Four is intended primarily for practitioners, focusing on a particular assignment from my critical curriculum: a *Cultural Plunge*. Chapter Five summarizes of all three papers, takes stock of the entire dissertation, and considers implications for the future.

Chapter Two: Using a Critical Curriculum in a Physical Education Teacher Education Course

Abstract

Physical education teacher education induction curricula are often structured for ideal and homogenous education students. Yet, these are not the students I encounter in my courses. Students come to my Introduction to Physical Education Teacher Education course with a multitude of backgrounds and experiences, but with a narrow perspective of the aims and goals of physical education. In order to better prepare my students for their chosen vocations, I have implemented critical curricula within my course. The focus of this manuscript is to explain how I arrived at using a critical curriculum and to share a sketch of my critical curriculum.

Keywords: critical curriculum, physical education, cognitive dissonance

Introduction

I am a teacher. During the last fifteen years I have taught physical education in public schools and physical education teacher education at a state university. I currently teach at a Midwestern State College consisting of around 17,000 students. My physical education classes range from 18-30 students per semester. The course I teach – Introduction to Physical Education and Health– is an entry-level class open to any student on campus. Normally, the class is made up of 50-70% physical education majors or students who may be interested in learning more about the major. The remaining students come from a mix of academic majors offered on campus, ranging from business administration to sociology.

Most often, students enter my class to discover more about physical education teacher education, as a major. Those who are interested in majoring in physical education teacher education are mainly drawn to the course, because of their backgrounds in athletics, and a desire to coach in the future. Most of my students come from the same State of the University, and several students are college athletes.

Like many within the profession, my own beliefs and practices have been impacted by personal and professional struggles, experiences, (Palmer, 2007) along with historical influences of physical education (Dalen & Bennett, 1971; Fahlberg & Fahlberg 1997; Kirk, 1997; Pangrazi & Beighle, 2010; Zeigler, 2005). As a result, I have naturally wondered, how similar factors impact my students' perspectives. I strongly suspected they have influenced what my students believe, and how they learn. Additionally, since many of my students' biographies are similar to my own, it seems likely that they, too, may struggle with professional identity challenges as they prepare

to enter the teaching profession.

Following up on these notions, I began to help my students', future physical educators, reflect upon their own biographies and identities to better understand how such factors might influence their teaching, their students, and our society. Together we reflect on who we are as teachers and who we want to become.

Numerous scholars have, previously addressed teacher identity, and the development thereof. The previous discussions concerning development of teacher identity and similar issues have served as an excellent baseline on which to ground my discussions. Decades ago, Jean Piaget (1972) established that learners' efforts to reconcile cognitive dissonance, or disequilibrium, are essential to their intellectual development. Other scholars such as, Paulo Friere (1970) and Maxine Greene (1988) promoted the idea of disrupting dominant assumptions to create the necessary social, psychological, and emotional spaces for learning to take place. Numerous others have explored what is required to promote dissonance and safety and critical reflection in the classroom in the service of ongoing growth (Fernandez-Balboa, 1995 & 1997a; Kirk, 1986; Palmer, 2007; Tinning, 1997). These beliefs contributed to my development of critical curricula for my physical education students.

In light of my personal experiences and concerns, and with the assistance of many who have gone before, I designed and implemented critical curricula to disrupt my students' perspectives of physical education and, in particular, their perspectives of teaching physical education, to help them challenge their own identities. Maxine Greene (1988) states, "We want to discover how to open spaces for persons in their plurality, spaces where they can become different, where they can grow" (p. 56). However, while

creating space for disruption in class, it has been crucial to support, acknowledge, honor, and recognize the personal narratives of my students' (Palmer, 2007).

To create a balance of tension in my class, I designed the course to hold what Palmer (2007) refers to as a paradoxical tension. One of Palmer's explanations of paradox I utilize in lesson development was "space should be hospitable and charged." Palmer goes on to explain "the learning space should be hospitable – inviting as well as open, safe and trustworthy as well as free" (pp. 76-77). With this in mind, I wanted my students' to feel safe in our learning spaces and to know they can trust me to hear their truths and support their growth.

The purpose of this paper is to explain my current approach to teaching physical education teacher education and how it came into being. First, I provide further context from my personal experiences that have shaped my teacher identity and helped further explain my decision to teach critically. Then I discuss some of the historical, and theoretical foundations, of why I chose to teach from a critical perspective. I then conclude with a description of my critical curriculum I currently use, in the hope that it may be of use to others.

My Personal Background and Teaching Experiences

I am a forty-five year-old Caucasian female, and I live and work in the same State where I was raised. I grew up in a rural community where I attended public school. I did not know it at the time, but we lived in what would be considered between poverty and lower middle class.

My first twelve years of life were spent on our family farm where I explored, played, created, and developed a love for sports and competition. I recall wanting to be

the best, to beat my sisters and neighborhood kids at whatever we did, to catch the most or biggest fish, ride my bike the fastest, create the best fort, win every race, or win the latest game we were playing.

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Like most first-year teachers, I dealt with my share of issues and problems. While many of the challenges were part of my interpersonal growth, such as unpacking my own unexamined privilege as a white female athlete, other struggles dealt with outside influences. Mainly, I grappled with two issues. I struggled with blending my conceptions of what physical education should be, in order to best serve my students, while wrestling with and/or fending off existing external expectations and conceptions of physical education. Additionally, like many within the profession I struggled with both confidence and efficacy, lacking a real sense of my teacher "self" or identity (Greene, 2008; Friere, 1970; Palmer, 2007).

One of the external expectations with which I dealt was the idea that physical education was simply an introduction to competitive athletics. Most often when students

came to class they expected that we would play a competitive game or sport. For example, in some schools in the community where I worked, third graders participated in basketball seasons with scheduled games and multiple tournaments during school. In these schools, the "physical education teacher" was essentially the coach. Consequently, these were common expectations of many students, their parents and community members.

Another external expectation I dealt with as a physical education teacher was exposing and disrupting gender biases. Gender bias revealed itself in various ways, including the ways students communicated and participated in class. Many times I overheard both girls and boys calling modified push-ups "girl" push-ups. Additionally, in any sport that required strong or quick movements, boys typically participated more readily than girls. Conversely, when activities required rhythm or more refined movements, girls more readily participated. Yet, if a girl stepped into a perceived "boy's" role, or vice versa, students reacted by calling them names such as 'girly boy'.

Yet another external conception was the idea that my students were, in a sense, viewed as 'products'. On many occasions, when speaking with community leaders or legislators, I heard variations of the following narratives referring to the aims of physical education: "These are the kids that will be working to pay your retirement; don't you want them to be healthy and educated?" or "We can't afford the impact of diabetes or obesity as a state/nation; we need healthy students (citizens)."

Furthermore, I grappled with the external conception that physical education seemed to be perceived as less important than other content areas. Typically, funding for physical education was either lacking or non-existent, and there was no established

curriculum framework for the discipline within my state. These conceptions and conditions were reflected in the common labels I was given as an elementary physical educator. I was called a “coach”, “gym coach” or “gym teacher” rather than simply a “teacher”.

Along with these conceptions of physical education I also struggled with finding myself as a teacher. Truly becoming an elementary physical education teacher didn’t happen for me upon arrival the first week of school. I struggled with my teacher identity. I had been a competitive, win-at-all-cost athlete and college basketball coach, so who would I be as an elementary physical education teacher? I wondered: Am I a coach? Am I an elementary physical education teacher? Am I still an athlete? Am I all three, both, or just one? Moreover, who do I need to be for my students, and to be a ‘good’ teacher?

These tensions caused disruptions, prompting my journey to find solutions, to figure out who I should be as a teacher. In my journey to find my teacher “self”, to be the teacher I felt my students deserved, I sought further opportunities to learn. One example of the learning opportunities I sought was pursuing my National Board Teaching Certificate. I followed this up in the subsequent years by pursuing a doctoral degree in curriculum and instruction. Upon entry into the doctoral program, I took the opportunity to join the teacher education profession where I continue to teach in the same state in which I was raised.

Historical and Theoretical Foundations of Physical Education

As I continue to reflect upon my personal history, striving to make sense of the sociocultural influences that have shaped who I am, I acknowledge that it is also

necessary to understand the historical development of physical education, the academic discipline of which I am a part. The conceptual and structural seedlings of physical education emerged during the 19th century in the midst of an evolving industrial revolution (Dalen & Bennett, 1971; Fahlberg & Fahlberg 1997; Kirk, 1997; Pangrazi & Beighle, 2010; Zeigler, 2005). This was an important period for the United States, marked with steady population and economic growth accompanied by an increase in nationalistic attitudes (Zeigler, 2005).

Increasing nationalism, coupled with the industrial revolution, further imbued the importance of physical health for the purposes of creating a strong national state (Zeigler, 2005). With a strong military emphasis, the need for physical health created space for physical training within a medical context, thus opening the path for formal physical education in schools (Dalen & Bennett, 1971; Zeigler, 2005).

Focus on an educated public, and a physically healthy citizenry, aided in the development of formalized physical education in schools, gradually pushing it into the education conversation. Yet, ideas of physical training as a core component of education did not become codified until the late 19th century, and even then, what did exist was only in a limited number of colleges and academies (Dalen & Bennett, 1971; Zeigler, 2005).

Following decades of work, The National Education Association in 1891 formally recognized physical education as curricular field. This recognition, initiated a shift in physical training from the medical field, to the education field. This transition created a path for physical education teacher education to begin.

While physical education took decades to formally emerge as a content area in

education, teacher training in physical education followed shortly behind. As the popularity of physical education gradually grew, and was opened up for both women and men, teacher education programs across the country multiplied.

During the 20th century, as physical education gained a firmer place in the education system, traditional emphases began to shift. By the middle of the century, some of the greatest influences were based on issues of equity. In 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* officially desegregated schools. This was followed by gender equity legislation in 1972, including Title IX (1972), which was part of federal education legislation designed to promote greater equity among the sexes.

A Brief Sketch of My Critical Physical Education Curriculum

All of these factors, personal to external, contributed to my desire to develop a more critical approach to teaching physical education pre-service teachers. My critical curriculum came to life through assignments, activities, discussions, experiences, and reflection. It was influenced by a continual state of reflection and teacher action research, in that, as students and I learned, we reflected and adjusted the curricula. Thus, the curriculum was dynamic and dependent upon what students needed to move forward. As the curriculum was dependent upon students' personal experiences, historical implications, and their reflections, it was still grounded in the teachings of various educational theorists. Therefore, the "sketch" of my critical curriculum is just an example of what a typical semester might look like.

During the first few weeks of the semester, I worked to get to know students on many levels. To do this, my students and I went through various activities such as

icebreaker activities, autobiographical informational worksheets, introduction discussions, and student presentations of information about themselves and their goals. I also shared information about myself with my students, including my personal and professional background and my pathway to teacher education.

From activities such as these, I began creating a snapshot of my students' perceived identities in order to develop a context for where they want to go with their lives. Moreover, we work together to build trust and connections with one another. This was done through mutual sharing of experiences, narratives, and personal biographies in a safe and supported learning space. While these efforts were preliminary to moving forward in the course, the process of getting to know my students never ceases.

The contexts my students' share, provide a framework on how to progress with my critical curriculum. Based on Parker Palmer's (2007) ideas around connectedness, I worked to weave the lived histories and vocational desires of my students within the context of our shared world, the content of the course, and my own history. Palmer (2007) states:

> Good teachers possess a capacity for connectedness. They are able to weave a complex web of connections among themselves, their subjects, and their students so that students can learn to weave a world for themselves. (p. 11)

As a sense of connectedness and a foundation of trust continue to be constructed within the class, I began providing critical curricular activities (such as, lessons, assignments, and discussions) with the intention of gradually challenging what students know and believe. The following examples are based on contextual factors involving my students and myself. Since each group of students within a class can vary,

materials should vary as well. Like others, I am always seeking new means of exposing other ways of seeing the world, and of disrupting our culturally bound identities.

Listed below are some of the curricular activities I have used along with some of the reasoning as to why I chose to use these materials as part of my critical physical education curricula (Table 1).

Curricular Activity	**Rationale**
Inventories: ATOP and BAOP (2009)	These inventories help provide students with insight into biases or attitudes they may have about obese persons, whether implicit or explicit. ATOP – *Attitude Toward Obese Persons* BAOP – *Beliefs About Obese Persons*
HBO documentary film, *The Weight of the Nation* (2012) (Four-Part Series)	This series, although dated, provides students with other perspectives of the obesity epidemic. I also provide discussion questions to promote deeper thinking about the issues of the obesity epidemic such as environmental, infrastructure, culture and other health issues. Additionally, I want to know whether their perspectives change, and why or why not.
Documentary film, *Fed Up (2014)*	This documentary focuses on the food industry and how it is working against the general public. This should help my students gain a larger picture of the obesity epidemic. It also helps them challenge mass media, critically analyze marketing and the implications in our environment.
Cultural Plunge Houser, N. (2008) Nieto, J. (2006)	The cultural plunge is an assignment my students participate in later in the semester. The purpose is to have students place themselves in a minority situation on someone else's turf. Students do the plunge and then write a reflection paper discussing their experiences. More often than not, their perspectives change how they see different people.
Courage to Teach (Introduction) Palmer, P. (2007)	This reading is used to help students see that they matter in the classroom. Physical education is not just about equipment or materials. Who they are as a person makes a difference. This is reading is preliminary to other critical pieces as it lays the foundation for moving forward and understanding that we must be the best humans possible to make a difference in the classroom and make an impact on future generations.
Unpacking the Knapsack of Invisible	This is a reading used to discuss all sorts of invisible privileges we experience. If our privilege is not white male privilege, such as discussed by McIntosh, we may have

Privilege. McIntosh, P. (1992)	able-bodied privilege and movement skill privilege. We must understand what this means and implies for how we should see and treat others.
Star Power Simulation Game. Shirts, G. (1969)	Star Power is a simulation game I have used to discuss unearned power and privilege. I use this to highlight how we may possess and perpetuate power and privilege in life without earning it.

Table 1: Curricular activities and rationale

The aim of sharing this information was to provide my reasoning for developing a critical curriculum for physical education teacher education, and to provide a sketch of how I have sought to implement these ideas. I do not view my work as a formula, but as evolving and dynamic. In sharing this information, my hope is to gain feedback from other professionals, and to learn what others are doing to help prepare future physical educators for classrooms of diverse learners for the present and future.

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Chapter Three: A Case Study of Preservice Physical Education Teachers' Perceptions of the Influence of a Critical Curriculum on Their Personal and Professional Development and Understanding.

Abstract

For decades there have been calls for more critical approaches in educator preparation programs. This manuscript is a case study of a critical curriculum implemented in a physical education teacher education program. The study, conducted over a sixteen-week period sought to determine the influence of a critical curriculum on students' personal and professional development and understanding. Data collected included written excerpts from assignments, reflection papers, field notes, and information gleaned from semi-structured interviews. The findings revealed positive influences of the curriculum on student learning and development, categorized into three themes; shift in thinking and understanding, decentralization of perceptions and/or beliefs, and strong emotional impact.

Keywords: critical curriculum, teacher identity, pre-service teachers, physical education teacher education, critical postmodernism.

Introduction

I am a teacher. During the last fifteen years I have taught physical education in public schools and physical education teacher education at a state university. I currently teach at a Midwestern State College consisting of around 17,000 students. My physical education classes range from 18-30 students per semester. The course I teach – Introduction to Physical Education and Health– is an entry-level class open to any student on campus. Normally, the class is made up of 50-70% physical education majors or students who may be interested in learning more about the major. The remaining students come from a mix of academic majors offered on campus, ranging from business administration to sociology.

Most often, students enter my class to discover more about physical education teacher education as a major. Those who are interested in majoring in physical education teacher education are mainly drawn to the course because of their backgrounds in athletics and a desire to coach in the future. Most of my students come from within the state, and several students are college athletes.

Like many within the profession, my own beliefs and practices have been impacted by personal and professional struggles and experiences (Palmer, 2007), along with being impacted by historical influences of physical education (Fernandez-Balboa, 1995 & 1997a; Kirk, 1986; Tinning, 1997). My journey, to this point in my profession, began in my first year as an elementary physical education teacher. Thus, to further illustrate my decision of teaching from a critical perspective, I begin with unpacking some of my personal experiences such as my unexamined privilege, cognitive dissonance, and reflection.

In elementary physical education, I found myself functioning as a teacher, consistent with my vocation and calling. However, while teaching provided fulfillment and at times true exhilaration and joy, it also provided heartache and, sometimes, challenging interpersonal growth. Like most first-year teachers, I dealt with my share of issues and problems. While many of the challenges were part of my interpersonal growth, such as unpacking my own unexamined privilege as a white female athlete, other struggles dealt with outside influences. Mainly, I grappled with two issues. I struggled with blending my conceptions of what physical education should be in order to best serve my students, with existing external expectations and conceptions of physical education. Undergirding these external expectations and many of my own identity challenges was the prevalent ontological stance in physical education, which has most often been positivistic. This was problematic for my emerging teaching identity, as it was becoming more and more incongruent with my ideas of who I should be as a teacher, and how I should teach. Additionally, like many within the profession, I struggled with both confidence and efficacy, lacking a real sense of my teacher "self" or identity (Green, 2008; Friere, 1970; Palmer, 2007).

One of the external expectations with which I dealt was the idea that physical education was simply an introduction to competitive athletics. Most often when students came to class they expected that we would play a competitive game or sport. Even in the community where I worked this took place. For example, third graders participated in basketball seasons with scheduled games and multiple tournaments during school, and the "physical education teacher" was essentially the coach. These were common expectations of many students, parents and community members.

Another external expectation I dealt with as a physical education teacher involved gender biases. Gender bias revealed itself in various ways, including the ways students communicated and participated in class. Many times, I overheard both girls and boys calling modified push-ups "girl" push-ups. Additionally, in any sport that required strong or quick movements, boys typically participated more readily than girls. Conversely, when activities required rhythm or more refined movements, girls more readily participated. Yet, if a girl stepped into a perceived "boy's" role, or vice versa, students reacted by calling them names such as 'girly boy'.

Yet, another external conception was that my students were, in a sense ,viewed as 'products'. On many occasions, when speaking with community leaders or legislators, I heard variations of the following narratives referring to the aims of physical education: "These are the kids that will be working to pay your retirement; don't you want them to be healthy and educated?" or "We can't afford the impact of diabetes or obesity as a state/nation; we need healthy students (citizens)."

Furthermore, I grappled with the external conception that physical education seemed to be perceived as less important than other content areas. Typically, funding for physical education was either lacking or non-existent, and there was no established curriculum framework for the discipline within my state. These conceptions and conditions were reflected in the common labels used to refer to elementary physical educators. I was called a "coach", "gym coach", or "gym teacher" rather than simply a "teacher".

Along with these conceptions of physical education I also struggled with finding myself as a teacher. Truly becoming an elementary physical education teacher didn't

happen for me upon arrival the first week of school. I struggled with my teacher identity. I had been a competitive, win-at-all-cost athlete and college basketball coach with unexamined privilege, so who would I be as an elementary physical education teacher? I wondered: Am I a coach? Am I an elementary physical education teacher? Am I still an athlete? Am I all three, both, or just one? Moreover, who do I need to be for my students, and to be a 'good' teacher? These tensions caused internal disruptions or cognitive dissonance, prompting my journey to find solutions, to figure out who I should be as a teacher. Consequently, I went through National Board Teacher Certification and began my doctoral studies in curriculum and instruction.

As a result of these experiences, I have naturally wondered how similar factors may impact my students' perceptions. I strongly suspect they have influenced what my students believe and how they learn. Additionally, since many of my students' biographies are similar to my own, it seems likely that they, too, may struggle with professional identity challenges as they prepare to enter the teaching profession.

Following up on these notions, I began to help my students' future physical educators, reflect upon their own biographies and identities to better understand how such factors might influence their teaching, their students, and our society. Together we have reflected on who we are as teachers and who we want to become.

Fortunately, numerous scholars have addressed the development of teacher identity and similar issues. Many years ago, Jean Piaget (1972) established that learners' efforts to reconcile cognitive dissonance, or internal disequilibrium, are essential to their intellectual development. Additionally, scholars such as Paulo Friere (1970) and Maxine Greene (1988) promoted the idea of disrupting dominant

assumptions to create the necessary social, psychological, and emotional spaces for learning to take place. Numerous others have explored what is required to promote dissonance and safety and critical reflection in the classroom in the service of ongoing growth (Fernandez-Balboa, 1995 & 1997a; Kirk, 1986; Palmer, 2007; Tinning, 1997). These beliefs contributed to my development of my critical curriculum for my physical education students.

In light of my personal experiences and concerns, and with the assistance of many who have gone before, I developed and implemented critical curriculum designed to disrupt my students' perspectives of physical education and, in particular, their perspectives of teaching physical education. My aim was to help them challenge their own identities as physical educators. Maxine Greene (1988) states, "We want to discover how to open spaces for persons in their plurality, spaces where they can become different, where they can grow" (p. 56). However, while creating space for disruption in class, it has been crucial to support, acknowledge, honor, and recognize my students' personal narratives (Palmer, 2007).

To create a balance between dissonance and safety in my class, I designed the course to hold what Palmer (2007) refers to as a paradoxical tension. One of Palmer's examples of paradox I utilized in my lesson development is that the "space should be hospitable and charged." Palmer explains, "the learning space should be hospitable – inviting as well as open, safe and trustworthy as well as free" (pp. 76-77). With this in mind, I wanted my students to feel safe in our learning spaces and to know they could trust me to hear their truths and support their growth.

To analyze the implementation of my critical curriculum, I conducted a study to

examine its influence on students' personal and/or professional development and understanding. Outlined in the following sections is the interpretive lens I utilized to interpret and analyze the phenomenon, the research methodology, the findings, and possible implications for teaching.

Interpretive Lens

There are many possible ways to analyze a phenomenon. For the purpose of this study, theory was used as a catalytic agent of understanding in seeking to interpret and explain a particular phenomenon in education. This study was designed to interpret the influence of a critical curriculum on pre-service physical education teacher perspectives, personal and professional development and self-understanding. In turn these theories shaped my interpretation of data.

I discuss this lens now to foreshadow what will come later. There are many ways to interpret any set of findings. As the study unfolded, it became evident that there were a few interpretive perspectives that made particular sense in interpreting the findings. The first lens is, connectedness, which is derived from my interpretation of Parker Palmer's ideas concerning a divided teacher self and connection to community. As a related factor, I also discuss his ideas around identity. The second interpretive lens is invisible privilege. Invisible privilege is unearned power or privilege hidden from those who hold it (McIntosh, 1992). In particular, I examined the ways in which it has impacted physical education, physical education teachers, and pre-service physical education teachers. The third interpretive lens is the idea of critical postmodernism.[1]

[1] Further interpretive lens detail can be found in the Appendix.

Connectedness and Identity

Issues of conectedness and idenity are extremely important to education and this study. One person who has addressed this at length is Parker Palmer. In *The Courage to Teach*, Palmer (2007) explores internal ideas around connecting our inner life to our teacher life, and how each influences the other. He also explores interpersonal connections between the self and others, between groups of people, and between individuals and groups and the greater community. He further discusses community as connectedness and the development of the learning spaces among learners and teachers. These are powerful ideas that have informed my inerpretation of the findingson conectedness and identity.

Palmer (2007) states "We Teach Who We Are" (p. 1), conveying this idea in a way relatable to my students and myself:

> Teaching, like any truly human activity, emerges from one's inwardness, for better or worse. As I teach, I project the condition of my soul onto my students, my subject, and our way of being together. The entanglements I experience in the classroom are often no more or less than the convolutions of my inner life. Viewed from this angle, teaching holds a mirror to the soul. If I am willing to look in that mirror and not run from what I see, I have a chance to gain self knowledge – and knowing myself is as crucial to good teaching as knowing my students and my subject. (p. 3)

In this view, teaching is an articulation of our own unarticulated self. Palmer, goes on to state that "good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; but good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher" (p. 10). This means that teachers or pre-ervice teachers can have great technical teaching skills, but if they are missing the interpersonal connections of teachers to their students, then good teaching and learning is unlikely to occur. Identity and integrity, in this view, then are the crossroads where these connections and relationships with students can be built. In this perspective,

knowing oneself teacher identity, is as important, as being good at technical teaching skills.

Fortunately, Palmer (2007) also addresses identity as a capacity to be enlarged. He emphasizes that identity is not left behind, rather it is evolving, growing, and continuously becoming.

In this idea of continually becoming and enlarging identity, Palmer also discusses the fear of losing identity. He suggests:

> If we embrace the promise of diversity, of creative conflict, and of "losing" in order to "win," we still face one final fear – the fear that a live encounter with otherness will challenge or even compel us to change our lives. (p. 39)

Closely related to the idea of indentity is the notion of integrity. Integrity, as Palmer (2007) describes, is wholeness found within the nexus of identity. He states:

> Integrity requires that I discern what is integral to my selfhood, what fits and what does not – and that I choose life-giving ways of relating to the forces that converge within me. By choosing integrity, I become more whole, but wholeness does not mean perfection. It means becoming more real by acknowledging the whole of who I am. (p. 14)

This perspective of integrity is important in realizing acceptance of oneself, all of the good, bad, and perhaps ugly. Whatever the reality of our identity, Palmer allows for this wholeness in integrity to accept where we are with space to work toward a new reality by acknowledging who we are, in the complexities of our lives.

Identity and integrity, according to Palmer, are "…subtle dimensions of the complex, demanding, and lifelong process of self-discorvery" (p. 14). It is essential for these to work in concert, woven together like fine tapestry, complementing and not competing. If we do this, we find joy in our vocation and teaching. If not, our work and those whom we share it with will suffer (Palmer, 2007).

This connection, through communion of a teacher's inner world or self with the outer world, in which our lives intersect with the lives of students, is the connection of identity and integrity. Connectedness, as Palmer (2007) states, is a capacity that good teachers posess. Teachers "are able to weave a complex web of connections among themselves, their stubjects, and their students so that students can learn to weave a world for themselves" (p. 11). In this light, teaching, as described by Palmer comes from the heart.[2]

To further this view, Palmer also discusses connection to community in education. Community can be created among teachers and students, in spaces of learning. Connection to a community of learners is one that, according to Palmer, "education requires" (2007, p. 92). He shares:

> The model of commuity we seek is one that can embrace, guide, and refine the core mission of education--the mission of knowing, teaching, and learning. We will find clues to its dimensions at the heart of the image of teaching that most challenges me: to teach is to create a space in which the community of truth is practiced. (p. 97)

This form of community in education creates spaces for truth to emerge from the participants though personal reflections and their interactions with others. These communities are guided by good teachers where truths are created, shared, and honed collaboratively by both the students and teachers. Yet, in this view there is neither absolutism nor is there relativism; rather, there is a transcendence in seeking the secrets of truth. Palmer states:

In this community, the process of truth-knowing and truth-telling is neither

[2] Palmer uses the word "heart" to refer both to compassion and to the center of a person's being, as implied by the related word cell "core" and "cour", connoting both centrality and bravery. Similarly, he correlates words like heart and hearth, noting their social and linguistic connections (e.g., heart being the center or core of a person, and hearth historically being the central gathering place in a home around which guests are welcomed and stories are told).

> dictatorial nor anarchic. Instead, it is a complex and internal dance of intimacy and distance, of speaking and listening, of knowing and not knowing, that makes collaborators and co-conspirators of the knowers and the known. (p. 109)

In Palmer's view, then, connectedness is not only the creation of an undivided self by connecting identity and integrity, but of further connecting people to people and to the greater community.

Invisible Privilege

A second dimension of the lens that proved valuable in interpreting data was the concept of invisible privilege. Invisible privilege is unearned power or privilege hidden from those who hold it (McIntosh, 1992). As a matter of definition, it involves taken for granted 'norms' and assumptions in society that allow those with the highest status to maintain their positions because their privilege is unquestioned and seemingly natural. If unexamined, such norms are continually perpetuated not only through the actions of privileged members of society, but also by the complicity of the oppressed as well (Aronowitz, 1991; McIntosh, 1992; McLaren, 1995).

Peggy McIntosh (1992) has described some important ideas around invisible privilege. First, invisible privilege exists throughout society in many forms. Even though McIntosh (1992) described invisible white and male privilege, there are many other forms of invisible societal privilege. Examples are related to sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender stereotypes, mental ability, physical ability, and privileged or preferred bodytypes, and relative thinnness and obesity (Bain, 1990; Greenleaf & Weiller, 2005; O'Brien, Hunter & Banks, 2007; Sage, 1997).

While invisible privilege exists in society, it is also found in education. In education, the frameworks serving invisible privilege function to perpetuate the belief

that we, as teachers, are neutral participants in the processes of teaching and learning. Simultaneously, they serve particular ideological interests which are often invisible or hidden from those who hold them (Apple, 1992; McCarthy & Dimitriadis, 2000). If unexamined, this belief of neutrality can be a key factor in maintaining current, problematic societal norms (Apple, 1992, Aronowitz, 1991; McLaren, 1995).

In many ways, physical education and the greater human movement culture have helped replicated dominant culture. The evidence can be seen in all facets of society. Sage (1997) states:

> Because competitive human movement activities, by their very nature, bring status and rewards according to supreme performance, they provide convincing symbolic support for the myth that dedication, sacrifice, and hard work will bring upward social mobility. (p. 24)

This invisible privilege in physical education works with cultural conditioning to contribute to meritocratic social order, thus perpetuating the myth that the social class system in the United States is more open to social mobility than it really is.

Invisible privilege can also function to perpetuate the dominant ideology of meritocracy in general. Meritocracy perpetuates a privilege narrative, reinforcing ideas that success is due solely to individual hard work. This feeds into human movement's cultural narrative that personal goals and achievements, are due to hard work and personal efforts. The ideology of meritocracy is perpetuated in part, by maintaining social class inequality, and is often spread through the myth that sacrifice, hard work, and dedication will bring about social mobility (Sage, 1990, 1997).

Invisible privilege, and the discourse of meritocracy, serves to promote "equal opportunity" and "rags to riches" narratives thereby exploiting people born into poverty, promoting the belief that working hard, saving money and sheer effort will help one rise

to a level of social, economic, and occupational importance (Sage, 1997). This is often echoed in the "if I can do it, you can do it" mantra sometimes espoused by people who have come out of poverty and made better lives for themselves.

Critical Postmodernism

The third dimension of the lens used to interpret data was what might be considered critical postmodernism. I recognize that it could be argued that critical and postmodern theories are conflicting. For example, while critical theory is a grand theory, postmodernism is a critique of grand theory. However, despite spite of their differences, both theories tend to disrupt taken-for-granted assumptions and common power structures. Additionally, they are both explicitly interested in disruption to promote more equitable and just social conditions. Therefore, from my perspective they have several shared and complementary commonalities and are used together for the purposes of my study (Butler 1994; Friere, 1970; Kincheloe, 2008; Kirk & Tinning, 1990; Lyotard, 1994).

Essentially critical theory is an explanation of social relationships and inequities originating from Marxist views on economic and political exploitation and alienation. It operates from a framework that works to uncover and question dominant assumptions, power inequalities, and social relations in society (Culpan & Bruce, 2007; Freire, 1974; Kincheloe, 2008). Critcal theory offers an alternative approach to understanding the ideologies behind modern cultural, economic, social and political foundations, and assumptions.

Among other things, critical theory is concerned with advancing the emancipatory function of knowledge. It is organized around assumptions that people

can change their world. It suggests asymmetrical social divisions are based on history; in other words, on dialectical relationships between material conditions and dominant social norms and ideals that have reinforced each other over time. Thus, critical theories aim to transform and explain circumstances creating asymmetrical views, systems, and footholds in society.

Postmodern thought began to emerge during the twentieth century as an increasingly explicit critique of modernity. During this period, postmodern critiques began calling into question the tenets of modernity, of mechanistic, and reductionistic thinking, of individualism, grand narratives, binary logic, linear progress, and dominant norms of objectivity. Today many postmodern thinkers emphasize multiplicity of realities, self-interrogation, subjectivity, and knowledge as power (Foucault, 1980; Lyotard, 1994).

Postmodernism, as Lyotard, (1994) suggested, constituted a radical break from modern habits and social practices that rejects modern narratives and any other form of totalizing thought. This critique rejects grand and totalizing narratives of modernity. It also critiques universal truths while embracing local truths. While many postmodern theorists have rejected modernity (Lyotard, 1994), others have suggested that a postmodernism is more of a critique and extension than an outright rejection of all things modern (Doll, 1993).

While there are critiques of both critical theory and postmodernism, these perspectives congruent in their efforts to disrupt and generate new modes of social organization and thinking. In these modes of social organization and thinking, new forms of language, cultural assumptions, meanings, social movements, and power

relations can emerge (Butler, 1994). In this view, I believe, critical postmodernism perspectives can validate and affirm lived experience as it critiques established regimes of power and embraces greater social and cultural multiplicity and context specificity.[3]

Freedom, justice, and equality are aspirations of many critical and postmodern thinkers. These aspirations must be sought through some sort of critical understanding. From a critical postmodernism perspectives freedom is lived, not static. It requires an opening of space to what can become new realities (Greene, 1988). Thus, I believe, viewing future possibilities of physical education and physical education teacher education through this dimension of my interpretive lens was useful for the interpretation of this case.

Methodological Framework

In the following section, I provide an overview of my research methods and procedures. I began with the aims and nature of the study, and then provided the methodological framework. Next, I discussed the participants and the setting, data collection methods and means of data analysis. Finally, I discuss issues of confidence and trustworthiness.

Aims and Nature of the Study

Traditionally, physical education and human movement culture researchers have accepted positivist assumptions and methods (McKay, Gore & Kirk, 1990). A key assumption of positivist research is the modernist notion of objectivity. Objectivity is a perception of reality that holds that the truth or meaning of a thing exists or is located in the object itself rather than in the minds of people or in some relationship between the

[3] Additional thoughts on the use of theory to interpret research findings can be found in Appendix A.

objects and people. Objectivism is based on the idea that it is possible to gain knowledge about the world by upholding an emotionally separate and value-free posture regarding that which one is studying (Sparkes, 1992). It also reflects an absolutist worldview, which presumes a singular, universal, unchanging reality existing independent of sociohistorical context and individual perspective.

Within this perspective, researchers are tasked with seeking absolute truth while studying phenomena objectively and independently of their own social, historical political, or social frames of reference. This epistemological view is especially problematic when considering human behavior, since the notion of objectivity hinders the advancement of social research due to the researcher's lack of engagement in "real world" settings. Knowledge is a social construct. As Freire (1998) stated,

> Knowing is a social process, who's individual dimension, however, cannot be forgotten or even devalued. The process of knowing, which involves the whole conscious self, feelings, emotions, memory, affects, an epistemologically curious mind, focused on the object, equally involves other thinking subjects, that is, others also capable of knowing and curious. This simply means that the relationship called "thinking" is not enclosed in a relationship "thinking subject-knowable object" because it extends to other thinking subjects. (p. 92)

If knowledge is a social process, there are problematic issues and limits to what objectivist research can reveal in the study of human knowledge construction, meaning making, and the complex processes of negotiating, and navigating social relationships.

Based on these epistemological and ontological limitations, I utilized interpretivist, relativist, and naturalistic approaches to gain insights and perspectives into the influence of my critical curriculum on my students' professional and personal development and understanding.

The goal of this study was to "understand the phenomenon and the meaning it

has for the participants" (Merriam, 2009, p. 34). As part of understanding the phenomenon, I sought to understand and interpret the possible influence that my critical curriculum might have on pre-service physical education teachers' personal and professional development and understanding. Rather than seeking absolute truths, my purpose was to distinguish how a critical curriculum might impact my students' personal and professional development and understanding. I wanted to interpret "how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam, 2009, p. 5). Consequently, this study was doubly interpretive (Erickson, 1973) as I sought to interpret meaning from my students' interpretations of the influence of a critical curriculum on their personal and professional development and understanding.

Finally, since I am interested not only in understanding my students' perspectives but also in improving my ability to teach in ways that promote emancipation and social justice, this study also incorporated aspects of critical research and teacher action research (Carspecken, 1996; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Greenwood & Levin, 2007; Merriam, 2009; Quantz and O'Conner, 1988). These aspects of my approach aimed to explicate hidden power relationships, value assumptions, and invisible privilege in ways that would not only inform theory and practice for others but that would also help transform my own teaching.

Case Study Approach

This study was qualitative in nature with classic anthropological and sociological influences. Interpretivist research attempts to understand people's thinking and perspectives. Case study was an appropriate methodology for this study since it

seeks to understand and interpret meaning within a bounded system. The bounded system in this case included the students in my Introduction to Physical Education and Health class (Stake, 1995).

I am aware there are other concerns with case study approaches. These concerns involve ethical issues, researcher bias, issues of reliability, validity, and generalizability, and little guidance to the novice case study researcher. While limitations do exist, Stake, (1995) states that the reader, not the researcher, determines the application of knowledge to fit their personal contexts. According to Stake (1995) case researchers will;

> Like others, pass along to readers some of their personal meanings of events and relationships – and fail to pass along others. They know that the reader, too, will add and subtract, invent and shape-reconstructing the knowledge in ways that leave it . . . more likely to be personally useful. (p. 455)

Thus, while the use of case study has been criticized, Merriam (2009) concludes that "its use far outweighs its limitations" (p.50).

Through what Geertz (2004, p. 153) refers to as "thick description", researachers can bring a case studies alive to a reader,and create vivid imagery. Geertz (2004) discusses the quality of thick description:

> As interworked systems of signs (what, ignoring provincial usages, I would call symbols), culture is not a power, something to which social events, behaviors, institutions, or processes can be causually attributed; it is a context, something within which they can be intellibly—that is, thickly – described. (p. 153)

Thick description is necessary as it illuminates the case in a mode not possible by other means in research. The aim of this case, as with all case study research is to unpack the case and represent it to the world through thick description, to extend the experience of the teacher and students from the case.

Trustworthiness

Since validity, reliability, and ethics are often criticized component of case studies, it is important to discuss how I enhanced trustworthiness within this study. Multiple methods were used to develop trustworthiness, including triangulation, member checking, and thick description (Creswell, 2012).

Triangulation was used to compare data from observations, interviews, and document analysis to build coherent justifications for emerging themes or categories (Cresswell, 2012; Merriam, 2009). Member checking was conducted with students, toward the end of the course. Through member checking, students helped to determine the accuracy of the findings (Cresswell, 2012). Students' reviewed their interview transcripts and made corrections, changed, or added information provided during the interview.

Further trustworthiness was created and enhanced through a rich-thick description (Geertz, 2004), which served to illuminate the case and bring it to life for the reader. These facets of the study not only added to its trustworthiness but also to the quality of interpretation and description of the case in general.

Setting and Participants

In describing the setting and participants for this study, I must also share my experiences and describe myself. I am a forty-five year-old Caucasian female. This is my twenty-second year of working in some sort of educational arena. My background consists of coaching basketball at the college and high school level, teaching elementary physical education, and now teaching in a physical education program at the university level for six years. I have been at the university where I currently teach for five years.

I grew up in the state where I work, in a small rural community, and am a graduate of the public school system and the regional university system. I grew up in what would be considered lower middle class to poverty circumstances. I participated in many sports while growing up, but excelled in basketball, attended college on basketball scholarship, and played throughout my time in college until I completed my degree. After I graduated, I started coaching at the collegiate level.

The class where the case was studied is on a university campus of around 17,000 students. The majority of students were from the state where the university is located. The university is identified as a "Metropolitan University" and is in a suburban/urban area of the state's capitol, and largest city and metropolitan area.

The college under which the program belongs is the largest college on campus. The department within the college that houses the physical education teacher education program is the Kinesiology and Health Studies Department. The department has transitioned overtime and originally began in 1928 as a physical education program.

The physical education teacher education program at my university has a rich heritage with several actively engaged emeriti faculty members. Enrollment for physical education teacher education majors has fluctuated over time but currently averages around 110 majors a year.

The course utilized for the case was an Introduction to Physical Education and Health course. The course description from the course catalog is as follows:

> This course is designed to give the prospective teacher of physical education/health an insight into this area of specialization. Included are the historical, philosophical, psychological, and sociological principles of health, physical education and recreation with a survey of the latest research and literature in the field. This course will serve to provide opportunity to integrate learning from previous courses.

The class is a 2000 level, three-hour course. It was designed for college sophomores to take as an induction to the physical education teacher education major and was a required course for our majors. The course was open to any major, which allowed students who were not identified as physical education teacher education majors to enroll.

The learning space for this course was a shared university classroom. This was where the majority of the study was conducted. The classroom has four large oval wooden tables with seating for up to eight students around each table. The tables and chairs took up the majority of space in the classroom. The mobile chairs were typical office chairs with cushioned seats and are mobile. There was a smart board in the back of the classroom and a variety of presentation technology including a projector available for use in the front of the classroom. The front of the classroom also had a lectern for the instructor. Dry erase boards were available in the front of the classroom. The room was typically clean, bright and comfortable. Since there could be up to thirty students enrolled in the course. Often there was limited space to move about in the room for students and myself.

Most of the course materials were housed in the online learning platform, Desire to Learn (D2L). This allowed students access to course materials outside of class. Students were required to use D2L to turn in several assignments in 'Dropbox' during the semester. Along with understanding how to access and use D2L, students were required to purchase a textbook for the course, "Introduction to Physical Education, Sport and Fitness."

While this class was a course for physical education teacher education majors,

there were other students with majors of all varieties. These were typically the majority of students in this course. In this particular class (N=29) there were nine students who had self -identified as physical education teacher education majors. The remaining students had majors such as business administration, sociology, and criminal justice. Students in our teacher preparation program were typically from this state.

Students in the class not only varied in field of study or major but also in age, gender, and classification in school. The age range for this class is nineteen to thirty-one. There were nine self-identified females and 20 self-identified males in the class. There were no Freshmen, 14 Sophomores, 12 Juniors and three Seniors.

My curriculum came to life through assignments, activities, and experiences involving my students, myself, and the teachings of various educational theorists**.** In the first few weeks of the semester, I worked to get to know students on many levels. To do this, my students and I went through various experiences such as icebreaker activities, autobiographical informational worksheets, introduction discussions, and student presentations of information about themselves and their goals. I also shared information about myself with my students, including my personal and professional background along with my pathway to teacher education.

From activities such as these, I began creating a snapshot of my students' perceived identities. This provided a context for understanding what they might want to do with their lives, or participate in as a vocation. We worked together to build trust and connections with one another. This was done through mutual sharing of experiences, narratives, and personal biographies in a safe and supported learning space. While these

efforts were preliminary to moving forward in the course, the process of getting to know my students never ceased.

The contexts my students shared provided framework on how to progress with my critical curriculum. Based on Parker Palmer's (2007) ideas around connectedness, I worked to weave the lived histories, and vocational desires of my students', within the context of our shared world, the content of the course, and my own history. Palmer (2007) states:

> Good teachers possess a capacity for connectedness. They are able to weave a complex web of connections among themselves, their subjects, and their students so that students can learn to weave a world for themselves. (p. 11)

A sense of connectedness, and a foundation of trust, continued being constructed within the class, on a daily basis, both in and out of class. One tool I used was the information students provided from an "About Me" inventory. This inventory provided students with the opportunity to tell me about themselves on many levels, along with asking more poignant questions such as, why they wanted to become teachers. Along with the inventory, students also made an "Emerging Philosophy" presentation, where they share information about where they are from, their familial structures, and what they want to do with their lives. This assignment, too, provided great insight into my students' identities, and how they see themselves. There were many occasions where students contradicted themselves within the two assignments. This helped me, as their teacher, dig deeper into helping understanding who they are and who they want to become.

I relied upon these assignments for the entire semester as touchstones of my students' identities. I used them to make deeper connections with them by talking about

people from their hometowns I might know or discussing the status of athletic teams in their respective high schools. I also used this information to joke with or tease students about hometown mascots or notable community information in the news. I worked to develop relationships of trust and respect with my students so they would know they could trust me and rely upon me for help, advice, and support. Many students, by their final semesters, refer to me as their "academic mom".

These relationships are essential to offering a critical curriculum. They are not just nurtured in class, but in the spaces between classes, both psychological and physical. Our building also houses faculty offices, a computer lab, and work and relaxation spaces for students. Many of our students spend the entire day in our building, so we cross paths on a regular basis. I took advantage of this proximity to have informal discussions and engage with my students on topics unrelated to classwork. Additionally, we set up monthly events with our students to interact on multiple levels, and not just in the classroom environment as professor and student. While I have office hours, students know they are welcome any time to ask questions, seek guidance, or just come by for a coffee and chat. Students are also able to text or call me if they have questions outside of class or school hours. My office was often filled with students sitting and talking about their daily grind of classes, work, and friends, or just joking and laughing with each other.

The environment that I worked to build in my class was deliberately carried over into every space of my work with my students. Furthermore, with these types of relationships where we respect and trust one another, enable us to have both easy and

tough conversations about topics from best practices to professional dispositions to ideological differences.

While these efforts to develop deep and meaningful relationships worked with most students, there were still some who chose to remain guarded. With these students, I worked above and beyond to get to know them and figure out what they needed from me, to help them open up and engage on a deeper level in class, with their peers, with me, or with program activities. There was never an exact formula for what could be done with every student, but our similar athletic backgrounds and growing up in the same state sometimes helped to open the door. Often, I had extra conversations with these students before or after class or around the building just to try to find out what was going on in their daily lives, and then I worked find ways to support them. Examples of support could be a text or just asking how they did on a tough exam. It could also be offering to take them to lunch or to get a coffee and chat. No matter the situation, as the teacher, I worked to engage with all students even if they did not want to engage in or outside of class.

Once I had a sense of my students as people and as students and believed that we had created an environment of trust and respect, we began moving forward with critical curricular activities. These activities were designed to disrupt, and open space, for students to find new ways to view their teacher identities (Green, 1998; Friere, 1970; Palmer, 2007)**,** and to challenge the positivistic ontological stance often pervasive in physical education (Kirk, 1986; Fernandez-Balboa, 1995 & 1997a; Tinning, 1997).

The following examples of curricular activities were based on contextual factors involving my students and myself. I relied upon what I learned about students in the

beginning of the semester to determine which materials I would use in the course. Since each group of students within a class can vary, materials should vary as well. Like others, I was always seeking new means of exposing other ways of seeing the world and of disrupting our culturally bound identities. Listed below are some of the curricular activities I used, along with the rationale as to why I chose to use these materials as part of my critical physical education teacher education curricula (Table 1).

Curricular Activity	**Rationale**
Inventories: ATOP and BAOP (2009)	These inventories help provide students with insight into biases or attitudes they may have about obese persons, whether implicit or explicit. ATOP – *Attitude Toward Obese Persons* BAOP – *Beliefs About Obese Persons*
HBO documentary film, *The Weight of the Nation* (2012) (Four-Part Series)	This series, although dated, provides students with other perspectives of the obesity epidemic. I also provide discussion questions to promote deeper thinking about the issues of the obesity epidemic such as environmental, infrastructure, culture and other health issues. Additionally, I want to know whether their perspectives change, and why or why not.
Documentary film, *Fed Up (2014)*	This documentary focuses on the food industry and how it is working against the general public. This should help my students gain a larger picture of the obesity epidemic. It also helps them challenge mass media, critically analyze marketing and the implications in our environment.
Cultural Plunge Houser, N. (2008) Nieto, J. (2006)	The cultural plunge is an assignment my students participate in later in the semester. The purpose is to have students place themselves in a minority situation on someone else's turf. Students do the plunge and then write a reflection paper discussing their experiences. More often than not, their perspectives change how they see different people.
Courage to Teach (Introduction) Palmer, P. (2007)	This reading is used to help students see that they matter in the classroom. Physical education is not just about equipment or materials. Who they are as a person makes a difference. This reading is preliminary to other critical pieces as it lays the foundation for moving forward and understanding that we must be the best humans possible to make a difference in the classroom and make an impact on future generations.

Unpacking the Knapsack of Invisible Privilege. McIntosh, P. (1992)	This is a reading used to discuss all sorts of invisible privileges we experience. If our privilege is not white male privilege, such as discussed by McIntosh, we may have able-bodied privilege and movement skill privilege. We must understand what this means and implies for how we should see and treat others.
Star Power Simulation Game. Shirts, G. (1969)	Star Power is a simulation game I have used to discuss unearned power and privilege. I use this to highlight how we may possess and perpetuate power and privilege in life without earning it.

Table 1. Curricular activities and rationales

Further discussion of how these curricular activities were used in the class and the implications of their use will be discussed in the findings and implications sections of this paper.

Methods of Data Collection

Data collected for this study fell into two categories; data relevant to the research and data used to provide context. Data used to provide context consisted of students' and my own personal background information in relation to the study, along with contextual information directly bound to my critical curriculum. Data collected consisted of multiple artifacts from students' work, questionnaires, field notes from classroom observations, and a semi-structured interview.

Field notes were kept during observation periods in class. Semi-structured interviews were heuristic in nature and were written to elicit meaningful information regarding student's perspectives at the end of the semester (Merriam, 2009). Interviews were audio taped and transcribed.

All data collected from students in the form of course work were copied and graded, and the graded copy handed back to the students. All copied work with student names or identifiers was redacted. All interview, document and observation data were

secured on a password-protected computer. Hard copy documents were secured in my office in a locked file cabinet. Student identities, location names, and university identifiers have not been used, and students were provided pseudonyms to protect anonymity.

Data Analysis

Data analysis began the first day of class. From the first artifact collected, I used open coding to begin categorizing documents, field notes, rudimentary notes, and interview transcripts (Merriam, 2009). From these categories or buckets (Marshall & Rossman, 2006) of data, I used axial coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2007) to refine the open codes into meaningful groupings.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) used constant comparison as a means for constructing grounded theory, Merriam (2009) suggests it is an inductive and comparative method appropriate for use within qualitative research. Merriam (2009) states:

> Making sense out of data involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read – it is the process of making meaning. (pp. 175-176)

To help make meaning, according to Merriam, (2009) while processing or interpreting findings, theoretical notes, or questions that emerged, as part the constant comparison process. Furthermore, if a new hypothesis or question emerged (theoretical sampling) it became part of the process of constant comparison, until theoretical saturation was reached (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Data were collected and organized in a systematic process.

Findings

For pre-service physical education teachers, often, social norms of physical education have been engrained through ongoing influences of modernity, meritocracy, and an ontological stance that has historically been positivistic. These influences have aided in the creation of frameworks for pre-service physical educators that influence students' and teachers' worldviews and identities. Further compounding the impact of socialization, students' come to our program with many unexamined privileges, such as thinness privilege, able-bodied privilege, and movement skill privilege.

Additionally, athlete identity among physical educators often perpetuates dominant macho masculinity, strong body image based self-concept, and place high value on physical attributes, aggressiveness, and competition (Greenleaf & Weiller, 2005; Obrien, Hunter & Banks, 2007). Genetic privilege of thinness and ability also feed into 'athletic' identity. While the responses from my students' were rather typical of most incoming candidates to the program, they were layered with aspects of human movement privilege, thus furthering the influence of this aspect of my interpretive lens to examine the case.

Multiple themes emerged through the analysis of the data collected during the sixteen week semester. The overall findings were positive in that students' perspectives were influenced, to some extent, by my critical curriculum. Three overarching themes emerged from the data. Overall, the curriculum appeared to shift in thinking and understanding, decentralize dominant perceptions and beliefs, and have a strong emotional impact.

Shift in Thinking and Understanding

One of the main findings was that my students' thinking and understanding began to shift or change as a result of the curriculum. There appeared to be notable and conscious shifts from preliminary thoughts and understandings shared upon entry into the class. While these shifts were noted throughout the semester, some were illustrated in two pre- and post-course inventories used to gain insight into students' attitudes and beliefs about obese persons: *Attitudes Toward Obese Persons scale* (ATOP) (Allison, 2009) and *Beliefs About Obese Persons scale* (BAOP) (Allison, 2009). At the beginning of the semester, I had students complete these two inventories. Then we watched the HBO documentary *The Weight of the Nation* (2012). Following discussion of the documentary, we spiraled back to the inventories to discuss possible weight-biased stereotypes and beliefs about the causes of obesity. With this discussion in combination of the documentary and the inventories, we began opening space for the possibility of shifts in thinking around our beliefs and attitudes about the causes of obesity. From the beginning of the semester to the end, there were subtle changes in thinking. Albeit small changes, both the students' comments and their ATOP and BOAP scores suggested that their attitudes and beliefs about obese persons shifted during the semester. The ATOP and BOAP inventories are twenty and eight category Likert-type items assessments. Higher scores in the ATOP inventory indicate better attitudes towards persons who are obese. Each inventory has specific scoring instructions (Allison, 2009). Higher scores, in the BOAP indicate a more negative belief about obese persons. (Allison, 2009). Results are located in Table 2.

ATOP Undergraduate Mean SD Range 63.9 16.7 23-96	BOAP Undergraduate Mean SD Range 19.4 8.7 0-41
Pre Test: N = 17, M = 51.1	Pre Test: M = 17, M = 18.2
Post Test: N = 17, M = 60.3	Post Test: N = 17, M = 14.5

Table 2. Results of ATOP and BOAP

While there were many instances noted from the semester revealing shifts in thinking and understanding, some powerful examples came through in their reflections after viewing of the film *The Weight of the Nation* (2012). One illustration of this was from the written work of Riley, "Yes, I didn't realize they cared to lose any weight because I have never been that close to someone who is obese." This statement reflects a beginning of his shift in thinking and understanding about obese and overweight persons.

Another instance in which this was revealed, was by Malique. He stated:

> This video has changed my perception because it shows what obese people go through. There is a constant struggle of eating food and not thinking about the calorie intake. I noticed how obese people constantly struggle with confidence due to their appearance. They all talked about how they can do other things so easily, but when it comes to eating right they cannot find the will to stay away from unhealthy food and overeating.

This example, among others, revealed beginning shifts in thinking as students considered the multiple complexities of the obesity epidemic. In addition to Malique's example, Bailey stated:

> It makes me look at obese people differently from now on because I know that their obesity is probably not their fault and that it may just come from their genes.

Without the video or some other means of highlighting existing complexities, Malique, Bailey, and others may have never considered there to be alternate realities, that exist outside of their own, without experiencing obesity first hand.

While some students shared their perspectives around obese persons, others illustrated shifts in thinking and understanding about how they envision themselves as future educators. An example of this was my student Baxter. In the first day of class, he declared he was only in this class because he was told he had to teach in order to coach. Toward the end of the semester, Baxter shared this insight:

> I love to work out and play sports and teaching PE would be a good fit for me since I really want to coach. I can now see how being a good coach would help me be a good teacher and being a good teacher would help me be a good coach.

Another instance of a shift in thinking and understanding was revealed when I asked Riley why he wanted to be a teacher. Riley, like Baxter, told me that he really only decided to major in physical education because he wanted to coach. Riley went on to explain that, as the semester progressed, he really thought he would enjoy teaching and physical education made the most sense for him, as he really loved being a physically active person.

Such findings from students reveal a shift in thinking and understanding, illustrating the positive influence of critical curricula, on their professional and personal growth and understanding. This shift in thinking is articulated by Giroux (1981), as he describes how students begin to explore the dialectical interplay critical curricula can ignite.

> Teaching must be viewed, in part, as an intensely personal affair. This suggests that prospective teachers can be given the concepts and methods to delve into their own biographies to look at the sedimented history they carry around, and to

> learn how ones own culture represents a dialectical interplay between private experience and history. (pp. 158-159)

Students' shared on muliple occasions how their views, thinking, and understanding were influenced, challenged and thus began to shift due to their experiences from the critical curriculum.

Decentralization of Perspectives and Beliefs

In addition to initial shifts in thinking and understanding, some students exhibited a deeper decentralization of their more fundamental beliefs or worldviews I refer to these experiences as decentralization because of the nature of the shifts students described in their thinking and understanding as they pertain to seeing others as whole and passionate people capable of living full lives. I believe this could indicate that students are shifting toward a more pluralistic and perhaps less positivistic worldview..

An example of a student whose beliefs appeared to become less centralized was Jasmine, who described herself as becoming aware and understanding of other peoples' struggles. She stated:

> Before this video when I saw an obese person or someone overweight I didn't really care and just thought it was their own fault and they are probably lazy and don't eat healthy. But I didn't realize that a lot of obesity is inherited from parents and some people really can't help it and I feel for them a lot more now.

Jasmine further elaborated, "I was pretty surprised that I had such negative ideas about overweight people. I realize now, they are not just lazy, but they really struggle with losing weight."

Another example involves Malique's written experience from his cultural plunge in which he visited a mosque. He stated:

> During my experience, I quickly discovered that this was all an inward emotional problem that I had to overcome and not be so judgmental towards a

> group or individual I have never met. I believe that I came into the situation wanting them to turn out how I envisioned them. But in the end they are the complete opposite. I found out that even though we are different in skin color, or beliefs, they are just like my family and friends, and people are the same no matter what culture they come from.

While his experience encompassed a few of the themes in this study, after conversations with Malique, I found this experience to fit best within the theme of decentralization. Malique revealed that he was beginning to think and reflect on the reality of other people's lives and experiences. Essentially, he appeared to be shifting from an egocentric view of the world and allowing for other realities to exist.

Another instance of decentralization involved Avery's experience. She described attending a friend's family gathering among an ethnic group different from her own. Avery said:

> I came into the situation wanting them (my friend's family) to turn out how I envisioned them but in the end they are the complete opposite. I found out that even though we are different in skin color and beliefs, they are just like my friends. People are the same no matter what culture they come from.

Avery described that she was beginning to think that just because people look and believe differently, it does not make them altogether different. There could still be commonalities. Her thinking, subsequent to her experience, demonstrates a decentralization of beginning to accept that those who outwardly appear to be different are very often not, and that common ground can be found and differences can be appreciated.

Another example of decentralization can be seen in the words of Raye both as she wrote of her cultural plunge experience and as she expressed her beliefs about people who are overweight.

> The cultural plunge was an experience that really made me step outside of my

> box. I would have never done anything like I did without it being a class assignment. It really helped me wake up and realize that I need to be a better person. Also, I was pretty surprised that I had such negative ideas about overweight people. I realize now, they are not just lazy, but they really struggle with losing weight.

To follow up on her experience, Raye shared in class that she was planning a trip over a holiday break. While visiting friends in New Mexico, she also planned to visit a Native American Reservation school. She said that without her experience with the cultural plunge, she would have never had the nerve to plan something so outside her comfort zone. She added that now she will try to push herself to do more uncomfortable things in life.

Yet another instance of decentralization was expressed by Bishop as he discussed aspects of the course that influenced his growth during the semester. He stated that the cultural plunge was "different". When I asked him to explain what he meant by different, he said "it helped me see people who are overweight in a different way". "In a different way?" I asked, to which Bishop replied:

> Before this semester, I didn't quite understand how being overweight can affect an individual. I didn't understand because I have always been physically fit whether I ate healthy or not. I am sad to admit it, but I was one of the people who would look at individuals who were overweight and say to myself "how could you do that to yourself and not try to change things." I am truly sad to say this, but I am being completely honest. This class educated me on the fact that most of the time it is not their fault. Poor eating habits, genetics, and not well educated on physical fitness can all play a large role.

Bishop also shared that he believe she does see himself different than before the beginning of the semester. He shared the following:

> I think now I can see myself liking being a teacher for high school students, maybe not the little ones, but definitely high school P.E. I definitely want to coach, but before I guess I didn't realize what it all meant. I just knew that I wanted to coach football and maybe other sports.

Another instance of decentralization was revealed as Emma discussed her culminating class experience:

> The class was not what I expected, but (laughing) it was still good. I learned a lot. Like, I didn't realize that laws impact our health, like obesity and fast food restaurants, or (the lack of) sidewalks. I think that I also realized, that even though I am a minority, I need to be more open to others especially in the classroom.

During Malique's interview, other examples of decentralization were illuminated. When asked if any other aspects of his thinking changed in the course of the semester, Malique responded that he didn't think so. He followed up to say that he had always thought of himself as being pretty open to other people. But then he said:

> You know, I think, the experience I had going to the Mosque (during his cultural plunge) did help me see things differently. Like, I thought it was going to be one way, with certain types of people, and it was completely different. I kind of felt bad for being judgmental. I do think I am different now, or at least try to be when it comes to people different from me.

At the end of Malique's interview, he thanked me and said the cultural plunge was the best assignment he has done while in college. I asked him why, and he said, "I think I am a better person now."

Students' discussions and descriptions offered substantial insight into the idea of decentralization. The findings revealed that some of the students allowed themselves to see other perspectives and to see that people who seem very different from them have equally passionate beliefs and difficult struggles in life. I belives these examples revealed students perhaps becoming less egocentric and more focused on understanding and acknowledging other perspectives.

The decentralization I observed makes me think of Parker Palmer's (2007) description of the paradox of teaching and learning, with implications for future

physical educators to move past seeing the world as "either-or" and instead seeing as "both-and" (p. 63). As pre-service physical educators begin to experience this kind of transformation, perhaps they can eliminate the historical thinking that continues to place teachers in central positions of privilege and power, and instead begin to see teachers as learners with students and students as teachers (Fernandez-Balboa, 1997a; Freire, 1970). McLaren (1989) situates this type of critical experience as:

> The process through which students learn to critically appropriate knowledge existing outside their immediate experience in order to broaden their understanding of themselves, the world, and the possibilities for transforming the taken-for-granted assumptions about the way we live. (p. 186)

Strong Emotional Impact

The third finding that emerged was that the curriculum had a strong emotional impact on the students. The emotional impact was manifested in different ways; guilt, fear, shame, and anxiety were emotions students described before, during, and after various assignments, experiences, and discussions. Several students stated in the reflection of their cultural plunges that fear of beginning their plunge held them in their cars while they contemplated their next steps. A few students admitted to failing on the first attempt and never exiting their cars, not completing the cultural plunge until later. They said they had to build up more courage and tackle fears they had of their "others".

One instance of this was an experience Dane described. He clarified that he was a heterosexual male, and his cultural plunge was to go to a known "gay" club. Dane stated:

> When I got to the club, I couldn't get out of my car. I was so scared. I just sat there gripping my steering wheel. I finally opened the door and made myself get out. Even when I opened the door to go in, I could hardly breathe I was so nervous, my heart was beating out of my chest! I thought terrible things would happen to me when I went in. I was worried that someone from church might see me going in, or someone I knew would see me there and think I was gay.

While Dane's fears were very real, and he was anxious, nervous, and scared, his later statements provide more insight to his experience. He went on to write in his cultural plunge paper:

> Once I got into the club, I was so much more relaxed. It was totally crazy in there, but I was safe, no one was hitting on me, or pointing out that I did not belong there. I came to appreciate that they (men who are gay) have a place to have fun and be themselves. I bet they do not get to do that all of the time like I do. I actually felt bad and embarrassed for being so afraid and thinking bad things about the people there before I even gave them a chance.

Dane described an experience familiar to many who encounter another cultural group. His stated that his gamut of emotions ran from fear, nervousness, courage, and shame, all within the same experience. Dane went on to say, during a class discussion, that this was one of his most meaningful college experiences.

Another instance of strong emotional impact was Jasmine's reflection on one of her class experiences:

> It's amazing that we all have this barrier up because of someone not sharing the same history as you we treat them differently. These plunges helped me change my biases, beliefs, and I also faced my fears of associating with others. This plunge has a long-term effect on my life because I will not view others all the same…

Like many others, Riley discussed his experience along with the emotional impact he felt during a class activity. Riley stated that he felt out of place in his experience in a Chinese Baptist Church, revealing uneasiness and anxiety being in the minority:

> When I walked in for the first time I did feel out of place. Their kindness and openness was special and warmed me up to the experience. You could just tell, they were so thankful for someone from a different race to experience their church experience. I felt guilty for wondering if they would be weird or different before I entered the church. You should never judge someone, or a race, before getting to know the person or the culture.

Experiences such as these have been addressed in the literature. For example, Joe Kincheloe (2008) refers to critical teacher education as a:

> Terrain of discomfort where knowledge is too complex to simply give it out for use on multiple choice test or convergent questions. On the complex epistemological landscape the assumptions teacher candidates bring to the classroom about teaching are challenged, analyzed, and debated. (p. 111-112)

Strong emotional impacts were often typical when students were challenged in ways that disrupted their core beliefs or where fear had grown in the spaces where knowledge should exist.

On the many occasions we discussed the critical assignments in class, students would often have difficulty discussing their thoughts, experiences, or ideas. They appeared uncomfortable in their body language by shifting papers in front of them, fidgeting with their clothes or hair, or just by saying they didn't know how to express their thougths. Digging into these instances, we considered that these feeling may have been due to the challenging experiences and thoughts students were working to understand. This, too, revealed a shift in thinking, the decentralization of more fundamental perspective or belief, or a strong emotional impact.

Although many students exhibited insight and growth, this was not always the case for every student. There were instances throughout the semester where students were discussing and writing about their experiences demonstrating, perhaps, their cognitive dissonance or disequilibrium. However, there were some students who never articulated a shift in thinking and understanding, decentralization of persepctive or belief or strong emotional impact. These are important to recognize because, while I believe the critical curriculum did impact students, and to an extent help them become

more interpretive of the world and perheaps less positivistic, there were some students that never articulated any aspect of dissonance and I never percieved it, through body language or otherwise, in our discussions.

While I do wish that every student could have been impacted by my critical curriculum, this will more than likely never be the case. In fact, as a teacher, it provides many learning opportunites for me, and I will discuss some of those in the Implications section of this paper.

Furthermore, if students continue to pursue experiences, to challenge themselves, in this manner, over time, the process provides an emancipatory, evolutionary like awakening. To what has always been perceived as innocuous and innocent before, there is now a clear view of the constructs, values, and theories of power. From this a new space emerges, a space for imagination, and dreaming, and a space for truth, to be practiced (Greene, 2008; Palmer 2007).

This shift too could be viewed ontologically, shifting from positivistic to more interpretive. This would be an important shift for those who wish to become teachers in being able to see the world with pluralistic lens.

Implications

At the onset of the study, I wondered whether my critical curriculum that my students' and I experienced over the term of a semester, would be influential in their personal and/or professional development and understanding. My hope was for our shared experience, to facilitate the creation of space, and capacity for students and myself, within the intrinsic and extrinsic dialogue of our class. Fernandez-Balboa (1997b) states what I would consider to my aspirations for our shared learning space:

> By dialoguing amongst themselves and listening to one another by sharing their stories and helping each other recover their "voices" and true identities, by speaking up and even talking back", PETE learners may gain new and more empowered identities, realize their commonalities and differences, and discover that they all are worthwhile persons. This can be a strong first step toward personal empowerment, which in turn may later lead towards the liberation of self and others. (p.134)

This study revealed that the utilization of a critical curriculum did to a certain extent, influence students' professional and personal development and understandings. Examples, shared by students', confirmed that the curriculum challenged their thinking, and impacted them emotionally, and in some cases, pushed them to see the world differently. In a sense, we were beginning to create a learning spaces for the realization of a particular kind of freedom, a:

> ...freedom developed by human beings who have acted to make a space for themselves in the presence of others, human beings become "challengers" ready for alternative that include caring and community. And we shall seek, as we go, implications for emancipatory education conducted by and for those willing to take responsibility for themselves and for each other. We want to discover how to open spaces for persons in their plurality, spaces where they can become different, where they can grow. (Maxine Greene, 1998, p. 56)

Within this view and in regard to Maxine Greene's (1998) view of creating space for students to perhaps become different and grow, my critical curriculum did to an extent seem to influence students understanding and development.

Curricular Implications

Further discussions regarding implications deal with my curriculum. Two particular assignments revealed themselves to be the most meaningful by students. These include, Home Box Office's documentary *The Weight of the Nation* (2012), and the *Cultural Plunge* (Houser, 2008; Nieto, 2006). These experiences were meaningful to

students in aiding in their shift in thinking and decentralization, as well as providing a strong emotional impact.

Conversely, students who seemed to have not been impacted by my curriculum provided opportunity for reflection and possible change. As stated above there were two assignments from the curricular materials that seemed to be more meaningful in impacting students, however there were some materials that either I needed to explain differently, use in different ways, or take out of the curriculum all together.

One example of this was the documentary *Fed Up.* I used this documentary to provide students an alternate view of our food industry in the United States. While it does provide this, it was not as meaningful in helping students shift ontologically, or in their personal or professional development and understanding. It is a very informative video, however in terms of a critical curriculum, I may remove it moving forward, or use it in a different way during the course.

Another example of a great assignment that did not garner as much feedback as I thought it would was *StarPower* (1969). I blame this on myself as the facilitator. I used *Starpower* (1969) in class toward the end of the semester, and did not provide enough time for reflection, and feedback. It did elicit the typical responses from students, as some students were angry at the situation created by the game, some cheated, some just sat back and observed, and others took full advantage of their power to oppress others, but, I did not provide enough time for us as a class to unpack the experience and reflect upon it. I would use this activity differently, and do it differently moving forward because, I do feel as though this activity could be a meaningful experience for my

students in helping them view power and privilege if I take the time to help them reflect and contemplate change or action to change.

My final two final examples from my curriculum to discuss are, Peggy McIntosh's paper (1992) and Parker Palmer's Introduction (2007). These are two reading assignments students read outside of class to help provide foundations of understanding and context for discussions during class.

I used Palmer's Introduction (2007) to ground the beginning of our critical curricula and our preliminary shift in our ontological stance from positivistic to possibly more interpretivist, or from an egotistic or black and white worldview to a more pluralistic worldview. This reading is used during our discussion to dig deeper in into the importance of our teacher identities and how we influence and impact every aspect of our teaching and environment. This piece of curricula does not provide data to add to the case, but is an important component in providing a contextual touchstone for the importance of why we need to analyze and reflect on who we are and want to become as teachers.

To follow up in subsequent weeks, I used Peggy McIntosh's paper (1992) to shape a discussion around the forms of privilege we have. We discussed how we can become more conscious and awake to our privilege by recognizing we have it, so that we know how to positively use our privilege to help others. While there are students who are willing to push back on the idea of privilege during discussion, and most often there are a few, conversely, there were also students who speak up about not having the more obvious aspects of privilege, whether skin color or gender. These students were typically more vocal during discussions in sharing examples that are relatable and

understandable. This often helps those who do not understand the idea of privilege, begin to understand. These discussions that came about in class from the Peggy McIntosh (1992) reading are very important in helping students understand ideas of privilege, and provide grounding context ,within the curriculum, as a touch point to address privilege as people and teachers.

Needless to say, there are changes I would make to my curriculum based on my findings. However, it the curriculum make-up is always dependent upon the students that make up my class. Building a critical curriculum is certainly not a formula but a give and take with students, and continual cycle of reflection and action as a teacher to determine the needs and then find possible solutions for particular students or the class as a whole.

Implications for the Profession

Perhaps with a critical perspective, physical education teacher education programs could help pre-service teachers find their intersect of identity and integrity (Palmer, 2007) to help them act against problematic socially constructed models of physical norms involving privileged body sizes and shapes (Fahlberg & Fahlberg, 1997), work against unearned privilege, and be the teachers our children need to help them fall in love with physical activity. Ideally, these teachers would have the ability to reflect critically on media representations and analyze the ideological aspects behind media's portrayal of stereotypes related to race, gender, sexual orientation, and those that pertain specifically to the human movement culture in order to, be able to help their students do the same. In essence, physical education programs should, perhaps strive toward helping pre-service teachers, become educators, who will be in full dialogue

first, with themselves understanding who they are and where they fit in the world, and then with students, and who see their students as individuals, whole human beings full of experiences worthy of being shared.

This shift in physical education teacher education preparation could help move the profession from the historically positivist view influenced by modernity, toward a more postmodern perspective, helping our pre-service teachers do the same. Perhaps possibilities in physical education classrooms could exist such as, competition taking its rightful place in a physical education classroom and being used only as a teaching strategy instead of the core component of the class, or all students finding success and being able to develop confidence in their physical activity skills, students participating in a class free of labels or bullying but only knowing that their best effort is what counts. These are examples of what physical education consists of, in many classrooms around the world, and could be more common with the help of critical experiences such as in a critical curriculum in physical education teacher preparation.

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Chapter Four: Promoting Cognitive Dissonance Through the Use of a Cultural Plunge in Physical Education Teacher Education to Develop Teacher Identity

Abstract

A cultural plunge is essentially an individual placing oneself as a minority, on the turf of another culture (physical exceptionality, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, ethnicity, and/or religion). The use of a cultural plunge assignment in a physical education teacher education program was intended to provide an opening, or disruption, for students to begin to challenge their worldviews and perhaps to think more critically about their place in the world. This manuscript provides a theoretical background, an explanation of a cultural plunge, and anecdotal evidence supporting its efficacy from students who have participated in a cultural plunge.

Keywords: Cognitive dissonance, cultural plunge, pre-service teachers, physical education, critical curriculum

Introduction

For decades there have been a calls for a critical approach to physical education teacher education preparation (Fernandez-Balboa, 1995 & 1997a; Kirk, 1986; Tinning, 1997). This approach has been and continues to be in response to the many influences in physical education such as: pervasive technocratic physical education programs, meritocratic narratives, and unexamined privilege frameworks. Unfortunately, these influences have aided in the creation of schema for pre-service physical educators that impact their worldviews and identities. In addition, pre-service physical educators often have an athlete identity, which is inclusive of dominate macho masculinity and strong body image based self-concepts, and places high value on physical attributes, aggressiveness, and competition (Greenleaf & Weiller, 2005; Obrien, Hunter & Banks, 2007).

These existing perspectives and conditions surrounding physical education continue to privilege some while marginalizing others. Those preparing to teach have often not examined who they are and whom they wish to become as teachers, let alone problematic assumptions related to invisible privilege and various forms of bias.

The use of critical approaches in physical education teacher education could help promote cognitive dissonance, and disruption, to help pre-service physical educators reflect upon their own biographies and identities, to better understand how such factors might influence their teaching, their students, and our society. One such approach, a cultural plunge, will be discussed in this paper.

To unpack the cultural plunge assignment, the following information will be discussed: the theoretical support for critical curricula thus a cultural plunge,

explanation of a cultural plunge, and remarks from students to highlight the efficacy of the assignment.

Theoretical Support for Critical Curriculum

Numerous scholars have addressed the need for a critical focus in education. Decades ago, Jean Piaget (1972) established that learners' efforts to reconcile cognitive dissonance, or disequilibrium, are essential to their intellectual development. Scholars such as, Paulo Friere (1970) and Maxine Greene (1988) promoted the idea of disrupting dominant assumptions to create the necessary social, psychological, and emotional spaces for learning to take place. Numerous others have explored what is required to promote dissonance and safety and critical reflection in the classroom in the service of ongoing growth (Fernandez-Balboa, 1995 & 1997a; Kirk, 1986; Palmer, 2007; Piaget, 1972; Tinning, 1997).

Further support for disruption, to promote learning, and help students challenge their perspectives, in order to develop their teacher identity, is from Palmer (2007). Parker Palmer has gone to great lengths to address connectedness and identiy in aspects of education. In *The Courage to Teach,* Palmer (2007) explores internal ideas around connecting our inner life to our teacher life, and how each influences the other. He also explores interpersonal connections between the self and others, between groups of people, and between individuals and groups and the greater community. He further discusses community as connectedness and the development of the learning spaces among learners and teachers. These are powerful ideas that have informed critical approaches for phsycial education teacher education and views on conectedness and identity.

Palmer (2007) states "We Teach Who We Are" (p. 1). He conveys this idea in a way relatable for physical edcuation teacher education:

> Teaching, like any truly human activity, emerges from one's inwardness, for better or worse. As I teach, I project the condition of my soul onto my students, my subject, and our way of being together. The entanglements I experience in the classroom are often no more or less than the convolutions of my inner life. Viewed from this angle, teaching holds a mirror to the soul. If I am willing to look in that mirror and not run from what I see, I have a chance to gain self knowledge – and knowing myself is as crucial to good teaching as knowing my students and my subject. (p. 3)

In this view, teaching is an articulation of our own unarticulated self. Palmer (2007) goes on to state that "good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; but good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher" (p. 10). To further explain inwardness; Palmer explains identity as:

> an evolving nexus where all the forces that constitue my life converge in the mystery of self: my genetic make-up, the nature of the man and woman who gave me life, the culture in which I was raised, people who have sustained me and people who have done me harm, the good and ill I have done to others and to myself, the experience of love and suffereing – and much, much more (p. 13).

This explanation from Palmer supports the need is to examine and reflect upon identity and integrity of pre-service physical education teachers.

Explanation of a Cultural Plunge

San Diego State University as early as 1990, began using a cultural immersion experience called a *cultural plunge,* in the sociology program. More recently, it has been used in teacher education (Houser, 2008; Nieto, 2006). The author of this paper, has participated in cultural plunge assignments as a student, along with using them as part of her curricula since 2012.

Essentially, a cultural plunge is an opportunity for individuals to gain exposure to groups, or persons of different cultures (physical exceptionality, sexual orientation,

socio-economic status, ethnicity, and/or religion) (Nieto, 2006). The cultural plunge assignment directions for the experience are as follows: (1) students must choose experiences that allow them to be minorities within another culture (2) you must place yourself on the "turf" of another culture for a minimum of an hour (3) must be a NEW experience, nothing you have experienced or done before (3) do not take notes, while in your experience (4) do not place yourself in an unsafe environment.

This particular cultural plunge assignment while following the outline of others (Houser, 2009; Nieto, 2006), it is somewhat different, in that it proposes to facilitate disruption, cognitive dissonance, and or an awakening of critical consciousness (Friere, 1970; Greene, 1989) as a result of the experience. While these are the proposed outcomes of the experience, each student must determine their own experience. The assignment only facilitates the possibility of the outcomes for students, however, each student has their own journey to complete in shifting and growing perspectives or worldviews within this critical aspect.

From the onset of the assignment, students outwardly and internally grapple with the idea of the assignment and these struggles are discussed often, during classes. Students are provided time to share with their peers what they think they might do for their cultural plunge, and then discuss ideas with the instructor, for guidance, and feedback. Consequently, the assignment is introduced to students four to six weeks prior to the due date.

This assignment in particular, has facilitated what Palmer (2007) refers to as paradoxical tension, "space should be hospitable and charged." Palmer goes on to explain "the learning space should be hospitable – inviting as well as open, safe and

trustworthy as well as free" (pp. 76-77). With this in mind, this assignment was designed for students' to feel safe in the learning spaces such as in class discussions and private conversations with the instructor, and to know they can trust their teacher to hear their truths, and support their growth.

It is up to the students to determine an experience, which for them should be an optimal opportunity to experience other cultures. The ranges of experiences students choose to participate in widely vary. The information they share about those experiences is perhaps the most compelling validation of the cultural plunge experience.

Students' Cultural Plunge Experiences

Since this is not a research but a practitioner paper, the excerpts from student's remarks are not categorically classified, or themed, but instead shared as information about the assignment, from a student's perspective. Additionally, students from the author's classes, over time, have participated in a wide range of cultural plunges; some are as simple as attending a medieval fair or as complex as spending time as a homeless person. Some excerpts from students' experiences will be shared in the following paragraphs, and pseudonyms are used for student's names and places.

Ann, self-identified heterosexual female, decided to go to a local mall and hold hands with one of her friends who was also heterosexual female. She describes her experience as "eye opening".

> I couldn't believe the way we were treated. Even in the women's clothing section at M's, the sales person wouldn't wait on us or talk to us, which is very unusual for that place. Also people stared at us a lot! It was hard to do for an hour, and at times I wanted to quit.

Ann, went on, in another component of her reflection, to state:

> Following the experience I really felt sorry for people who are gay or lesbian,

> and how they must be treated like they are bad or different all of the time. I certainly have a greater appreciation for their courage to be themselves in public. I also realize now that I need to be less judgmental of other people, and recognize how hard it is to be your true self all of the time when you are not in the majority culture.

Tim's cultural plunge experience, was attending a religious service in a language he does not speak. He shared with the class that, he has only attended an African-American Baptist Church, and for his cultural plunge, he attended a Spanish-language Catholic Church.

> First, I was by myself and didn't want to get out of my car when I got to the church. When I got control of my nerves, I got out and went up to the door. I noticed right off that I didn't know what to do, when people were walking in a bowing and doing different things at the front door. Someone who spoke English greeted me and that helped me feel a little more comfortable. I sat in the back and waited for the service to begin. When the service began, I felt lost and uncomfortable the entire time. I didn't know what to do and I didn't want to offend anyone by doing the wrong thing, so I followed along the best I could.

Tim also included, further reflection, from his experience:

> After my experience I spoke with one of my Catholic friends about their faith and asked him to explain the service. Once he did, I realized that the Catholic faith is not too different from mine at least not like I originally thought. Also, I can totally understand the frustration and difficulty people who do not speak English have on a regular basis. I hated not understanding the service I attended, and the language barrier made it even more difficult. I cannot imagine what it must be like for kids in school who cannot speak or understand English. This experience has really made me more sympathetic toward kids who are learning to speak and understand English in our schools.

Another student, Martin, chose to spend a few hours in a predominately gay male club in the city where he lives. Martin, who identifies as a heterosexual, shared that he has gay friends, and that going to the club would not be a difficult challenge for him. However, what he shared from his experience was different from his expectations.

> When I arrived at the K Club I was actually scared and did not want to go inside. I started to worry, what if someone sees me there? I finally went up to the door and was shocked when I walked in because the men were not wearing much

> clothing. I was even more uncomfortable. I went to the bar and ordered a drink just hoping they wouldn't think I was gay too and hit on me. It took a little bit of time and I finally calmed down, but I was never at ease. I did have a few guys talk to me but it wasn't as bad as I feared.

Following up on this experience, Martin shared what he realized after leaving, that everyone should have a place to be their selves and the people at that club do not have that opportunity during their normal lives. He stated he was happy they had a place to feel safe, to be who they are. He also discussed how he was surprised about how afraid he was to go in, and then, never felt comfortable in the club. He said he would not have considered himself homophobic, and continued, he felt he needed to think about that part of his life more, and work to grow in that particular aspect of his life.

Additional comments from students' regarding the cultural plunge, fall outside the realm of details referring to their specific experiences, and are perhaps, some of the most meaningful.

> This was the coolest and most impactful assignment I have done since I started college. I was surprised by what I learned about myself during this assignment and now am planning to challenge myself by doing this again.

> Thank you for making me do this, I would have never attended a Chinese Baptist Church on my own. It really made me step outside of my box, and I cannot believe how much I really liked it, especially learning about the Chinese churches, and how nice those people were.

> I learned so much from my cultural plunge. I would have never even thought about what it was like to be a homeless person. Now, after I spent time as a homeless person, I learned there are people with incredible hearts like the lady that gave me money and her breakfast. I also learned of the sadness and hopelessness that can occur among the homeless. Lastly, I too learned how homeless people are treated badly and talked harshly to by regular people walking down the street. I was told on several occasions to go get a job. Truly, I would have never gained this perspective without this assignment.

These excerpts are but a few insights students have shared about their cultural plunge experiences over the past several years. Nieto (2008) states: “Plunges represent a type of education that is experiential, meaningful, interesting, challenging, confidence building, growth-inducing and rewarding for most students.” These plunges have helped students delve into other cultures, examine biases, experience being a minority, and safely discuss while learning through these experiences with their peers in class. Since the plunges last only an hour or two, they are perfect for students to gain significant learning experiences in a short amount of time. Thus, allowing class time to be used for students to work through cognitive dissonance in a safe and welcoming learning space with their peers and the instructor. Considering the countless challenges pre-service physical education students will face in their future classes, experiences like the cultural plunge can help them make strides in their personal and professional development in a safe and consequence free learning environment.

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Chapter Five: Summary and Recommendations for the Future

Summary

This study came out of my concerns and experiences as an educator. As a physical education teacher educator, I had worries and concerns about the many issues discussed previously, and wondered if my students did as well. To seek answers to these worries and concerns, I wrote three papers to address them, and they are presented in this dissertation.

This dissertation was not presented in a traditional format, instead, I wrote three publication ready papers, and formatted them into a traditional five-chapter dissertation. The first chapter, like traditional dissertations is an introduction. The rest of the chapters will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

The second chapter offers an aim at the best answer for my questions, worries, and concerns about physical education in my state. It provides a theoretical and historical justification for the framing of critical curricula use in a physical education teacher education program. Additionally, in this chapter, was a sketch of what I used as critical curricula in my Introduction of Physical Education and Health course.

The third chapter was a research paper. I wanted to know if critical curricula would have an influence on my students. My research question was: ***What are my pre-service physical education students' perceptions of the influence of critical curricula on my student's personal and/or professional development and understanding?*** To a certain extent my critical curriculum did influence students. The chapter goes on to provide information about the study from methodology to findings and implications.

The fourth chapter was a byproduct of Chapter Two and Three as it emerged from the study as a practitioner paper, to highlight one of the more meaningful assignments within my critical curriculum, a "Cultural Plunge." In this chapter I provided a theoretical framing for the use of a cultural plunge along with student's statements about their experience as evidence of efficacy.

This chapter, Chapter Five, was similar to the traditional format, and was a summary, and recommendations for the future. Other pertinent information, in addition to the five chapters, was the Appendix. The Appendix was my dissertation prospectus and provides further in depth discussion of my interpretive lens from Chapter Three.

Recommendations for the Future

As discussed, in Chapters One through Three my personal history, and experiences, are intimately intertwined in and around physical education and athletics, or what is known as human movement culture. I have had great success and benefits from this culture, and I am privileged in this culture and society because of it. However, upon realization of the problematic side to this culture,
I began wondering how to make it better.

This questioning led to what Friere (1970) refers to as critical consciousness, or from Maxine Greene (1988) an awakening, allowing myself to know, or see for the first time, not only my own unexamined privilege, but also my culpability in oppressing or marginalizing others with it. As a physical educator, for me this was intolerable and contradictory to my mission as a teacher.

My contemplation began with my role, purpose, or mission as an elementary physical educator. Overall, as an elementary physical educator my mission was to help

my students build competency and confidence in knowledge, attitudes, and skills to support physical literacy while fostering a joy and love for activity for a lifetime. However, if I were to allow the problematic side of physical education to influence my teaching, I would not fulfill my mission as a teacher. These ponderings, not only influenced my doctoral studies, but followed me into my vocation, as a physical education teacher educator, and thus to where I am now by becoming my research question.

Chapter Three of this dissertation revealed, that the critical curriculum I implemented in my class, was, to an extent, influential on students understanding, and thinking, students core views and thoughts of other people, which I called decentralization of perceptions and/or beliefs. It also revealed, a strong emotional impact upon students. These responses from students are often typical when students are challenged in a way that disrupts their core beliefs or where fear has grown in the space where knowledge should exist. Joe Kincheloe (2008) refers to critical teacher education as the:

> Terrain of discomfort where knowledge is too complex to simply give it out for use on multiple choice texts or convergent questions. On the complex epistemological landscape the assumptions teacher candidates bring to the classroom about teaching are challenged, analyzed, and debated (pp.111-112).

The findings from this study further supports my belief that pre-service physical education students can begin to counter the dominant discourse of modernity in physical education, if provided the opportunity. If students continue to pursue experiences to challenge themselves in critical ways over time the process provides an emancipatory, evolutionary like awakening, to what has always been perceived as innocuous and innocent before, there can now a clear view of the constructs, values, and theories of the

power. From this a new space emerges a space for imagination and dreaming, and a space for truth to be practiced (Greene, 2008; Palmer 2007).

These dimensions were played out in the three different papers, now as an ongoing process, new questions emerge. At this point I feel much like the quote taken, as an excerpt from The Little Gidding, which is the last of T. S. Eliot's Four Quartets:

> We shall not cease from exploration
> And the end of all our exploring
> Will be to arrive where we started
> And know the place for the first time. (p. 144)

Palmer's teachings of integrity and identity, has allowed me to accept the good, bad, and ugly, of my identity, in fact, embrace it forging my teacher integrity. This exploration into what comprised my identity, has taken me through the tough terrain of unpacking my unexamined privilege, the uncomfortable space of cognitive dissonance, and the emotional discomfort of challenging my worldview. Nevertheless, upon arriving in the space of what Palmer refers to as "connectedness" the journey was worth it all, and I like T.S. Eliot stated above, know this place for the first time. Furthermore, I shall not cease from exploration, like Maxine Green in many of her speeches and books has stated: "I am not yet, I am always becoming" (1988), this too, is my perspective.

As the facilitator and compiler of critical curricula used in the course, and the researcher of this study, I have many questions I would like to pursue in the future. It makes sense that further work could be done, to pursue further critical curricular information, materials, and experiences to implement and study. This, I hope to be a permanent yet continuous, fluid and dynamic aspects of my teaching, used to meet the needs of my students and myself as we all change and grow.

Additionally, the study of the influence of critical curricula was just minor insights into one semesters worth of time within my students' lives. I would like to pursue this study on a larger scale and as a longitudinal study, and find out if there is an actual influence in my students' pedagogical practices when they become teachers.

I also look forward to feedback, questions, and discussions from the publications of my papers to learn more about what others have done and what they think about my work. This will provide valuable feedback to my future growth and direction in my pedagogical practice.

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Appendix: Prospectus

Introduction

I am a physical education teacher educator in my twenty-second year of working in the educational arena. As such, like other professionals, my views have developed and evolved over time. At this point I have become increasingly aware of the importance of knowing and developing an understanding of our identities, or who we are, and how our identities impact students and society. This awareness has led to the development of this prospectus.

To begin I will share my experiences, realizing they have shaped who I am and influenced the way I see and perceive the world. I am a forty-five year-old Caucasian female, and I live and work in the same state where I was raised. I grew up in a small rural community where I attended public school. I did not know it at the time, but we lived in what would be considered between poverty and lower middle class.

My first twelve years of life were spent on our small family farm where I explored, played, created, and developed a love for sports and competition. I recall wanting to be the best, to beat my sisters and neighbor kids at whatever we did; catch the most or biggest fish, ride my bike faster, create the best fort, win a race, or win at the latest game we were playing.

At the age of twelve my parents divorced. This tumultuous time pushed me to find something for myself and galvanized my love for competition and sports. While I participated in many sports while growing up, I loved and excelled in basketball. For me there was no second place, only first place, and only being the best, and basketball was the perfect venue for me to win.

During my high school years, my basketball coach, who also became a surrogate parent, helped me see something greater for myself, to set goals and dream. At this time in my life, I had no idea about my future or college. Since neither my parents nor anyone else in my immediate family had been to college, it just was not talked about in our family. But my coach helped me see a future through basketball as a pathway to attending college on a scholarship. From that moment on, my goal was to attend college on a basketball scholarship. In my mind, to do this, I had to be the best, work the hardest, and win.

While I made it through college as a successful education student and athlete, my only desire was to coach basketball at the college level. Receiving a degree in education was just a step to becoming a college basketball coach.

My dream job was realized upon graduation, and I coached for several years at the college level. After many years of coaching and upon the realization that maybe there was something more for me in life, I began thinking of a change in my vocation. I had grown tired of the ups and downs of winning and losing and my life being held hostage by a game. So I decided to change my path.

While one of my roles when coaching at the college level was also teaching a methods course in physical education to future physical educators, I had never really participated in teaching it at the common education level. I knew a lot of theory around physical education, but had no true teaching experience. Nevertheless, this experience led to an opportunity to teach physical education to elementary students.

Embarking on my first 'real' elementary teaching experience, I was hired to teach in an urban/rural school district in a low socio-economic area. I had on average 400

students.

I knew going into teaching physical education that I wanted to be a 'good' teacher. With my theory background in mind, for me 'good' was defined as being a teacher that did not privilege my physically gifted students but who helped all students find the joy in physical activity. It also means helping them develop competence and proficiency in skills to aid in a lifetime of enjoyment and participation in physical activity.

My ideas around what I thought physical education should look like were reflective of the basic goal of physical education as defined by the Society of Health and Physical Education (SHAPE) of America (Courturier, Chepko & Holt-Hale, 2014): "The goal of physical education is to develop physically literate individuals who have the knowledge, skills and confidence to enjoy a lifetime of physical activity" (p. 11). SHAPE (Courturier, Chepko & Holt-Hale) provides further insight into the goals of physical education through its five basic standards (2014, p. 12):

> Standard 1 - The physically literate individual demonstrates competency in a variety of motor skills and movement patterns.
>
> Standard 2 - The physically literate individual applies knowledge of concepts, principles, strategies and tactics related to movement and performance.
>
> Standard 3 - The physically literate individual demonstrates the knowledge and skills to achieve and maintain a health-enhancing level of physical activity and fitness.
>
> Standard 4 - The physically literate individual exhibits responsible personal and social behavior that respects self and others.
>
> Standard 5 - The physically literate individual recognizes the value of physical activity for health, enjoyment, challenge, self-expression and/or social interaction.

These standards, learned in college, informed my thinking around physical education

and helped guide how and what I taught as a beginning elementary physical education teacher.

In elementary physical education I found myself, functioning as a teacher, consistent with my vocation and calling. While teaching provided fulfillment and at times true exhilaration and joy, it also provided heartache and sometimes challenging interpersonal growth.

Like most first-year teachers, I dealt with my share of issues and problems. While many of the challenges were part of my interpersonal growth, many were also dealing with outside influences. Mainly, I grappled with two issues. I struggled with blending my conceptions of what physical education should be to best serve my students, with existing external expectations and conceptions of physical education. Additionally, I struggled with both confidence and efficacy because I did not have a real sense of my teacher "self" or identity.

Physical education as introductory competitive athletics was one of the expectations with which I dealt. Therefore, most often when students came to class the expectation was that we would play a competitive game or sport. Even in the community where I worked this took place. For example, third graders participated in basketball seasons with scheduled games and multiple tournaments during school, and the "physical education teacher" was essentially the coach. These were common expectations of many students, parents and community members.

Another struggle I dealt with as a physical education teacher was breaking gender biases. Gender bias revealed itself in various ways, including the ways students communicated and participated in class. Many times I overheard both girls and boys

calling modified push-ups “girl” push-ups. Additionally, in any sport that required strong or quick movements, boys would typically step up and participate more readily than girls. Conversely, when activities required rhythm or more refined movements, girls would readily participate. Yet, if a girl stepped into a perceived “boy” role or vice versa, students would react by calling them names such as ‘girly boy’.

Yet another external conception that I grappled with over time was the idea that my students were in a sense ‘products’. On many occasions when speaking with community leaders or legislators I heard some variation of the following narratives referring to the aims of physical education: “These are the kids that will be working to pay your retirement, don’t you want them to be healthy and educated” or “We can’t afford the impact of diabetes or obesity as a state/nation, we need healthy students (citizens).”

Furthermore, I struggled with the fact that physical education seemed to be perceived as less important than other content areas. Typically funding for physical education was either non-existent or lacking, and there was no established curriculum framework for the discipline within my state. These conceptions and conditions were reflected in the common labels, I was referred to, as an elementary physical educator. I was commonly called a “coach”, “gym coach” or “gym teacher” rather than simply a “teacher”.

Along with these ideas and conceptions around physical education I also struggled with finding myself as a teacher. Truly becoming an elementary physical education teacher didn’t happen for me upon arrival the first week of school. I struggled with my teacher identity. I had been a competitive win-at-all-cost athlete and college

basketball coach, so who would I be as an elementary physical education teacher? I wondered: Am I a coach? Am I an elementary physical education teacher? Am I still an athlete? Am I all three, both, or just one? Moreover, who do I need to be for my students and to be a 'good' teacher?

This tension caused disruption and prompted my journey to find solutions to the issues and seek answers to figure out who I should be as a teacher. In my journey to find my teacher self, to be the teacher my students deserved, I sought further opportunities to learn. By my fourth year of teaching elementary physical education I was pursuing my National Board Teaching Certificate. I followed this up in the subsequent years by pursuing my doctoral degree in curriculum and instruction.

Upon entry into the doctoral program I had the opportunity to join the educator preparation profession. I took the opportunity and currently teach in the same state where I was raised.

As I continue to reflect upon my history, striving to make sense of the sociocultural influences that have helped shape who I am, I must also review the history of the formal development of physical education to gain better understanding of the academic discipline of which I am a part. Conceptual and structural seedlings of physical education emerged in the 19th century, in the midst of an evolving industrial revolution (Dalen & Bennett, 1971; Fahlberg & Fahlberg 1997; Kirk, 1997: Pangrazi & Beighle, 2010; Zeigler, 2005). This was an important period for the United States marked with steady population and economic growth accompanied by an increase in nationalistic attitudes (Zeigler, 2005).

Increasing nationalism coupled with the industrial revolution further imbued the

importance of physical health for the purposes of a strong national state (Zeigler, 2005). With a strong military emphasis, the need for physical health created space for physical training within the medical context, thus opening the path for formal physical education in schools (Dalen & Bennett, 1971; Zeigler, 2005).

Focus on an educated public and a physically healthy citizenry aided in the development of formalized physical education, gradually pushing it into the education conversation. Yet, Ideas of physical training as a core component of education did not become codified until the late 19th century, and even then, what did exist was only in limited colleges and academies (Dalen & Bennett, 1971; Zeigler, 2005).

Following almost a century of work, The National Education Association in 1891 formally recognized physical education as an education curricular field. This recognition initiated the shift for physical training from the medical field to the education field. This transition created a path for teacher education to begin.

While physical education took almost a century to formally emerge as a content area in education, teacher training in physical education followed shortly behind. As the popularity of physical education grew and was opened for both women and men, teacher education programs across the country multiplied. Many of the early programs were focused on an introduction to hygiene, anatomy, physiology, and gymnastics.

In the 20th century, as physical education found a place in the education system, some of the greatest influences were based on issues of equity. In 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* desegregating schools. And in 1972 Title IX, was part of federal education legislation promoting equity among the sexes.

Considering my personal and professional experiences along with the historical influences of physical education, I continue to wonder how these various factors have impacted my students' perceptions as well as my own teaching and learning. I suspect these factors impact not only what and how I teach, but also what my students believe and how they learn. Additionally, as many of my students' biographies are similar to mine, I suspect they too could struggle with similar identity issues as I did in my first year of teaching.

Following up on these notions, I began helping my college students, future physical educators, reflect upon their own biographies and identities to better understand how such factors might influence their teaching and/or students and further society. Together we work to reflect on who we are as teachers and who we want to become.

It has been my experiences of personal, professional, and conceptual disruption, seeking understanding, and taking action, which have led me to begin thinking about similar challenges for my students. I suspect that perhaps a critical counter-narrative, embedded within the curriculum of my class, could help facilitate similar disruptions or awakenings (Greene, 1988) for my students.

These personal reflections and ponderings have gradually uncovered an important problem. Existing perspectives and conditions surrounding physical education continue to privilege some while marginalizing others. Those who are preparing to teach have often not examined who they are and whom they wish to become as teachers, let alone problematic assumptions related to invisible privilege and various form of bias. In light of this problem, my question is:

What are my students' perceptions of the influence of my critical curricula on their personal and/or professional development and understanding?

My hope in offering critical curricula with my students is that we, together, can open spaces to challenge ourselves in the safety of an environment of collaborative learning as opposed to during the first or subsequent years of teaching, or perhaps not at all. I want to open space for the transformative processes of disruptions and awakenings for the development of teacher identity, self-criticality, and reflexivity while my students are still in the physical education teacher education program. I want to begin the process with students while they are in the program with peers and caring faculty who can help them reflect, seek answers, and take action to begin changing their worlds and thus, perhaps also the worlds of those with whom they intersect.

Further Questions and Concerns about My Chosen Profession

Participating in the human movement culture[4] as an athlete, coach, physical education teacher, and now as a physical education teacher educator, there have been many moments where I struggled with external perceptions and lived realities of my loved profession.

Based on my experiences, my belief has been that the physical education is beneficial for 'all' as a sort of universal 'good', yet implemented as it stands, it in fact may be detrimental for many. I believe major goal of physical education is to provide life enhancing educational experiences that guide students in learning to lead, live, and find joy in participating in physically active lifestyles. However, for many, it instead may be something altogether different.

[4] "Human Movement Culture" is a term used to commonly describe culture related to fitness, athletics, and physical education.

Public perception of physical education is an interesting subject. What does the average person on the street think when hearing the words "physical education"? Dodgeball, kickball, basketball, jumping rope, push-ups, jumping jacks, and capture the flag, are activities or games typically associated with and used to describe physical education. Other possible affective descriptors include dreaded, fun, exciting, hard, or hated.

Public perceptions such as these have revealed an incomplete picture physical education, which in turn has become its reality. These perceptions and those I encountered while teaching elementary physical education often reflect a narrow performance based, sport focused, or technocratic conception of physical education.

I believe these common perceptions serve to promote what Culpan & Bruce (2007) refer to as "scientisation" (in which the content has become highly scientific) in physical education and in physical education teacher preparation. We have rapidly navigated toward an approach in which the content has become highly scientific in the sense that it is mechanistic, reductionistic, analytical, universal and impersonal. This privileged discourse of science in physical education keeps the focus mainly on physical activity and sports centered skills based on finding the most efficient path to the desired outcome.

From this view, knowledge, in teacher education, including my own program in physical education, is viewed as static and neutral, and teachers are seen as the sole owners of knowledge, tasked to inculcate students with truth. This is reflective of Freire's banking model concept, where one person such as a teacher has knowledge or power and others are seen merely as objects to be acted upon, or vessels to be filled

(Freire, 1970). Kirk (1986) suggests that this conception of education develops prospective teachers who are either somewhat or not at all autonomous, aware, or critical of their moral and political roles within their profession.

Additionally, this paradigm promotes a form of education, where teaching is reduced to conditioning and manipulating students. Thus, many believe that physical education teacher preparation programs such as these are producing students who are unrefelctive 'transmitters' of content information, rather than conscious "creators' of ideas and relationships who are aware of their educational roles. Within this orientation our prospective teachers are typically taught classroom management strategies, physical activity and sport skills and basic planning and instruciton (Fernandez-Balboa, 1997a).

Most often in this paradigm prospective teachers are not taught to reflect upon the personal realm of teaching or in the broader sense of society. The lack of reflection especially in the critical sense of unpacking social, historical, political, and cultural influences contributes to the further perpetuation of the status quo. Culpan & Bruce (2007) state:

> In effect, this positioning of physical education reinforces the marginalization of it and promotes a dualism between the mind and body that is not only outdated thinking but has the potential to remove the education from physical education. (p. 2)

Possibly more problematic are the implications to physical education and further society if physical education should remain in this view. In this paradigm, physical education tends to promote rather than challenge reproduction of existing social arrangements. Additionally, there are common, albeit possibly hidden, influences such as male privilege in sports and physical training, dualistic view of mind and body, and training for human production. Tinning (1997) adds:

> Physical education can liberate and oppress, inspire and disillusion, encourage and alienate, and be a source of satisfaction and achievement as well as disappointment and failure. We as professionals are part of the problem and part of the solution. (p. 105)

I believe these problematic issues in physical education, further illustrate the need for disruption in the status quo of physical education and physical education teacher training.

Interpretive Lenses

In this study, I propose to examine the influence of critical curricula on pre-service teachers' personal and/or professional development and understanding. In order to move beyond description to provide possible explanation for human activities, it is necessary to utilize a theoretical framework or interpretive lens. Although I cannot be certain prior to conducting the study how I intend to interpret the findings, it is possible to make an educated guess about some of the concepts and explanations of human learning and behavior that are more likely than others to inform my thinking regarding my findings. Prior to conducting the study, my views are informed by ideas related to identity and connectedness, invisible privilege, critical consciousness, and the postmodern critique of modernity.

In my very first-year of teaching, I unknowingly began engaging in what I would later understand as reflexive practice, seeking answers to my questions, and working to apply what I learned. This curiosity led to my pursuit in furthering my education. Further illustrating my ideas, Ferdendez-Balboa (1997) states:

> Education must not be understood as a taken-for-granted, stable concept, but as an ambiguous term whose meaning depends on the ideological lenses through which it is perceived. (pp. 121-122)

Thus, the theoretical framing of this study began with my experiences as a

doctoral student. In my studies, I encountered professors and peers who challenged me to view the world through a more critical and postmodern lens, to unravel the complexity of my lived experiences, and to make connections within my own pedagogical context. Many semesters of wrangling with theories, reflection, and application have resulted in the potential theoretical constructs of this study.

In the following sections I will outline how these lenses might influence and shape the study and guide the interpretation of data. To begin, I will use the term 'connectedness', from my interpretation of Parker Palmers' ideas around a divided teacher self and further connection to community. I will also discuss his ideas around identity. Then I will examine invisible privilege, particularly the ways in which it has impacted physical education, teachers, and pre-service teachers. Next, I will discuss critical social theory and the postmodern critique of modernity.

Connectedness and Identity

When refelcting upon my efforts to connect my inner self and teacher self, Parker Palmer was an influencial voice in helping me make the needed connection to begin finding myself as a teacher. This has led me to use his ideas around connectedness in a variety of ways in my own teaching.

In *The Courage to Teach*, Palmer (2007) explores internal ideas around connecting our inner life to our teacher life, and how each influences the other. He also explores interpersonal connections between the self and others and between groups of people and the greater community. He further discusses community as connectedness and the development of the learning space among learners and teachers. These are powerful ideas that have informed my views on conectedness and identity.

Palmer (2007) states "We Teach Who We Are" (p. 1), and further illuminates this idea in a way that relates to my students and myself:

> Teaching, like any truly human activity, emerges from one's inwardness, for better or worse. As I teach, I project the condidion of my soul onto my students, my subject, and our way of being together. The entanglements I experience in the classroom are often no more or less than the convolutions of my inner life. Viewed from this angle, teaching holds a mirror to the soul. If I am willing to look in that mirror and not run from what I see, I have a chance to gain self knowledge – and knowing myself is crucial to good teaching as knowing my students and my subject. (p. 3)

In this view, teaching is then an articulation of our own unarticulated self. He goes on to state that "good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; but good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher" (p. 10).

> To further explain inwardness Palmer explains identity as:
> an evolving nexus where all the forces that constitue my life converge in the mystery of self: my genetic make-up, the nature of the man and woman who gave me life, the cutlure in which I was raised, people who have sustained me and people who have done me harm, the good and ill I have done to others and to myself, the experience of love and suffereing – and much, much more. (p. 13)

I use this view to examine and reflect upon my own identity and as a guide for students.

Palmer (2007) also addresses identity as a capacity to be enlarged. He emphasizeds that identiy is not left behind, rather it is evolving, growing, and continuously becoming.

In this idea of continually becoming and enlarging identity, Palmer also discusses the fear of losing identity. He suggests:

> If we embrace the promise of diversity, of creative conflict, and of "losing" in order to "win," we still face one final fear – the fear that a live encounter with otherness will challenge or even compel us to change our lives. (p. 39)

Integrity, as Palmer (2007) describes, is wholeness found within the nexus of identity. He states:

> Integrity requires that I discern what is integral to my selfhood, what fits and what does not – and that I choose life-giving ways of relating to the forces that converge wihtin me. By choosing integrity, I become more whole, but wholeness does not mean perfection. It means becoming more real by acknowledging the whole of who I am. (p. 14)

Identity and integrity according to Palmer are "…subtle dimensions of the complex, demanding, and lifelong process of self-discorvery" (p. 14). Furthermore, it is essential for these to work in concert, woven together like fine tapestry, complementing and not competing. If we do this, we find joy in our vocation and teaching and conversely, if not, our work and those whom we share it with will suffer (Palmer, 2007).

This connection through communion of a teacher's inner world or self with the world in which their life intersects with the lives of students is the connection of identity and integrity. Connectedness, as Palmer (2007) states, is a capacity that good teachers posess. Teachers "are able to weave a complex web of connections among themselves, their stubjects, and their students so that students can learn to weave a world for themselves" (p. 11). In this light, teaching as described by Palmer comes from the heart.[5]

Conversely, the disconnected life is out of tune with self, content, and students. Teacher identity and integrity pose a problematic discourse. Within this disconnect teachers' identities may be mismatched for a capacity to love and open up or relate to students. A disconnect could be represented through an unexamined identity or

[5] Palmer uses the word "heart" to refer both to compassion and to the center of a person's being, as implied by the related word cell "core" and "cour", connoting both centrality and bravery. Similarly, he correlates words like heart and hearth, noting their social and linguistic connections (e.g., heart being the center or core of a person, and hearth historically being the central gathering place in a home around which guests are welcomed and stories are told).

unconsciousness about oneself that interferes with the ability to see all students as humans full of experiences and potential.

Through the idea of connectedness, there is hope for those who wish to teach but who possibly lack the articulation of self in relation to their teaching or their views of their students. This view of connectedness challenges teachers to explore the inner self and to ultimatley integrate self and practice. Through this inward growth, we are able to become better teachers. Palmer refers to this as developing an "undivided" life. By pursuing an undivided life, as a teacher I am participating in an ongoing exploration of self, and creating greater capacity for connectedness. In this capacity, my heart as a teacher is open to learn, fail, grow and love and connect with my students.

To further this view, Palmer also discusses connection to community in education. Community can be created with teachers and students in a space of learning. Connection to a community of learners is one that, according to Palmer, "education requires" (2007, p. 92). He shares:

> The model of commuity we seek is one that can embrace, guide, and refine the core mission of educaiton-the mission of knowing, teaching, and learning. We will find clues to its dimentios at the heart of the image of teaching that most challenges me: to teach is to create a space in which the community of truth is practiced. (p. 97)

This form of community in education creates a space for truth to emerge from the participants though personal reflections and their interactions with others. These communities are guided by good teachers where truths are created, shared, and honed collaboratively by both student and teachers. Yet, in this view there is not absolutism nor is there relativism, but there is a transcendnce in seeking the secrets of truth. Palmer states:

> In this commnity, the process of truth-knowing and truth-telling is neither dictatorial nor anarchic. Instead, it is a coplex and ternal dance of intimacy and distance, of speaking and listening, of knowing and not knowing, that makes collaborators and co-conspirators of the knowers and the known. (p. 109)

In Palmers view, then, connectedness is not only the creation of an undivided self by connecting identity and integrity, but of further connecting people to people and to the greater community.

Invisible Privilege

Invisible privilege is unearned power or privilege hidden from those who hold it (Apple, 1992; McCarthy, 2000). It involves taken for granted 'norms' and assumptions in society that allow those with the highest status to maintain their positions because it is unquestioned and seemingly natural. If unexamined, such norms are continually perpetuated not only through the actions of privileged members of society, but also by the complicity of the oppressed as well (Apple, 1992: Aronowitz, 1991; McLaren, 1995).

Invisible privilege exists throughout society in many forms. McIntosh (1992) described invisible white and male privilege, yet there are many other forms of invisible privilege in society related to sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender stereotypes, ability, and bodytypes or obesity (Bain, 1990; Greenleaf & Weiller, 2005; O'Brien, Hunter & Banks, 2007; Sage, 1997).

While invisible privilege exists in society it is also found in education. In education, these frameworks that serve invisible privilege function in the development of the belief that we as teachers are neutral participants in the processes of teaching and learning. Simultaneously they serve particular ideological interests, which are often invisible or hidden from those who hold them (Apple, 1992; McCarthy & Dimirtiadis,

2000). If unexamined, this belief of neutrality is a key factor in maintaining societal norms (Apple, 1992, Aronowitz, 1991; McLaren, 1995).

Physical education and the greater human movement culutre have been very successful in changing consciousness and replicating dominant culture. The evidence can be seen in all facets of society. Sage (1997) states:

> Because competitive human movement activities, by their very nature, bring status and rewards according to supreme performance, they provide convincing sympoblic support for the myth that dedication, scrifice, and hard work will bring upward social mobility. (p. 24)

This invisible privilege in physical education, works with cultural conditioning to contribute to meritocratic social order. Thus, perpetuating the myth that the social class system in the United States is more open to social mobility than it really is.

Invisible privilege can also function to perpetuate of the dominant ideology of meritocracy in general. Meritocracy perpetuates a privilege narrative in that success is due solely to due to individual hard work. This feeds into human movement's cultural narrative that personal goals and achievement are due to hard work and personal efforts. This ideology of meritocracy is perpetuated in part by maintaining social class inequality. This ideology is often spread through the myth that sacrifice, hard work, and dedication will bring about social mobility (Sage, 1990, 1997).

Invisible privilege and the discourse of meritocracy serves to promote "equal opportunity" and "rags to riches" narratives that exploit people born into poverty, promoting the belief that working hard, saving money and sheer effort will help one rise to a level of social, economic and occupational importance (Sage, 1997). This is often heard in the "if I can do it, you can do it" mantra that is sometimes espoused by people who have come out of poverty and made better lives for themselves.

Critical Social Theory

The third lens I propose to use is critical social theory.[6] Essentially critical theory is an explanation of social relationships and inequities that originated with Marxist views on economic and political exploitation and alienation. It operates from a framework that questions assumptions, power inequalities, and social relations (Culpan & Bruce, 2007; Freire, 1974; Kincheloe, 2008). Critcal theory offers an alternative approach to understanding the ideaologies behind modern cultural, economic, social and political foundations, and assumptions.

Among other things, critical social theory is concerned with advancing the emancipatory function of knowledge. It is organized around assumptions that people can change their world. It suggests that asymmetrical social divisions are based on history, in other words, on events and relationships that happened in the past. Thus, critical social theories aim to transform and explain all circumstances that create asymmetrical views, systems, and footholds in society.

Since critical social theory can aid in inquiry, designed to emancipate people from material and ideal constraints, many 'critical theories' in the broader sense have

[6] It could be argued that critical and postmodern theories are conflicting. However in my perspective they have several shared and complementary commonalities and can be used together for the purpose of my proposed study. First, both critical theory and postmodernism aim to critique modernism (Butler 1994; Friere, 1970; Kincheloe, 2008; Kirk & Tinning, 1990; Lyotard, 1994) Additionally, as freedom, and justice, and equality are aspirations of postmodernism, these must be sought through some sort of critical understanding, that freedom is lived, not static, and is an opening of space to what can be a new reality (Greene, 1988). Thus, I believe, that viewing the future possibilities of physical education and physical education teacher education through the lens of critical theory and the postmodern critique, or through what might be called a critical postmodern perspective, appears to be very useful for this case. Furthermore, this lens seems to highlight my view of how to explicate physical education form the influence of modernity and help transition it in the postmodern era to a more critical view.

been developed, such as feminist theory, critical race theory, queer theory, and critical media studies.

Critical theory is concerned with action derived from examination of political, social, and historical processes by understanding how these processes interrelate to form asymetrical structures in wider society (Culpan & Bruce, 2007; Freire, 1974; Kincheloe, 2008, Kirk & Tinning, 1990). Critical theorists contend that overt action can work to disrupt power inequalities and social relations (Frieire, 1974, Kincheloe, 2008). It seeks to disrupt, critique, and examine society and culture. As a theory that has been applied to various aspects of society, critical theory can be used as a lens to help understand and critique assymetical power and inequality that exists in physical education and our perspectives around teaching physical education.

The Postmodern Critique

The fourth lens that may be useful for interpreting my findings is postmodernism. Doll (1995) and others suggest that postmodernism is more a critique of modernity than it is a theory of its own. Therefore, to explain postmodernism, it is first necessary to explain modernity, or modernism. Essentially, modernity is a term used to describe a sweeping constellation of broadly shared Western societal norms, perspectives, and practices encompassing a space of time extending from approximately the seventeenth to mid–twentieth centuries.

To explain modernity there are several aspects to discuss. It can be described as industrial civilization (Giddens, 1990) as it has focused on growth and industry. This led to capitalism and establishment of the world market. In this focus modernity has a linear view of progress as it embraces new beginnings and denounces history.

Modernity has been dependent upon all- encompassing grand theories that presume to account for all people and situations regardless of history, circumstances, culture, or gender. While it focused on individuality and individualism, it did not recognize the multiplicity of individuals nor their connection to their family, culture, locale, or religion. Modernist views fostered reductionist thinking that examined parts to understand the whole and excluded holistic ways of thinking. It is highly mechanistic in that it has transferred human labor and production to mechanized, advanced technology.

Additionally, much of modernist philosophical thought is in a mechanistic Cartesian/Newtonian view of the universe in which the body and the mind are isolated. From a modernistic view, knowledge is acquired and measurable, a separate and isolated quantity removed from the experiences of the knower. This mechanistic model provided the foundation from which traditional philosophy and epistemology have flourished, finding pathways into mathematics and science, the arts and humanities, physical education, and educational theories of learning, development, and curriculum.

Although this view of the world led to innumerable benefits to humans, it also led to many problematic perspectives, conditions, and social relationships. In this view, modernity has influenced "either-or" thinking (Palmer, 2007) absolutist assumptions of reality, mechanistic and reductionistic modes of thought and analysis, and an intense focus on the individual (Capra, 1996)

Postmodern thought began to emerge during the twentieth century as an increasingly explicit critique of modernity. Postmodern critiques began calling into question the tenets of modernity, mechanistic and reductionistic thinking, individualism, grand narratives, binary logic, linear progress, and dominate norms of objectivity.

Basically, today many postmodern thinkers emphasize multiplicity of realities, self-interrogation, subjectivity, and knowledge as power (Foucault, 1980; Lyotard, 1994).

Postmodernism, as Lyotard, (1994) has suggested, could be a radical break from modern habits and social practices that rejects modern narratives and any other form of totalizing thought. This critique rejects grand and totalizing narratives of modernity. It also critiques universal truths while embracing local truths. While many postmodern theorists have rejected modernity (Lyotard, 1994) others have suggested that a postmodernism is more of a critique and extension than an outright rejection of all things modern (Doll, 1993)

While many have claimed that postmodern thought is a negative form of analysis limited to critique rather than construction, others have argued that postmodern thought has generated new modes of social organization and thinking in which new forms of language, cultural assumptions, meanings, social movements, and power relations can emerge (Butler, 1994). I believe, in this view, a postmodern perspective can validate and affirm lived experiences as it embraces multiplicity and context specificity.

I envision using aspects of the literature on connection and identity, invisible privilege, critical social theory, and postmodern thinking as interpretive lenses and/or theoretical explanations with which to better understand my findings. Again, although I cannot detemine ahead of time which of these perspectives will be most useful in interpreting the findings, it seems likely that some combination of these ideas will ultimately be included in my analysis.

Additional Thoughts on the Use of Theory to Interpret Research Findings

Finally, having identified a possible theoretical framework or set of lenses through which to interpret the data, it is important to comment a bit further on the potential merits and challenges of utilizing theory to interpret one's findings and on the feasibility of combining different theoretical lenses within a given study. First, while theory can be transformative, it too has limitations. As a transformer, theory can offer a language of challenge, modes of thought, and ways of making the familiar strange. In the same way theory can work on the individual level, it can also disrupt present practices and categories to make them less self-evident and necessary. This can open spaces for creation of new forms of experiences. Conversely, as language is an agent of theoretical emancipation, it, too, functions as a restraint. Theory can be limiting, authoritative and sometimes seem conflicting.

Theory, for the purposes of this study, is intended to be a catalytic agent of understanding in seeking to interpret phenomenon in education. The purpose of this study is to interpret the influence a critical counter narrative, embedded within a curriculum, on pre-service physical education teacher perspectives. I would use theory to help interpret my students' perspectives and experiences; in turn this would shape my interpretation of data. The frameworks I propose using have significantly influenced my worldview and interactions in the world as researcher and educator.

Another potential problem with the use of different theoretical or interpretive lenses is that they can be viewed as contradictory or even mutually exclusive. Yet, it is often the case that theories are used in combination to meet the needs of a particular argument. In this light, theory is not intended to prescribe but to be used to explicate and interpret. Understanding that frameworks are interpretive, I suspect they may

become the lenses I would use. There may be other lenses that influence or are added during the study as well.

The Study

In this section, I will provide an overview of my proposed research methods and procedures. I begin with the aims and nature, and then provide the methodological framework. Next, I will discuss the participants and the setting, and data collection methods. Finally, discussed are the data analysis and the ways in which I wish to enhance trustworthiness in the study, and consequently for the reader.

Aims and Nature of the Study

Traditionally physical education and human movement culture researchers have accepted positivist assumptions and methods (McKay, Gore & Kirk, 1990). A key assumption of positivist research is the modernist notion of objectivity. Objectivity is a perception of reality that holds that the truth or meaning of a thing exists or is located in the objects themselves rather than in the minds of people or in some relationship between the objects and people. Objectivism is based on the idea that it is possible to gain knowledge about the world by upholding an emotionally separate and value-free posture regarding that which one is studying (Sparkes, 1992). It also reflects a modernist worldview, which presumes a singular, universal, unchanging reality that exists independent of sociohistorical context and individual perspective.

Within this perspective, researchers are tasked with seeking absolute truth while studying phenomena objectively and independently of their own social, historical political, or social frames of reference while seeking absolute truth. This epistemological view is especially problematic when considering human behavior, since

this notion of objectivity hinders the advancement of social research due to the researcher's lack of engagement in "real world" settings. Knowledge is a social construct. As Friere (1998) stated,

> Knowing is a social process, who's individual dimension, however, cannot be forgotten or even devalued. The process of knowing, which involves the whole conscious self, feelings, emotions, memory, affects, an epistemologically curious mind, focused on the object, equally involves other thinking subjects, that is, others also capable of knowing and curious. This simply means that the relationship called "thinking" is not enclosed in a relationship "thinking subject-knowable object" because it extends to other thinking subjects. (p. 92)

If knowledge is a social process, there are problematic issues and limits to what objectivist research can reveal in the study of human knowledge construction, meaning making, and the complex processes of negotiating and navigating social relationships.

Considering these epistemological and ontological limitations, I propose to utilize interpretivist, relativist, and naturalistic approaches to gain insights and perspectives into the influence of a critical counter narrative on pre-service teachers' identities and perspectives.

The goal of this research would be to "understand the phenomenon and the meaning it has for the participants" (Merriam, 2009, p.34). I would seek to understand and interpret what influence a critical counter narrative might have on pre-service physical education teachers' identities, self-criticality, and reflexivity. Rather than seeking absolute truths, my purpose would be to distinguish how a critical counter narrative might impact their perspectives and identities. I want to interpret "how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam, 2009, p. 5). Consequently, this study would be doubly interpretive (Erickson, 1973) as I sought to interpret meaning from students'

interpretations of the influence of a counter narrative on their perspectives.

Finally, since I am interested not only in understanding my students' perspectives but also in improving my ability to teach in ways that promote emancipation and social justice, this study would also incorporate aspects of critical research and teacher action research (Carspecken, 1996; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Greenwood & Levin, 2007; Merriam, 2009; Quantz and O'Conner, 1988). One of my assumptions is that there exists an asymmetrical master narrative: Aronowitz and Giroux (1991)

> Largely drawn from cultural scripts written by white males whose work is often privileged as a model of high culture informed by an elite sensibility that sets it off from what is often dismissed as popular or mass culture. (p. 58)

This critical aspect of my approach would aim to explicate hidden power relationships, value assumptions and invisible privilege.

Case Study Approach

The study I am proposing would incorporate a case study approach. Given the nature of this study, it is qualitative with classic anthropological and sociological influences. In this view, I propose to understand peoples thinking and perspectives, often referred to as interpretivist research.

Case study is an appropriate methodology as it seeks to understand and interpret rather than measure phenomenon. The selected case would take place in the only Introduction to Physical Education and Health class taught with beginning pre-service physical education teacher educators. This class qualifies as a bounded system because it is one particular classroom of learners. The case will also narrow and become an embedded case as the research narrows from the class to a number of particular students

(Stake, 1995).

While the use of case study has been criticized, Merriam states that "its use far outweigh its limitations" (2009, p. 50). Many of the limitations are mere misunderstandings.

I am aware there are other concerns with case study approaches. These concerns involve ethical issues, researcher bias, issues of reliability, validity, and generalizability, and little guidance to the novice case study researcher. While limitations do exist, Stake, (1995) states that the reader, not the researcher, determines the application of knowledge to fit their personal contexts. Case researchers will,

> Like others, pass along to readers some of their personal meanings of events and relationships – and fail to pass along others. They know that the reader, too, will add and subtract, invent and shape-reconstructing the knowledge in ways that leave it . . . more likely to be personally useful. (p. 455)

Through what Geertz (2004, p. 153) refers to as "thick description" can bring a case studies alive to a reader, and create vivid imagery. Geertz (2004) discusses the quality of thick description:

> As interworked stystems of signs (what, ignoring provincial usages, I would call symbols), culture is not a power, something to which social events, behaviors, institutions, or processes can be causually attributed; it is a context, something within which they can be intellibly—that is, thickly – described. (p. 153)

Thick description is necessary as it illuminates the case in a mode not possible by other means in research. The aim of this case, as with all case study research is to unpack the case and represent it to the world, with thick description, to extend the experience of the teacher and students from the case.

Setting and Participants

The class where the case is to be studied is on a university campus of around

17,000 students. The majority of students are from the State where the university is located. The university is identified as a "Metropolitan University" but is in a suburban/urban area of the State's capital and largest city and metropolitan area.

The College of Education and Professional Studies is the largest college on campus. The department within the college that houses the physical education teacher education program is the Kinesiology and Health Studies Department. The department has transitioned overtime and originally began in 1928 as a physical education program.

The physical education teacher education program at my university has a rich heritage, as the progenitor of the program studied under Dudley Sargent, one of the notable key figures in the creation of physical education. Enrollment for physical education teacher education majors has fluctuated over time, but currently averages around 110 majors a year.

The course to be utilized for the case is the Introduction to Physical Education and Health course. The course description from the course catalog is as follows:

> This course is designed to give the prospective teacher of physical education/health an insight into this area of specialization. Included are the historical, philosophical, psychological, and sociological principles of health, physical education and recreation with a survey of the latest research and literature in the field. This course will serve to provide opportunity to integrate learning from previous courses.

It is a 2000 level, three-hour course, meaning it is designed for college sophomores to take as an induction to the physical education teacher education major and is a required course for our majors. The course is open to any major, which allows students who are not identified as physical education teacher education majors to enroll. However, physical education majors are typically the majority of students in class.

While the class has a majority of physical education teacher education majors,

there are other majors of all varieties. Students in the class not only vary in field of study or major, but also in age, gender, and term in school. Students in our teacher preparation program are typically from this state.

The classroom where I teach Introduction to Physical Education and Health is a shared university classroom. It has four large oval wooden tables with seating for up to eight around each table. The tables and chairs take up the majority of space in the classroom. The chairs are typical office chairs with cushioned seats and are mobile. There is a smart board in the back of the classroom and a variety of presentation technology including a projector available for use in the front of the classroom. The front of the classroom also has a lectern for the instructor. Dry erase boards are available in the front of the classroom. The room is typically clean, bright and comfortable. There can be up to thirty students enrolled in the course. Often there is limited space to move about in the room for students and myself.

Most of the course materials are housed in the online learning platform Desire to Learn (D2L). This allows students access to course materials outside of class. Students are required to use D2L to turn in several assignments in 'Dropbox' during the semester. Along with understanding how to access and use D2L, students in this class are required to purchase a textbook for the course, "Introduction to Physical Education, Sport and Fitness."

Methods of Data Collection

Data collected for this study will fall into two categories; data relevant to the research and data used to provide context. Data used to provide context will consist of students and my own personal background information in relation to the study along

with contextual information directly bound to the counter narrative. Data collected for research purposes will consist of multiple artifacts from students' work, classroom observations and an exit meeting (a semi-structured interview) at the end of the semester. Written student reflections from the semester from multiple occasions throughout the semester.

- Beginning and end of semester questions for students in the About Me Worksheet:
    - What do you believe it means to be a teacher? What is a teacher's purpose or role?
    - What are your goals for your students? What do you hope to accomplish?
  - Transcribed Audio recordings from class discussions
  - Reflection responses to questions from viewing "The Weight of the Nation"
    - Targeted questions:
      - Hearing the very personal stories of people who are suffering as a result of conditions related to obesity, are you more or less sympathetic and why?
      - Additionally, has this documentary series influenced your perspective as a future teacher? If so, how? If not, why not?
  - Personal biography statements –
    - All About Me (assignment)
    - Why I want to be a teacher (assignment) (field notes from observation of presentations)
  - Cultural Plunge – (experience and reflection paper) (field notes from observation of presentations)
      - Targeted questions:
      - Describe the scene, where are you, what time is it, what are you doing, provide detail.
      - Discuss how you felt during the experience, be honest.
      - What have you discovered about yourself from the experience (your values, biases, beliefs and other affective responses)
      - What have you discovered about the culture you have experienced?
      - Critically analyze; comparing your experience to your prior knowledge beliefs to your new knowledge and how your thoughts or feelings may have changed from your experience. Discuss your experience in detail.
      - Discuss whether and/or how this will impact you as a

future educator.
- Implicit Association Test – Weight Bias Assessment and discussion (refection paper)
- StarPower (reflection paper) (field notes from observation)

Field notes will also be kept during observation periods in class along with recordings from class to be transcribed to reinforce field notes. Exit meeting (semi-structured interview) draft questions for the exit meetings are intended to be heuristic in nature and were written to elicit meaningful information regarding students perspectives at the end of the semester (Merriam, 2009).

> Why do you want to be a teacher and why physical education?
> Use your words to describe your experiences this semester.
> Do you feel you have grown or changed this semester? If so how and why?
> Describe your identity as a teacher? (May need to explain and/or provide prompts)
> Has this changed from the beginning of the semester to now? If so how? Describe?
> How have other aspects of your thinking changed re: weight bias, privilege, and interactions with people who may seem different?

Most of the documentation would be from embedded course work within the class, but there may also be researcher-generated documents created for students to complete (Merriam, 2009).

All data collected from students in the form of course work would be copied, graded and the graded copy handed back to the students. All copied work with student names or identifiers would be redacted. All data, interview, document and observation data would be secured on a password-protected computer. Hard copy documents would be locked in my office in a locked file cabinet. Student identities, teacher, and university identities will be either not used or provided pseudonyms to protect anonymity.

Data Analysis

Data analysis would begin the first day of class. From the first artifact collected,

I would begin with open coding to begin categorizing documents, field notes, rudimentary notes, and interview transcripts (Merriam, 2009). From these categories or buckets (Marshall & Rossman, 2006) of data, I would use axial coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2007) to begin refining the open codes into meaningful groupings.

While Glaser and Strauss (1967) used constant comparison as a means for constructing grounded theory, Merriam (2009) suggests it is an inductive and comparative method appropriate for use within qualitative research. In the process of interpreting findings, theoretical notes or questions that emerge will become part the constant comparison process. If a new hypothesis or question emerges (theoretical sampling) it will then become part of the process of constant comparison, and thus is ongoing until theoretical saturation is reached (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Emerging questions or theories may also be used to elicit new information during an interview, or as part of the researcher-generated documents.

Since data collection and organization can be challenging, data will be organized in a systematic process. Merriam (2009) states,

> Making sense out of data involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read – it is the process of making meaning. (pp. 175-176)

Trustworthiness

Since validity, reliability, and ethics are often criticized component of case study, it is important to discuss how I will enhance trustworthiness within this study. Multiple methods would be used to develop trustworthiness, including triangulation, member checking, and thick description (Creswell, 2012).

To begin, I propose that the study take place over a four to six week period in a

class I teach. I would use constant comparison methods, and only use document and artifact data collected from class. In no way will the study impact students' grades, nor will grades be based on participation in the study.

Triangulation would be used to compare data from observations, interviews, and document analysis to build coherent justifications for emerging themes or categories (Cresswell, 2012; Merriam, 2009). Member checking would be conducted with students toward the end of the course. By member checking, students can help determine the accuracy of the findings (Cresswell, 2012). Further trustworthiness would be created and enhanced through a rich-thick description (Geertz, 2004), which serves to illuminate the case and bring it to life for the reader. These facets of the study perhaps will not only add to trustworthiness but also add to the quality of interpretation and description of the case.

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