A Journey of Critical Scholarship in Physical Education Teacher Education

Erin Cameron

Context and Objectives of the Study

I am a beginning teacher educator in a university physical education program in Canada. This emerging identity is informed by my past role as a professional athlete and current roles as a doctoral student and contract lecturer in a physical education teacher education (PETE) program. In this chapter, I illustrate how these roles are not only interrelated but I argue that taking the time to understand their relatedness has been instrumental to understanding my developing 'critical' pedagogy (CP).

Through a year-long critical autoethnographic self-study (CASS), I explore my shifting perspectives during the 2010–2011 university school year as a student in my first year of doctoral studies and as a co-instructor of a course titled 'Curriculum and Instruction in Health and Physical Education'. I draw upon reflective journaling and critical dialogues with internationally renowned scholars in physical education to explore the research questions: *What informs my developing critical pedagogy? How does this influence my teaching practice?* The paper has three objectives: (a) to explain the nature and process of CASS methodology, (b) to highlight key moments when thinking about my CP changed, and (c) to identify some of the ways in which my professional knowledge of teaching practice has benefited from this form of inquiry.

This study is important for three reasons. First, just like students can't help but learn in ways that reflect their past learning experiences, teacher educators cannot help but teach from their subjective experiences (Palmer 1998). As such, understanding and sharing how our past, current, and future experiences impact our attitudes, beliefs, and values as researchers and teacher educators is of utmost importance (Loughran 2006). Second, there is growing recognition of the complex and multifaceted process that contributes to becoming a teacher educator (Williams

E. Cameron (✉)
Assistant Professor, School of Human Kinetics and Recreation,
Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, NL, A1C 5S7, Canada
e-mail: ecameron@mun.ca

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et al. 2012). As a result, a growing number of scholars are suggesting that self-study methodology offers a 'promising method for new teacher educators to make meaning of their developing pedagogies' (Bullock and Ritter 2011, p. 173). This is particularly important given that new teacher educators often 'do not think about the issues of teacher education in a general sense or about the programs they work in beyond their individual courses' (Zeichner 2005, p. 120). Yet, few have endeavoured to explore the experiences of beginning physical education teacher educators, and it is my hope to contribute to this body of literature by sharing my own experiences and encouraging other beginning physical education teacher educators to engage in self-study 'not only for what it shows about the self but because of its potential to reveal knowledge of the educational landscape' (Clandinin and Connelly 2004, p. 597). Third, a number of scholars are calling for 'critical consideration and/or revisiting of programs in light of changing societal and student needs for global, socially and culturally responsive PETE' (Melnychuk et al. 2011, p. 148). Critical pedagogy, which derives from the idea of education for social justice, endeavours to transform inequitable, undemocratic, and oppressive institutions and social relations. This study responds to this call for reconsideration and reimagining of PETE programs in Canada and beyond. It builds upon the rich history of CP within physical education, which began in the 1990s and highlights the need for more socially, culturally, and critically oriented PETE programs (*cf.* Fernandez-Balboa 1997; Fitzpatrick 2010; Halas 2011; Kirk 2010; Macdonald and Brooker 2000; Tinning 2002).

Why Self-Study and Critical Autoethnography?

Hamilton and Pinnegar (1998) define self-study as 'the study of one's self, one's actions, one's ideas, as well as the "not self"' (p. 236). Self-study provides a framework for inquiry that enables teacher educators to explore the gap between who we think we are and who we think we would like to be (Pinnegar and Hamilton 2009). As Wilcox et al. (2004) write, self-study helps 'to uncover, critique, and celebrate the less explicit, yet significant, aspects of professional practice' (p. 307). At its core it is a recursive process where teaching philosophies and practices are 'revisited, reinterpreted, reframed, and restoried' (Tidwell et al. 2009, p. xix). As Pithouse et al. (2009) write, self-study 'involves using methods that facilitate a stepping back, a reading of our situated selves as if it were a text to be critically interrogated and interpreted within the broader social, political, and historical contexts that shape our thoughts and actions and constitutes our world' (p. 45).

It is the dual purpose of self-study, to incite reflective practice and transformative education, that makes it uniquely positioned to contribute to a social justice agenda (LaBoskey 2004). However, LaBoskey (2004) argues that 'the connection is not automatic' (p. 81) and it is for this reason that I believe critical autoethnographic self-study (CASS) (Pennington 2006) is particularly suited to self-studies that aim to explicitly bring social justice issues to the forefront. Not only has CASS been used to prompt pre-service teachers to examine their white racial identities in

relation to their practice (Pennington and Brock 2012) but teacher educators have used CASS to examine their complex identities and histories within the classroom and their attitudes towards students (Pennington et al. 2012). As Kincheloe (2005) writes 'teachers and students who gain such a critical ontological awareness understand how dominant cultural perspectives have helped construct their political opinions, religious beliefs, gender roles, racial positions, and sexual orientation' (p. 162). By employing CASS I am intentionally engaging in what Lincoln and Denzin (2005) have called the 'methodologically contested present' (p. 1116), where blurring genres pushes methodological boundaries (Hamilton et al. 2008). While critical autoethnography and self-study are both methodologies that have 'I' at the centre, the blending of the two recognizes that *self* does not exist apart from but rather is part *of* complex social structures.

While CASS was used in this research, the design of the study was consistent with characteristics of self-study research identified by LaBoskey (2004). First, it was self-initiated and focused. Not only did I want to teach but I wanted to engage in reflective practice throughout my first year of teaching in order to better understand my practice. Second, it was improvement aimed. Despite the recognized need for more critical approaches in physical education, there is a recognized need for more effective strategies to address power and privilege within the physical education classroom (Halas et al. 2012). Third, it was interactive. As I was co-teaching the course with my doctoral supervisor, I met with her on numerous occasions to discuss the course and to reflect upon my teaching practice. I also wrote reflective journal entries after most classes and we used these as texts to analyze and critique. Fourth, it included multiple, primarily qualitative, methods. Not only did I engage in narrative inquiry through reflective journaling, but also through dialogues with six prominent scholars around the world about the *process* of becoming a critical scholar in physical education and teaching in a PETE program.

By engaging both an internal reflective tool and an external reflective tool I was able to analyze my developing CP within the broader context of PETE. Through several successive rounds of data analysis, involving coding, categorizing, and identifying concepts (Lichtman 2010), a number of key themes emerged that highlighted my developing CP. Furthermore, ongoing discussions with my co-instructor and supervisor helped to further affirm how my thinking about teaching practice was changing.

In the following sections, I highlight how I came to CASS methodology and what I learned through the process about my teaching practice. It is my hope to promote CASS 'as an approach which creates space for others to engage in critical thought' (Lyle 2009, p. 294) so that together we can reconsider and reimagine PETE pedagogy and practice in the twenty-first century.

Examining My Developing Critical Pedagogy

In the months leading up to the PETE course, my excitement escalated. Not only was I excited to teach adult learners, I was also excited to engage CP as a way to disrupt some of the dominant discourses and ideologies within physical education.

While I hadn't always been critical of physical education, a growing sense of discomfort with the field had encouraged me to pursue doctoral studies where I had been introduced to CP, what I described in one of my dialogues as a '*language of possibility*'. As part of the doctoral program, I conducted numerous literature reviews on the history of physical education, the emergence of CP in physical education, and physical education reform. I quickly realized I was not alone, that in fact there were many arguing for physical education reform, PETE reform, and for the inclusion of more social-cultural perspectives in physical education. I learned how rationalism and the Scientific Revolution gave shape to ideologies of mind/body separation and inspired educators to promote physical education as a vehicle for military training (Phillips and Roper 2006); how ideas in medicine and psychology about sanitary practices and physical activity inspired educators to use physical education to promote health (Van Dalen and Bennett 1953); and, how, in Canada, low fitness levels among men enlisting in WW2 and a desire to stimulate amateur sport inspired educators to emphasize fitness and sport in physical education curricula (Morrow and Wamsley 2005). While this emphasis on fitness and sport has remained dominant over the last 50 years, it has been argued that a new agenda has emerged where schools, particularly physical education programs, are targeting childhood obesity (Azzarito 2007; Evans et al. 2008). Sadly, such acculturation of neoliberal ideology results in the promotion of body regulation and serves to fuel dominant discourses of fat bodies being 'at risk' (Lupton 2013). In response, a growing number of voices are calling for critical reflection on a view of physical education that is dominated by obesity discourse (Gard and Wright 2005; Webb et al. 2008).

With the Best of Intentions

It was in reading the critical physical education scholarship where I felt I had found an academic home. I began to critique all positivistic, reductionistic approaches, and began to identify as a critical pedagogue. Like others, I began to argue that physical education has largely been influenced by master narratives derived from privileged, white, elite, Western worldviews (Fernández-Balboa 1997) that have encouraged or abetted the continual progress of science and technology, industrialization, and medicalization of life, referring to how more and more of everyday life has come under the medical dominion, influence, and supervision (Conrad 1992). I wrote in my journal: *I feel as though we need a whole new language to talk about the concept of being and living.* I increasingly drew from the work of Foucault (1977, 1984) and Bourdieu (1990) to argue that with the increased agenda of high standards and measurement, bodies were being turned into sites of punishment and privilege, and as a result, many youth were suffering from these injustices (Cameron et al. 2014). I drew attention to the need for more physical educators to understand how the subject was (and was not) engaging students in meaning-making practices about their bodies, from the perspective of both a physical and social construction. For instance, I wrote in my journal: *are we teaching youth about bodies in such a*

way that they don't know how to be…that we teach our youth to say NO but that we don't teach them to say YES? While this entry was inspired by the growing controversies within the sex education curriculum in Ontario, I felt these could be extended to other body-related activities such as eating and activity. As has been shown, youth are well-versed in health discourses and the behaviours that can and cannot make them healthy, but few actually choose to engage in such behaviours (Rail 2009). I argued that physical education continues to focus on providing students with information, skills, and confidence, but little attention is given to situating these within broader contexts of society.

When the time finally came to start planning for the PETE course, my co-instructor and I drew heavily from Fernández-Balboa's (1995) work around reclaiming PETE through CP. There were three goals for the course. Our first goal was to connect the course to broader social issues. We wanted students to see health and physical education as broader than just sport techniques. For this reason, we included a diversity of topics related to wellbeing and introduced a variety of pedagogical models (e.g., Sport Education, Teaching Games for Understanding, and Teaching for Personal and Social Responsibility). Our second goal was to challenge conventional relations of power in the classroom. We hoped to create spaces that encouraged emancipative dialogue by positioning power and privilege in all classroom discussions, and by inviting students' experiences and perspectives to be equally as necessary as our own in the creation of classroom knowledge. In doing so we hoped to acknowledge the possibilities and limits of our own knowledge and perspectives and challenge the notion of teacher-as-expert. Following Fernández-Balboa's (1995) suggestion we endeavoured to co-create the syllabus and design the course content, topics, and assignments with the students. So on the first day of class we presented the syllabus as a rough draft and invited students to provide feedback. Other strategies we employed to challenge power relations were: talking circles, interactive classes that prompted dialogue, and community building activities. Our third goal was to bring the personal and the political into the learning experience. We wanted students to question knowledge, particularly around who benefits from it, how it changes over time, how it is used, and who it influences. This approach stemmed from our desire to inspire a group of students to value difference and diversity, be attentive to one another, and to care about and protect the health of each other, the environment, and oneself. We hoped that by employing CP our students would 'acknowledge, accommodate, and adopt more holistic and integrative ways of knowing and living' and 'be better prepared to teach in a society of multiple values and traditions, and I dare say, would be more able to renew the world' (Fernández-Balboa 1995, p. 99).

While there were a few students in the class who embraced and expressed appreciation for our approach, the majority resisted. Even our attempt to engage the students in co-creating the syllabus fell flat as we received no feedback. My journal entry for that day should have been a forewarning of what was to come.

> *I watched the students' expressions intently – some were nodding, while others looked absolutely stunned. Some of their faces seemed to say … 'What kind of PE is this!? Gardening? Spirituality? Death Education? Book Clubs? Journaling?' I had to stop from laughing out*

loud out of nervousness. I can't help but think about the year ahead… How will our critical approach be received?

While there were many moments throughout the course that were suggestive of how our critical approach was being received, it was the second last day that was the most memorable. As outlined in their negotiated final assignment outline, two students had chosen to create a film that examined conventional physical education with more alternative forms. While we had approved the outline, the final product was none-other than a 'mockumentary' of the course. I still remember how sick I felt watching the video. One by one they picked apart and mocked the social justice issues that we had asked them to critically reflect upon, such as racism, sexism, elitism, and healthism. In one scene, a student dressed in a fat suit woke up, got out of bed, reached into his pants (for what appears to be an erection), pulled out a chocolate bar, and proceeded to eat it. I am still not sure why we didn't stop it or how I held back tears of frustration. It wasn't just the film, but also the standing ovation they received by half a dozen males in the class that left a lasting impact.

When I think back to that film on the last day of class, I can still remember sitting there paralyzed by disbelief and being at a loss for words. In fact, neither my co-instructor nor I said anything during or at the conclusion of the video. It wasn't until a few days later that I reflected on the experience in my journal: '*I am calling it a mutiny. A besiege. A form of resistance. Whatever it was – whatever I call it… it was shocking, disturbing, and deeply unsettling*'. For months I relived the experience and went through a range of emotions, from anger to sadness. Mostly I struggled with a sense of helplessness, especially knowing that these students would pass (despite a low grade in physical education) and could go on to become certified as teachers. While I initially blamed the students' unquestioning compliance with the field's determined boundaries, their privileged backgrounds, and their hegemonic intent on preserving masculinity within physical education, later I turned the critical lens on my own teaching practice. I began to ask, what could I learn from their resistance to inform my practice? While I still can't help but think that my students were standing on the shoulders of the status quo in physical education, admittedly the resistance had also been a result of the pedagogical approach and critical practice that we had taken in the class.

Turning a Negative into a Positive

Given that our intention had been to challenge the master narratives and regimes of truth in physical education, I initially felt that we had been ineffective in doing so – I even went so far as to write that we '*failed to teach*'. But did we? While the students responded differently than I had anticipated or perhaps hoped for, the fact that they responded meant that they had engaged in the learning. Through my journal, it is evident that learning had taken place and that we had connected the students to broader issues. In fact, many of them responded enthusiastically to the alternative activities and ideas we included in the course. For example, many of them felt that the gardening lecture, where we had explored issues such as greening school-yards

and school food policies, had been extremely useful. One student even wrote to us after the course was finished to explain how the lecture on death education, where we had examined death as it related to health and wellbeing, had benefited her teaching practice.

When I now reflect back to the course I realize we didn't fail, but rather it was our interpretation and implementation of CP that failed (Muros-Ruiz and Fernandez-Balboa 2005). I can see that despite efforts to engage CP, I unwittingly perpetuated the 'repressive myth' of CP (Ellsworth 1992) by being too idealistic (O'Sullivan et al. 1992) and too fixed on ideas of acceptable moral behavior (Sicilia-Camacho and Fernandez-Balboa 2009). For, as much as I tried to challenge power and decentre myself as the expert teacher, I maintained a position of authority over the class. In fact, the tension between my desire to give up power and my inexperience to do so is clearly evident in my journal. After the first day of class I wrote:

> *We presented the syllabus as a draft asking for their input. But what if they come back hating it all – what then? Do we start from scratch? How comfortable am I with reorienting my thoughts, ideas about what I think they should learn?*

While my intentions had been to create a more socially, culturally, and critically oriented PETE program, I now realize how naïve, inexperienced, and ill-prepared I was to teach using CP. My hope had been to challenge power, but I failed to recognize the very fact that by employing CP I was enacting my power as the teacher. As Muros-Ruiz and Fernandez-Baloba (2005) argue:

> … methods, no matter how they are used, do reflect specific relations of power. That is, using a so-called emancipator method in autocratic ways works against the aims of CP because, rather than encouraging students to be transformative, it forces them to comply (p. 258).

Research has shown that student resistance in teacher education can stem from a lack of preparation towards alternative praxis, being pushed too quickly towards thinking critically, and specific expectations of teacher education (Breunig 2006). While some resistance is arguably healthy as it can demonstrate student agency (Davis 1992), strong resistance can be discouraging and even harmful to some students and teachers. For instance, at the end of our course a few students indicated that while they had enjoyed the course and appreciated our approach, the overt resistance displayed by some students had turned them off of wanting to teach physical education in the future. One student went as far as to suggest that the overt resistance by several students had made her feel unsafe and unwelcome in the class and the field in general. As a beginning teacher educator I had felt similarly disoriented and discouraged by the resistance and for months struggled and questioned whether I should continue.

Fortunately, over time and as a result of this self-study I did not lose hope but rather gained new insights into my developing CP. I began to shift away from a focus on teaching students to *be* critical towards trying to understand the different ways we, students and I, *do* criticalness. This shift in thinking was further precipitated by my dialogues with critical scholars in physical education, who reinforced the ideas that teaching is emplaced, storied, and relational. These themes have not

only helped me to further my CP but also my teaching practice. While none of these themes seem out of the ordinary, their presence has been nothing shy of extraordinary for my practice. I am thankful for what they have taught me about myself and how they have contributed to my developing teacher educator self.

Teaching as Emplaced

I began dialogues with several critical scholars in physical education by sending each a narrative of the key moments, shifts, and transitions that I experienced in my critical journey. By offering my narrative, it was my hope that others would be inspired to reflect on their own journeys and identify the challenges they faced in forging their professional identities. One scholar responded by writing,

> *I don't know whether it is refreshing and hopeful to encounter a graduate student who is questioning the level of critical thought among physical educators, or depressing beyond words to be reminded that a severe lack of critical perspective and a studied avoidance of anything approaching social justice could probably be used as distinguishing characteristics of the field.*

Another suggested: '*The idea of key moments, shifts, and transitions is an interesting way to think about the pathways we take*'. He later went on to write:

> *I've come to view over the course of my career that very little of what I've done has been on the basis of such a 'rational' decision-making process. The issue for me is, how much do we position ourselves and to what extent are we positioned by others, by events, by our biographies?*

The discursive production of selves was a key theme to emerge through my dialogues. Others suggested that through multiple encounters, the books/articles they read, the people they spent time with and/or met, and the television/media they watched, they were constantly negotiating new subjective positions. As Davies and Harre (1990) write 'who one is always an open question with a shifting answer depending upon the positions made available within one's own and others' discursive practices' (p. 46). This diverges from role theory, where personhood can be seen as separate from various roles. So, while I began this study with the intention of understanding how my various roles have informed my critical journey (i.e., athlete, student, teacher), I have come to see that what I am really trying to understand is how my 'experiencesasathletestudentteacherinWesternculture' have informed my critical journey. This distinction not only captures the interconnected nature of my emerging professional identity, situated in time and place, but also the contextual nature of teaching, where social conventions within sport and education impact my teacher educator identity. This distinction is important in that it recognizes both the freedom and constraint in our positionality. This was well articulated by one scholar who wrote,

> *I think part of the answer to your question about our responsibility to address/interfere/disempower, etc, harmful ideologies is to become aware of the possibilities and also the*

> *limitations of our multiple positionalities. This for me is an important first but also often repeated step in recognizing how we might practice critical pedagogy. At a very basic level, relative age and experience in a particular domain (eg. Critical scholarship in physical education and sport) determine to a large extent the positions we might occupy/live/practice in relation to others and the influence we may have.*

It is by understanding teaching as emplacement, to put something into a specific time and place, which allows me to acknowledge where I am and where I might go in the future. For example, I have begun to recognize that while I endeavored to position myself as disruptive of physical education ideology in 'body' I was a *hegemonic functionariate* (Fernández-Balboa and Muros-Ruiz 2006) who served to reproduce the dominant ideologies within the subject. I represented the very phenotypic cues that matched with students' socialized expectations of 'who teaches' in physical education (Douglas and Halas 2013). In other words, students not only came to the class with expectations of *what* they would learn and *how* they would learn, but also *who* to expect as a teacher. This growing awareness was captured in my journal:

> *As the guest speakers were telling their stories I found myself looking around the room. It dawned on me in this class I was more like my students than I wanted to admit. Furthermore, I represented the very thing that I was trying so hard to trouble, critique, and disrupt. I was white, middle-class, able-bodied, athletic, and had excelled in PE and sport all through school. It was in being a jock/athlete that I had gained social currency and capital, and to a large degree still did.*

It is this realization that made me recognize, that had I been a student in the class, I too would have likely resisted. As a 'trim, tight, lineless, bulgeless, and sagless' (Bordo 2003, p. 32) athlete I had easily 'measured up' and 'fit into' the dominant physical culture of health and physical education. In university, as I pursued kinesiology courses that focused on the material body, where the explicit curriculum was teaching the names of body parts and movement principles, the implicit curriculum was reinforcing an objectifying, mesomorphic, anti-intellectual, sexist, homophobic, and competitive jock culture (Hunter 2011; Kirk et al. 1997). This was perpetuated in the ways student performances and participation were systematically quantified, the homogeneity of teachers' and students' dress and body codes, the acquiring and legitimacy of gendered physical capital, and the privileging of the physical above all else. My ability to fit in with this culture not only gave me a sense of security, but it reinforced the subjective sense of who I was and supported my actions and choices in the world. As Bourdieu and Wacquant (1989) write '…when habitus encounters a social world of which it is the product, it finds itself 'as a fish in water', it does not feel the weight of the water and takes the world about itself for granted' (p. 43). Moreover, as Gramsci (1971) points out, it is the very discourses that are normalized and accepted by a culture that often serves to enable injustices and oppression.

As a result of this self-study, I have become increasingly aware of positionality and how teaching is a discursive process of positioning oneself and being positioned by others. It is not sufficient to 'trouble, disrupt, critique, make the familiar strange' (Hunter 2011, p. 198), without also taking into consideration

the context of social conventions embedded in PETE and teacher education more broadly. Hunter (2011) writes:

> …without attending to teaching and learning as embodied [and emplaced] we might leave new teachers, and indeed new teacher educators, with a sense of disempowerment, distorted expectations of agency, feelings of hopelessness, or the only option being to revert, willingly or unknowingly, to the very practices and structures they are critical of and attempting to change (p. 198).

Teaching as Storied

Closely linked to positionality, storying involves our use of stories to make sense of our own life and the lives of others. In other words, the stories we tell of ourselves and the meanings we give stories help to form our subjective sense of self. I appreciated how the scholars I dialogued with reflected upon my story and shared their observations. As one scholar wrote:

> *I am reading a story, on the one hand, about disillusionment or disappointment and a sense of self disrupted or unsettled. But on the other hand, as a counter-point, I am also reading about an opening up of self, a realization of important things beyond what had been a 'comfort zone'.*

While I felt incredibly vulnerable to share my story it also helped me to see things anew through different eyes, and to be able to gain a meditative distance from my storied experience. It was through these new found and different eyes that I was able to see how my story as a beginning teacher educator is deeply connected to my experiences in sport, where sport came to represent both a failed promise and an opportunity for change.

Storying My Lived (and Moving) Experiences

I grew up in the Canadian prairies on a small farm where I was in constant movement. It was through movement that I learned about myself and the world around me. I thrived in anything that involved moving, including sports. At the age of 6 when I went to school, I was confused why we had to sit to learn and why 'real' learning only happened indoors. It contradicted much of how I had learned in the first 6 years of my life growing up on a farm deeply connected in mind and body. As a result, I had trouble sitting for long periods of time and was often disruptive in class. Halas and Kentel (2008) suggest that we rarely 'consider how painful it can be when we hold young people back from the movement their bodies crave, particularly in schools' (p. 214). Such schooling practices are not only counter-intuitive for some children, but they reinforce a Western ideology that privileges the mind over the body, and reduces the body to a machine to control and manage.

Over time I learned how to sit, listen, and obey. As Foucault (1984) has argued, this type of 'biopower' – the idea that individuals and populations are controlled

through practices associated with the body – is a form of invasive and omnipresent governance that acts to regulate similarities and differences among people. In other words, schools are sites where regimes of discourse and power inscribe themselves and where students learn how to think and how to experience their bodies (McLaren 1991). While school became a place where I felt confined and controlled, sport became a place where I could develop a sense of self that wasn't narrowly circumscribed by social conventions. However, over time this began to shift as I became more involved and influenced by the institutionalization of sport. I came to a point where '*all I did was sport, and all I was – was sport*'. While sport claims to provide opportunities for positive development and critical life skill development, I had begun to see past these promises to recognize dominant ideologies of capitalism, elitism, and sexism. I began to recognize, along with many other sport leaders, journalists, and sociologists, that in an increasingly socially conscious world, sport was failing to demonstrate its capacity for moral and social responsibility (Kidd 1996).

As a response, I began to question the sport conventions I had once lived by. Bourdieu (1991) explains that complicity is first necessary for power to occur, which, in my case, took the form of the unconditional support and power I had once given to sport. However, as I began to question, I began the process of reclaiming this power for myself. In fact, it was through my masters research that signaled the start of this reclamation. Inspired by a growing number of athletes seeking opportunities to create positive social change, I examined what I called Athlete Social Responsibility (ASR) (Carter 2009), and its potential positive implications on the Canadian sport system. While a small number of athletes have historically used sport to address social issues such as equality, justice, and freedom, this type of civic engagement has often been discouraged (Wolff and Kaufman 2010). Fueled by the storied experiences of athletes, my research showed that ASR provided an opportunity for Canadian sport to escape from its current trap as a Hollywood fixture; that is, something to watch, but not be a part of. While my sense of a failed sport system is evident in my narrative and storied experience within sport, there is an equally strong sense that sport has a lot of positive things to offer: '*I believe in the power of sport. I believe that we are physical beings and sport has a role in our global world to absorb our physicality. But we will need to change our current system*'.

As a result of my self-study, I have become increasingly aware of the storied journeys we are all on. Each of the scholars I spoke to had a unique story to tell about how they came to think critically about physical education. Regardless of the pathway, all spoke about how reflection has been a critical part of understanding their journeys. As one scholar wrote:

> *I wouldn't claim to have understood my situation all at once back then, but the effort to try to do so was very important in terms of keeping some kind of perspective on life, the universe, etc. And, of course, as things change, the sustainability of criticality requires us to go on recognizing the source/s of discomfort, which may be different from the source/s that gave us initial impetus.*

Most importantly, I have become aware of how important it is to understand our own stories. For the more we can understand our stories and ourselves, the more

we can change ourselves to enact change in the world. Mahatma Gandhi once said, 'Be the change you see in the world' and this idea was captured well by one scholar wrote:

> *Perhaps, more than aspiring to change PE it would be wiser to center your efforts in knowing yourself. As you gain knowledge-feeling in this regard, that which is around you will change as well, much like when you throw a pebble into a pond: The ripple effect comes naturally without the pebble trying to make it happen.*

Teaching as Relational

This self-study has helped me to see the interconnectedness of our humanity. As one scholar wrote, *I understand your struggle, because it is not unlike mine. There lies our kindship – in our humanness.* Despite different ontologies, axiologies, epistemologies, and paradigms, I can now see how students and teachers exist in relation to one another. I now feel that my inability to acknowledge my process of becoming and to share that process with the students in my class was perhaps the downfall of my initial approach to CP. It was as a result of this self-study that I began to acknowledge that while I was in the process of becoming a critical pedagogue, my earlier actions had been oppressive to others in the same way that I was critical of my students.

Admittedly at the beginning of the course, I believed it was important to downplay my background as a professional athlete because I thought that it would reinforce some of the dominant ideologies that I was trying so hard to disrupt. I even went to the extent of denying my past: when my students googled me and brought it up in class, I shrugged it off because I felt that it didn't serve CP. I have come to see how important this gesture was for my students and their need to connect to my athleticism and to me as an instructor. Not only did my history make them feel safe but it also made them feel that they could trust me, two very important aspects of any critical approach! Arguably without first focusing on developing trust and creating a community within a classroom, critical discussions and new ideas won't feel safe and, worse yet, might be overtly resisted.

I now recognize that in my first year of teaching I spent little time engaging the knowledge, attitudes, and values of the students; instead I positioned CP in opposition to the conventional approach to physical education that many of the students knew and loved. This is in itself an act of power over the students and their lived experiences, and an act of privilege in my role as teacher. While my intentions had been good, my approach cultivated an environment of conflict and resistance. Initially I discounted this resistance, but as a result of this self-study I am now learning to reframe this resistance as a 'teachable moment'. As a result, I now share the experiences and learning from this first course as a way to not only show that teaching is a process of becoming but as a way to illustrate that teaching is emplaced, storied, and relational. It is in sharing space with students, to learn from and with each other, that CP can naturally occur. It is not so much the pedagogical

approach that makes the learning rich but the environment in which one creates that enables criticalness to occur. This idea was captured well by one of the scholars when he wrote:

> *Think of yourself as a flute at the service of a GREAT FLUTIST. You see, the flute is neither the flutist nor the music, IT, the FLUTIST, will blow through you and wonderful MUSIC will emerge, also through you. The ego will try to make you believe that you are the creator of such music, you (with the ego in check) must know better. Others, upon hearing that (not your) MUSIC, will recognize its power, will envi* [sic] *and criticize you (thinking you as the author), and you (from the ego) may fell the temptation to either convince them of the rightness of the music or defend yourself from their envi and criticism. Refrain from both. Keep conscious of, and grateful to, the FLUTIST for the MUSIC, and just remain in peace, open to be played again and again. There is no need for labels, there is no need to convince or defend. A flute is a flute and as long as it knows it, lives peacefully enjoying what comes through it while contemplating the delight in others (through not everyone) upon hearing that music.*

An Emerging 'Gentle' Pedagogy

I went into my first year as a beginning teacher educator believing that change needed to happen. While I still think change is needed, I now 'acknowledge more fully the significance of learning from and with the teacher candidates I instruct' (Grierson 2010, p. 11). I feel as though my greatest shortcoming as a teacher educator was my focus on teaching a course rather than on creating a community of learners. I was so focused on reforming the course content and disrupting the dominant discourses and ideologies that I spent little time actually helping teacher candidates develop their reflexive abilities. Through this self-study I have come to acknowledge that the student resistance I encountered was more a reflection of my inadequate understanding of the knowledge teacher candidates require (and desire) and the complexity of facilitating reflexive practice.

While admittedly not the fault of CP but my implementation of CP, I have come to see the importance of finding 'teaching and learning approaches that resist binaries and consider complexities' (Bowes and Bruce 2011, p. 29). It was evident in my discussions with the numerous critical physical education scholars that while many of them continue to challenge dominant discourses and ideologies in physical education, many have moved from activist-oriented approaches to more modest-oriented approaches that acknowledge different ways of knowing and being in the world. This idea is captured well by Tinning (2002) who calls for more modest pedagogies that combine and interweave analytic voices of critique and truth, voices of rage for injustices, and personal voices of lived stories and culture. As such, he highlights the importance of embracing diversity, relationality, and contextuality within pedagogical approaches, while working to advance a more socially just world.

Social justice pedagogy arguably fits within the frame of a modest pedagogy in that it focuses both on process and goals (Bell and Griffin 1997). In other words, there is an acknowledgement of the process involved in building relationships and

contextuality in a highly diverse world. Kumashiro (2004) writes that within social justice pedagogy there is no 'best' approach but rather a commitment to turning inward, to explore perspectives and practices that make change possible and impossible, and outward, to explore perspectives and practices that have yet to addressed.

Through this self-study I feel I have gathered more tools in my developing pedagogical repertoire to help teacher candidates prepare to teach in a more socially and culturally responsive way. While it may be hard for me to see all the facets of my developing pedagogy, this study provides a jump-start for this process. I draw hope from dialoguing with critical scholars in physical education, many of whom are further along in their critical journey, who articulated that the effort to understand one's developing pedagogy is very important for keeping some kind of perspective on life and scholarly work.

Conclusion

Through this critical autoethnographic self-study, I have endeavored to show that taking time to become deeply conscious of one's multiple selves is a worthwhile journey. It builds upon the notion that we build stories through our life experiences and that these 'storied' selves are worth deconstructing because 'the simplicity of Cartesian rationalism and mainstream forms of educational knowledge production has not met our needs' (Kincheloe and Tobin 2006, p. 6) to date. A critical approach to self-study research not only emphasizes a journey of becoming but it is 'well suited to addressing the complexities and subtleties of the human experience in teaching and learning' (Webster and Mertova 2007, p. 1). This approach not only enabled me to explore the complexities within my journey as a scholar, it also helped me to better understand my developing teaching pedagogy and practice. My hope is that by sharing my experiences I have opened up a space for students and teachers alike to examine their own experiences.

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