

From insider to outsider and back again: A self-study of being and becoming a curriculum specialist in physical education

by © Cheryl Tanton A Thesis submitted

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was: (1) to capture my lived experiences as a curriculum specialist attempting to enact change, (2) to investigate how my identities as a curriculum specialist shape my lived experiences and how those lived experiences shape my identity and (3) provide insights into a curriculum specialist's practice through self-study. Given that little is known about the work and lived experiences of a curriculum specialist, in particular, less is known about the identities of those who work in curriculum development and how their identities influence their daily practice (You, 2011). It is in these gaps that this study is situated thus will add to the limited body of research.

This study was conducted over a 17-month period where I actively engaged in conversations with a critical friend who challenged and/or supported my assumptions. Data collection involved personal journal entries (n=39,529 words), emails, field notes from conversations with a critical friend, and artifacts and other forms of text. The analysis of data comprised of building and sifting through themes, inductive coding, synthesizing, organizing, inquiring questions and answers, insights into self, and looking for patterns for the purpose of discovering my findings (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). I looked at problems through multiple lenses and angles, which brought about a crystallization of the data and balance to this self-study that in turn, will ensure the element of trustworthiness and 'ring true' to those who read it

Several themes were identified from the data: how I came to develop a newly shaped view of who I was as a curriculum specialist; contrasting insider and outsider identities, tensions in coming to identify as a curriculum specialist, becoming a curriculum specialist, importance of critical friendship, establishing metaphors for my

identity, from *being* a physical educator and *becoming* a curriculum specialist. This research also demonstrates the value of self-study on processing identification in *being* and *becoming* a curriculum specialist.

By sharing the resulting findings from this research, others can learn from the insights about my practice as a curriculum specialist and the processes of curriculum development, and identity while using self-study research.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

In 1978, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) developed the International Charter of Physical Education and Sport, which states that:

Every human being has a fundamental right of access to physical education and sport, which are essential for the full development of his (sic) personality. The freedom to develop physical, intellectual and moral powers through physical education and sport must be guaranteed both within the educational system and in other aspects of social life (p. 10).

Despite recognizing the value of physical education by making it a fundamental human right, the status of physical education as a school subject continues to decline (Hardman, 2008; UNESCO, 2014). According to Kirk (2010), the dominant form of physical education (a multi-activity curriculum taught mostly through direct instruction) has serious design flaws, which need to be analyzed before we can “begin to contemplate a positive future” (Kirk, 2010, p. ix). UNESCO recently renewed the call for quality physical education, reiterating that throughout their school years, students will have access to quality physical education as a fundamental human right (UNESCO, 2015). In the document, UNESCO recognizes that physical education is a unique school-based medium that captures what all students will be able to do and know as they move through

a holistic approach to learning about and through the physical, mental, social, and emotional dimensions.

The guidelines and benchmarks for quality physical education outline the need for planned, progressive, inclusive, learning experiences that form the curricula in the early, intermediate, and secondary years of education (UNESCO, 2015). One of the key messages in this document states: “the provision of [quality physical education] depends on the concerted effort of all relevant stakeholders around a common vision. This vision must be encapsulated at the policy level” (UNESCO, 2015, p. 20). UNESCO’s (1978; 2015) advocacy of quality physical education can influence and spark an evolution of educational change and add to the international discussions about physical education curricula and policy. For example organizations such as Physical and Health Education Canada (PHE Canada) and SHAPE America have taken on this advocacy role. This renewed interest in physical education and indication of international support for the status of school physical education is a contributing factor to educational change in the field. Those involved in physical education are thus tasked with keeping physical education curricula current and relevant in modern times.

In Canada, curriculum policy development resides at the provincial and territorial level of government; therefore, curriculum renewal and reform is not a federal or national responsibility. Education is the exclusive jurisdiction of the 13 provinces and territories. In Kilborn, Lorusso, and Francis’s (2015) analysis of physical education curricula in ten Canadian provinces, the diversity in provincial curricula led to their investigation being a challenging task as they considered instructional time, aim statements, number of learning outcomes and themes, and the politics of curriculum renewal. In their gazing

into curriculum reform, they acknowledged that there is “no consistent time frame for renewal of physical education” and “pedagogical reform” can be delayed or exhilarated by “political moves” (Kilborn et. al., 2015, p.14). “An in-depth political analysis” (Kilborn et al. 2015, p. 15) was not the sole purpose of their paper, and so, there is little specific consideration of the political landscape of physical education in provinces like Prince Edward Island (PEI), which is where I work as a curriculum specialist¹. That Kilborn et al. (2015) did not focus specifically on the case of physical education in PEI is not to suggest conditions in the province are stagnant; we are in the midst of radical curricular reform, and this thesis research will focus on my experiences of working in this educational and political climate.

In PEI the physical education curriculum specialist is tasked with policy development to support a renewed vision and attention to children’s wellbeing, thus investing in and contributing to educating more physically literate and global citizens. Gazing through a lens of curriculum reform in PEI over the past decade, there has been and continues to be a clear agenda mandated by governments in power to develop and implement both the Grades 1-9 health curriculum and the Grades K-12 physical education curriculum. Over the past decade, this mandate has not wavered.

At a broad level, the curriculum reflects the role of education in society and the blending of public policy with the role of the curriculum specialist, who is part of an authoritative, government team tasked with the responsibility of creating a new and contemporary curriculum (Macdonald & Hunter, 2005). The role of the curriculum specialist is not to arbitrarily select what is valued at a certain place and time but to set

¹ Curriculum specialists are also referred to as curriculum writers, curriculum makers, curriculum developers, curriculum leaders, and curriculum consultants. Please see Definition of Terms in the chapter for a more detailed description of the term “curriculum specialist”.

forth change in the skills, knowledge and attitudes of current and future students to better equip them for a healthy and robust life.

It is the task of the provincial curriculum specialists who are entrusted by the government to reform and renew curriculum outcome standards that determine the expected skills, knowledge, and attitudes for students so they can work towards their preferred future and live as active citizens in a global world. Thus, a common vision and the medium for teachers to access these expected learning outcomes is through a curriculum document. Today, curriculum authorities must respond to significant changes in the ways we think and go about physical education. The physical education curriculum “guide” and the resources that support teaching and learning is a government’s investment in inclusion, health, physical literacy, civic engagement and overall academic achievement (UNESCO, 2015).

1.2. Who is a curriculum specialist and what is their role?

Curriculum specialists are the authority “charged with creating a new curriculum for new times” (Macdonald & Hunter, 2005, p. 112). In PEI curriculum specialists are for the most part, teachers who are seconded from schools to work directly for the government. Specifically the term “specialist” is a title that I carry as a seconded physical education teacher at the PEI Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD). The front portion of this specialist title, “physical education” describes the subject area in which I have deep knowledge. The title “specialist” is one that denotes many perceived and complicated notions of who I am and what I do. Across many jurisdictions the curriculum specialist’s work and professional responsibilities seem

consistent. What is it that we do? The following are descriptive job indicators for a curriculum specialist in PEI:

- Holds a valid teacher's license,
- Has at least five years of teaching experience,
- Coordinates the overall planning, designing, and development of course content for a specific subject area,
- Investigates and coordinates curriculum innovation, research, and ensures curriculum development and maintenance of curriculum is of the highest quality,
- Reviews external teaching resources,
- Has membership on many internal and external relevant committees/boards,
- Maintains a broad, up-to-date, and deep knowledge of subject area and disseminates this pertinent health and physical education information to teachers and colleagues,
- Stay current with curricular trends in the specific subject area,
- Provides guidance and counsel for teachers on all matters pertaining to curricula, instruction and assessment,
- Leads professional learning days.

In 2005, the Premier Task Force on Student Achievement released its report, *Excellence in Education: A Challenge for Prince Edward Island* (Kuriel, 2005). This report included recommendations to enhance and enrich the educational experience for all PEI students and set the direction for the future of education in the province. This report was the driving force for curriculum specialist to increase student achievement

effectively; it is thus necessary for teachers to have a clear and robust curriculum supported by:

- Outcomes with well-described standards and benchmarks;
- Human, physical, and material resources to assist in curriculum delivery;
- Research-based teaching and learning strategies; and
- Assessment practices and tools to provide information and decision-making.

Curriculum guides prescribe what outcomes are expected of students and should also prescribe the standards and benchmarks that are to be pursued. In order to have meaningful benchmarks and standards, the curricula must be fully developed. In the context of high school physical education in PEI, the curriculum was over 20 years old or non-existent. The same can be said for the resources. This made it very challenging for educators to know what to teach. The curriculum specialists examine and react to these deficiencies and develop measurable outcomes and achievement indicators that set the standards and expectations for students. Consequently, this is our task.

As a curriculum specialist I believe that form follows function and should not lead it (K. McDonald, personal communication, Nov. 18, 2013). Our own assumptions, that is, our personal desires, notions, and expectations must remain “in check” and evidence-based decision-making must guide the spirit of our work. The intent of the curriculum specialist work requires a shared vision of what children need to be successful now and in the future. We are futurists because we are trying to keep up with and prepare students for a future not yet discovered. In so doing, we should demonstrate and acknowledge what we know and what we do not know and accept this uncertainty. Our former role/s as teacher, administrator, and/or coach need to shift to researcher, progressive thinker and

influencer, while keeping the learners of the province front and centre during this process.

In PEI we are a small team that works to produce the best product or guide we can to serve teachers and ultimately serve students. I often found this curriculum writing process to be isolating from other curriculum specialists and educational leaders within the provincial system. As a member of the provincial curriculum writing team we consider what is essential for students in the province, as students should be at the core of what we do. We respect diversity, human rights, and all abilities. Without supporting and advising teachers on their understanding of the curriculum, I believe I will have failed at what is foremost in my mind and what is in the minds of other provincial curriculum specialists: the students of this province. Curriculum specialists create the document but it is up to physical education teachers to bring it to life in the school environment. Our role continues in all phases, piloting and implementing plus supporting the maintenance of provincial curricula with ongoing teaching assistance to deepen teachers' understanding of the curricula to a gradual release of our responsibility. Not only is developing, piloting, and implementing part of our duties, supporting the maintenance of provincial curricula is also vital, thus subsequent and ongoing teacher assistance can be a major part of our assignment. The curriculum guide alone will never be able to hold the stories of the servitude that took place to produce this curriculum.

My journey as a curriculum specialist began in 2011 when I met the posted requirements and was seconded from the English Language School Board. Since this time, I have discovered that curriculum specialists collaborate and are committed to engaging in ongoing collegial conversation and debate about existing and forthcoming

curriculum documents. My work is methodical, selfless, and meticulous, and involves physical education teachers, researchers, provincial partners, and community groups. An expert in the subject area and an educator, a curriculum specialist should engage provincial and national authorities and lead the curriculum development process for a particular subject matter. There are many intersecting pieces to the work of a curriculum specialist and we wear many labels such as teacher educator, community liaison, policy guru, consultant, content expert, mentor, and team player. Our work is very complex. We consume research (Macdonald & Hunter, 2005) in pursuit of the identification of best practices for those in our field. This recontextualizing of research involves recent developments, breakthroughs, or international practice in the field of physical education, focused on relevant and dynamic issues appropriate to our provincial context. Curriculum is the sum of all of these parts while the curriculum specialist is the designated leader to manage this complex web, being mindful of the privilege and burden of creating sustainable and progressive curriculum that must endure years before the next cycle of renewal.

1.2.1. Curriculum specialist and government

Curriculum specialists in PEI are the “makers” of curricula who work in the recontextualizing field (Macdonald & Hunter, 2005). We are not the political authorities who decide the public and educational interests and agendas. The research literature rarely acknowledges this world of the specialist (Westbury, 2007).

In PEI we work as public servants for the publicly elected government and by our hiring we are responsible for doing the work assigned to us. We take small steps, start and re-start, plan and re-plan. We do not have the “authority” to make decisions but we

can influence them. Ultimately our job is to advise on and implement decisions, and support the lawmakers. The public and institution creates the values we take on but how we manage these values is personal.

In our roles as public servants we are the stewards of the government purse and we must justify and get value from the money we are permitted to spend. As a curriculum specialist, we become intimately aware of governmental organization and election cycles, thus some critical announcements are not ours to make. We are required to discern feedback that moves up and down the bureaucratic staircase, but sometimes coming back down does not always happen. The slower pace of the government work environment can be a challenge as we are used to the speed, autonomy, authority and decision-making of teaching.

While working in the context of government we must always be at the ready to explain the “hows” and “whys” of what we do and be prepared to brief the Minister and his or her staff. To be effective, these briefings are expected to be timely and provide objective advice for the Minister. To do our job effectively and provide sound advice in a political system, we must quickly comprehend the political realities of our work and unpredictability of politics, as well as be media savvy. We are expected to be able to decide how to do the right thing at the right time within the right circumstance and with the right political strategy. Within government, an internal decision-making team can move items forward or prevent items from moving in the direction we expect and just because we win some battles does not mean we win the war. We learn to think divergently, create networks, embrace diversity, and be bravely honest in our communication. The politicians who we serve may not be content experts in curriculum

but we must be able to provide them with high quality advice and information to support them to do the best work they can.

Currently, I am hired to do the work of a curriculum specialist and must try to be master of all the above-mentioned characteristics and descriptions while being and becoming a curriculum specialist. I can only do the best job I can each and every day I am employed at the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD). People come and go from this role, for reasons that can be their own or for reasons that seem to lack respect and are unclear and unjust. I balance my moral beliefs and values every day. Internal and external conflicts will always be inevitable as I navigate the waters of a 21st century teacher and curriculum specialist.

1.3. General problem statement

There is considerable support for claims that one's professional identity changes over the length of one's professional career, particularly when it involves being a teacher and teaching (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard, Verloop & Vermunt, 2000; Bullock & Ritter, 2011; Casey & Fletcher, 2012; Cook, 2009; Fletcher & Bullock, 2014). These identity changes can come from internal (changes in professional self-perception) and/or external forces (such as a change in professional role). In my professional life it was external forces that were largely responsible for the initial significant change in my identity. As I moved from physical education teacher to curriculum writer/specialist/public servant, what took me by surprise was the immediacy with which this change occurred. The change happened within seconds after anxiously walking through the doors of the DEECD. I became acutely aware that I was entering a complex environment where the "authority of government in shap[es] and determin[es]

worthwhile format and content of the official curriculum documents” (You, 2011). I was consciously catapulted into the task of developing the Grades 10-12 physical education curriculum, yet I was unconsciously unaware of the significant impact this job change would have on my identities.

You (2011) wrote about her experiences, efforts, and processes as a curriculum “maker” in South Korea during her time of revising the national physical education curriculum. She articulated the professional role that she played during the conflicts and “historical struggle to improve the existing curriculum through fair and meaningful change” (You, 2011, p. 88). You’s (2011) work was my first exposure to a self-study article of a curriculum specialist, where she made her personal insights open to public scrutiny and available for others to learn from. Although miles apart, she allowed me to not feel alone in my arduous task of high school physical education curriculum renewal and reform. Her study as a curriculum specialist resided with me during my own self-study, providing me with an understanding that others experienced the “lack of mutual understanding between insiders and outsiders concerning how curriculum making takes place”(You, 2011, p. 87). You’s (2011) self-study resonated so deeply with me on a number of levels. For example, the notion of curriculum making and the insider’s view point to the challenges of curriculum change, and inspired me to reflect and capture my own insider view point during my transformative time at the DEECD. Comments from You’s (2011) lived experience allowed me to think divergently about my own context of insider and outsider misconceptions and misunderstandings.

Being a female curriculum specialist, I too felt and continue to feel a “strong sense of accountability and responsibility in leading the process and in producing a

quality document” (You, 2011, p. 94) in an area strongly dominated by males. You (2011) was invested in her work to the extent that she could proceed in successful and meaningful ways in resolving problem situations as she tried to maintain, function and fortify her identity as curriculum specialist, gaining expert knowledge and experience in curriculum making. You (2011) provided many “aha” connections for me, which included: marginalization (as a subject area and in terms of my gender), work distractions from the curriculum revision process, physical education curriculum framework (what constitutes knowledge), and ultimately “there was serious resistance within the physical education community, particularly in the formal meetings [...]” (p. 100). To this end, You (2011) lit a spark that demonstrated to me what is possible in terms of scholarly autobiographical work. To vicariously experience her life and work as a curriculum specialist allowed me to feel that at least one person “out there” understands or could connect with what I have been or am going through. Her work allowed me to gain insights into my own lived experiences and to become inspired that others might similarly learn my experiences as I did from You’s (2011). At this point I started to contemplate the significance of engaging in self-study, fortified by a new understanding of the credibility this research methodology was having in the educational research community.

Clearly the world of the curriculum specialist is complex and has significant implications for the people who interact with the curriculum document (Macdonald & Hunter, 2005; Westbury, 2007; You, 2011). Yet, a major gap exists in the physical education literature, with little being known about the professionals who write these

documents, lead curriculum renewal and reform, and the ways their identities are embedded in the construction and the subsequent implementation of the guide itself.

In this thesis I expose my own choices, actions, tensions, vulnerabilities, turning points, and professional development as a curriculum specialist so that readers can learn about and from my experiences by engaging with and critiquing my experiences in relation to their own. It is thus with great hope and guidance that I conducted this research to try to create new and valuable knowledge for the educational community (LaBoskey, 2004). I aim to do this by providing a “snapshot” of my experiences as a curriculum specialist embedded in the current state of affairs of secondary physical education curriculum writing in PEI. This work may guide current and future physical educators who aspire to accept the challenge and privilege of creating curricula.

Through this research I interrogated my current practice as a curriculum specialist and shared my lived experiences as I went through transformative moments in my professional and personal identities (Fletcher, 2012). This transformation occurred as I faced the educational challenges and needs that surrounded every one of my working days over one and half years. This required me to think about my own thinking (Loughran, 2005) in a metacognitive and embodied way, and express it as best I could so that others could relate to and learn from my experience.

At the core of my mission is an unashamed desire for personal and professional self-improvement and the examination of the “I” in practice (Whitehead, 1989). Thus, I aim to highlight knowledge of my self-in-practice as a curriculum specialist. Given these aims, self-study of practice methodology was the best-suited approach to my research. LaBoskey (2004) proclaimed:

...self-study researchers are concerned with both enhanced understanding of teacher education in general and the immediate improvement of our practice. We are focused on the nexus between public and private theory and practice, research and pedagogy, self and other. (p. 818)

Knowledge in self-study is framed in terms of my making warranted interpretations and explanations (Dewey, 1997) about the role of a curriculum specialist through exploring principles and experiences that have shaped my practice as a curriculum specialist, thus providing insights into the complexities of that work. Dewey (1997) believed greatly in the value of experiential learning and its transformative properties. In keeping with the essence of Dewey's philosophies, I have savoured, documented, and analyzed my journey of self-improvement and exploration of self in order to make meaning of my own learning. In turn, I aim to share what I have learned so that others may read and analyze the extent to which it resonates with what they understand of curriculum writing, the people who create it, and the implications of the work and experiences of curriculum specialists for those who interact with the documents curriculum specialists produce.

1.4. Purpose

The purpose of this self-study is to deeply explore areas of my own practice as a curriculum specialist, as well as learn from both the process and the outcomes so I might critique how they become meaningful for me and potentially for others. In essence, I am controlling and taking charge of my own personal and professional development so the knowledge and understanding I gain can improve my practice and inform the practices of others. In particular I hope that my research informs the ways in which readers *interpret*

the practices and experiences of curriculum specialists. Whitehead and McNiff (2006) support the notion of meaningful improvement, recognizing the power of self-study to, “generate personal, organizational, and social change” (p. 11). This purpose statement supports why self-study methodology and the specific topic I have chosen are important. Studying the role of a curriculum specialist and the ways in which curriculum specialists identify themselves (through the lens of my daily personal and professional life) and are identified by others fills a gap in our knowledge. Despite the rhetoric that exists about “how” to write curriculum and “what” students are expected to know and be able to do, we know little about who is ultimately responsible for this work and how the “who” of curriculum specialists is embedded in the work they do.

1.4.1. Specific Research Questions

Little is known about the work and lived experiences of a curriculum specialist (Aoki, 2004), with next to nothing published on those who work as physical education curriculum specialist. In particular, little is known about the identities of those who work in curriculum development and how their identities influence their daily practice. It is in these gaps that this research is situated.

In my daily work as a physical education teacher and now curriculum specialist, I had never considered professional identity or identification (see Chapter Two for an extensive discussion on the distinction between these two terms) prior to this research because I was never asked or contemplated the importance of identification and the impact it has on the formation of self until now. Through my current work I have ventured into the complex and compounding nature of identity development and try to understand the labels and masks I wear, as well as the similarities and differences that

render me an insider or outsider with certain groups and individuals (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009; Fletcher, 2012; Goffman, 1959). The questions that guide the research are:

1. What are my lived experiences as a curriculum specialist trying to enact change?
2. How do my identities as a curriculum specialist shape my lived experiences and how do those lived experiences shape my identities?
3. How can self-study provide insights into a curriculum specialist's practice?

1.5. Situating my self in the research

My eastern Canadian school experience culminated with my high school graduation in 1984 and post-secondary graduation occurring in 1988. My first teaching moment I can recall was with my best friend in the early elementary years. I was the so-called early developer of my class and was considered “sporty” or “athletic”, she on the other hand, was neither. I wanted her to love sport and physical activity, not because someone said it was the right thing to do or because it would keep you fit or slim; I wanted her to feel the joy of sport, skill acquisition or perhaps it was the thrill of team accomplishment or the win. Gymnastics was what I was teaching her, in particular a back bridge, guiding her or pushing her body to perform a back walk over, then a cartwheel, in the grass at the park. She was so gracious and patient with me. She never did succeed to demonstrate the perfect move but we had fun playing and trying. I learned these physical skills in physical education classes but refined and dreamed of a Nadia Comaneci-like gymnastic experience through the school gymnastics team. That dream died when I entered high school along with my figure skating dream. I wonder now why dreams die for some students when they enter high school. I also wonder who or what

are the dream killers? I participated in all the school sports in my early school career and continued to achieve academically at an average pace. I participated and contributed to my school's sports programs but was never classified as great or receiving the athlete of the year. I walked to school four times a day regardless of inclement weather, left for school early for practice, home for lunch and stayed late for more practice or game play. Field hockey, soccer, gymnastics, badminton, curling, and basketball dominated my school sporting life.

Traditional (as I knew it to be) East Coast life inside and outside of sports was my existence, and I can recall each of my physical education teachers and explain the deep connections I had with each. I connected with them as an athlete and student, and during my high school years I was confident in my occupational direction. I knew at a very early age I wanted to teach and I wanted to "be" a gym teacher. Job security, how much money I would make or what school I would teach in did not sway my desire. Physical education was a passion that came from within and it would be what I would "do" and who I am.

In the early years of my career, I was socialized in the traditional teachings of physical education (Capel & Blair, 2013; Kirk, 2010; Lawson 1988; 1991). Sport and how to teach and assess it was foundational. I look back now at the non-authentic methods I used in delivering the curriculum, non-existent outcomes I assessed and how strongly the school, the community, and I valued coaching. I often wonder how my former students managed in the physical education setting that I created for them. It frightens me to reflect on my first years of teaching. I am thankful for and loved the

students I had and hope that this superseded my lack of experience as a teacher and parent.

During my first years of teaching physical education, health and family life all teachers employed at this intermediate school were required to do home visits with every student within their homerooms. I will always remember and value this experience. Looking back at these home visits I realize how much they have framed and dramatically changed my relationships with my students and my life; then and now. I very quickly realized what my “normal” was as a child growing up was far removed from what some of my students experienced as their “normal.” Wood that was needed to be put in for the winter or working in the potato warehouse until the early morning hours or one room houses were some of their normal. The stresses, abuses, and strains of dysfunctional and unhealthy relationships were some of their normal. It was during these home visits and moments that I took to “know” my students that I questioned what I really knew and understood about teaching. The family structure looked different than what I knew it to be, Christmas holidays were not the joyous occasion that I knew as some students were in harmful and unsafe situations. Yet they all managed to come to school and bring their best selves. At that point I believed that if my students could bring their best selves to me every day and their families are preparing their children the best they knew how, then I can do the same for them; be the best me I can be each day.

Teaching I thought would be a five-year “gig” and then I would move on. In retrospect I know that for me teaching is much larger than a gig. I have been teaching for 23 different years give or take a couple of years off to raise my two boys who I see are amazing. The stories of my later teaching years are sprinkled with the highs and lows of

teaching in a small K-8 consolidated, rural school. Once again I loved my students. They caused me to laugh, cry, think, and love. I believed firmly that I should treat them as a kind and caring parent should, respect came easy for some but not for others, either way they made me a better teacher and we grew to trust one another.

All of us have identities that we bring into our present no matter what age (Jenkins, 2008). All of my experiences and the ways they have shaped my identities to this point in life are reflected in my involvement in national physical education matters and in my representation of the physical education teachers of PEI provincially. Each moment on my journey has allowed me opportunities to grow and learn from the people and professionals I have met. At times this journey to being a curriculum specialist has not been easy as I am an introvert coping in an extroverted world (Cain, 2013). I am giving to my profession and my former students in a quiet and well-intentioned way. I pay attention and give voice to the marginalized student and have learned from my past to have no expectations or wait to receive any recognition. I am determined and my feet are planted. I am here to serve and find greatness in the smallest of moments.

Presently I am shaping the future of high school physical education and working in an adult world. Working with adults and words are my every days. The control over my own physical education program is gone but those student voices and faces will forever be in my heart and soul. I have had the gift of learning from insightful physical education professionals and people in general -- scholars or not -- from across the globe. I am in awe of their knowledge and passion for all matters surrounding the state of physical education and the perceived ease in which they express and share their knowledge, skills and experiences. My self-study has allowed me to consider what they

have all done for me and how generous they are with their time, wisdom and opinions; importantly how all of this matters to my becoming. All these factors described in this section have contributed and influenced my lived experiences and shaped my identity as a physical education teacher and curriculum specialist trying to enact change.

1.5.1. My future

My career has been and will continue to encompass education. I have never thought about any other occupation and I look forward to be in the position to continue to influence the future in the area of health and physical education either as a teacher or in another role. I enjoy the quiet solitude with students, sharing in the celebration of student, school and community successes and work in an intimate setting that can be a school gym.

My name will be in curriculum documents and internally I will feel that I have imparted some of me in those documents. I will continue to be physically active but on a different scale, a wellness scale. I will check into my self more frequently and find balance between my mental, physical, psychological, and social self. Reflecting now, I know I have embodied this newly created and holistic physical education curriculum. I will look after my self, not only in the physical domain but find balance in all domains so I can look after others. I want to nourish my inner flame. I will slow down and pause in nature. I am treasuring moments when I see and speak to former students who are thriving in their own right. My two boys are my future and I will find happy and joy with all that they do and become.

LaBoskey (2004) refers to self-study research in such a way that "...we can never be sure; that this intensely interpersonal, highly complex, always changing, moral and

political act requires continual monitoring and adaptation” (p. 820). I see my future much in the same way. I hold my self responsible and accountable for my self, and how I will continue to influence other people’s learning and throughout this journey appreciate and value being a lifelong learner in this process.

Researchers working in this tradition (qualitative) offer themselves as the primary instrument of inquiry; trained, systematic, meticulous, and cautious, but in the end, themselves. Their data, their method and their integrity make an appeal for belief, but the validation comes from the reader. There is no authority to be claimed solely on the basis of having done it right (Locke, 1989, p. 4).

Working from Locke’s (1989) suggestion, I would like to offer glimpses of my critical life moments and beliefs that have shaped my research and my identity. They will be useful and insightful to this paper and possibly to readers. The words and stories I will share are memories; my unique memories may or may not be the truths of my past but they are the retelling of the events as I know them to be (Armour, 2006; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). These stories provide special access to readers as to how I have come to this place as a curriculum specialist. Once told, these stories will not be my own but ours to inform the work we do as teachers and curriculum specialists. I hope readers will contemplate their own journeys of self and make meaning of the events to create new stories of teachers and curriculum specialists; stories that can inform and transform research, teaching practice and curriculum development (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). I will be comforted by “deciding what to tell and what to leave out” (Carter, 1993, p. 9) as I consider what purpose and service my stories can provide to readers. However, in order

to offer the reader an authentic insight into my lived experiences, I acknowledge the need to include stories and reflections that are both joyous and depressing, satisfying and frustrating, positive and negative. I also acknowledge the responsibility I have to be respectful and make ethical decisions regarding the words and action of others who have played salient roles in my experiences. They have a right to share their own stories but they also have a right to keep them silent.

1.6. Definition of Central Terms

Curriculum specialist: Curriculum specialists are also referred to as curriculum writers, curriculum makers, curriculum developers, curriculum leaders, and curriculum consultants. The terms are often used interchangeably and those who are involved in this work are given their title by the governing body responsible for the work they do. I acknowledge the diversity in use of the label for this type of work but because my role is specifically that of curriculum specialist, I use this term to describe these roles throughout the thesis, unless otherwise stated.

Curriculum guide: Curriculum guides are provincial policy and prescribe what outcomes are expected of students and should also prescribe and emphasize the standards, expectations, and benchmarks that are to be pursued by students.

Physical education: This is a required area of study in PEI's core curriculum for students in Grades K-10. It provides opportunities for students to develop positive attitudes toward active living, and gain self-confidence as skilful movers, and to promote personal, social, cultural, and environmental growth and appreciation. It is a part of the entire learning experience concerned with educating the whole person and supports students in developing a solid foundation for a balanced life. Physical education is a

catchall term for all the diverse ways it can be represented in PEI public school system (wellness, physical literacy, leadership).

Health education: This is a required area of study in PEI's core curriculum for students from Grades K-9. It involves learning about the habits, behaviours, interactions, and decisions related to healthy daily living and planning for the future. The aim of the health curriculum is to enable students to make well-informed, healthy choices and to develop behaviours that contribute to the well-being of self and others.

Wellness: This is a required grade 10 course. It is in the physical education section of the program of studies for PEI public schools and was implemented in 2014. The purpose of this course is to reflect the Grades K-12 aims of the physical education and health education which are to develop confident and competent students who understand, appreciate, engage, and sustain a balanced, healthy, active lifestyle.

1.7. Organization of the Thesis

Chapter Two illustrates a review of the literature with a focus on identity as a theoretical framework. The complex nature of professional identity in education will be presented. Chapter Three explains the setting and my self. In addition to this background information this chapter highlights the qualitative research methodology used in this study and clarifying data collection methods and how the data was analyzed. A brief explanation of trustworthiness and ethics will close this chapter. Chapter Four describes the results of how I came to develop my identity as a curriculum specialist, the tensions in becoming a curriculum specialist, importance of a critical friendship during these moments of identity negotiation, use of metaphor, and the bearing of self-study during the processes of my identification of *being* and *becoming* a curriculum specialist.

Chapter Five addresses the research questions use of self-study and the value of this methodology to providing insights in to a curriculum specialist in practice. Chapter Five concludes with final recommendations for future research and reflections on the importance of the study.

Chapter II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1. Introduction

Theories constitute an attempt to interpret or make sense out of a phenomenon or paradigm (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) and provide a framework for conducting research. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) further emphasize: “all research is guided by some theoretical orientation...and theory helps data cohere and enables research to go beyond an aimless, unsystematic piling of accounts” (p. 24). Social scientists provide an understanding of how people make sense of their world (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) and inform the research process by exposing the meaning, nature and challenges associated with a phenomenon and the making of these assumptions explicit (Crotty, 1998). Theories are a convenience; a necessity for organizing unsorted facts, laws, and concepts into a meaningful and manageable form.

The purpose of this chapter is to articulate a theoretical framework that describes the theoretical assumptions of identity and the processes of identification (Jenkins, 2008). Through this framing process, I will show how identity theory provides insights into understanding and analyzing my identification processes as a curriculum specialist. The review of scholarly works on identity and identification will help me articulate assumptions that I have and transform them from a simple description of a phenomenon to an intellectual and meaningful philosophical stance on how my identity shapes my experiences and vice versa. In turn, this articulation and transformation will contribute to

an understanding of my professional identity as a curriculum specialist in the context of curriculum development and renewal.

This chapter consists of three main sections that consist of a divergence of topics connected to my self-study journey. First, I explain how identity and identification is defined in educational research, followed by examining internal and external encounters and how these encounters influence the development of self. I continue to explore the literature to gain insight on selfhood, collective identification and categorization systems that contribute to individuals or group identifications. To complete this section I considered the internalized power of labels.

The second section builds upon the first, extending into conversations around professional identity, sub-identities, professional categories and labels research. The conclusion of this review is the drilling down into identity and the curriculum specialist.

The chapter concludes by taking a closer look at reflection. Reflective practice is more than story telling. The research clearly shows that shining the flashlight deep within during reflective journaling is a dialogical, creative, and safe tool for self-study. Those who set out on this personal experience can make meaning and find direction.

2.2. Identity/identification defined

Jenkins (2008) is quick to dispel any notion that identity and identification are purely theoretical tools for sociologists – they have strong and important practical consequences for all humans. He stresses, “identification affects real human experience: it is the most mundane of things and it can be the most extraordinary. Whichever way we look at it, identification seems to *matter*, in everyday life and in sociology” (p. 5). Jenkins (2008) convinces us that it is the *processes* of identification that matter:

...because it is the basic cognitive mechanism that humans use to sort out themselves and their fellows, individually and collectively. This is a “base-line” sorting that is fundamental to the organization of the human world: it is how we know who’s who and what’s what. We couldn’t do whatever we do, as humans, without also being able to do this. (p. 13)

Jenkins (2008) provides a starting point for defining identity, stating simply that identity is a process involving people “knowing” and figuring out who is who and what is what. Implicit in this simple description of identity is the involvement of both *self* and *other* in any processes of identification. Jenkins (2008) suggests, “identity is our understanding of who we are and who other people are, and reciprocally, other people’s understanding of themselves and of others (which includes us)” (p. 18). While this definition provides a useful starting point for the articulation of a framework, Jenkins (2008) explains that definitions of identity are always contested. To this end, it is important to acknowledge that there is more than one definition of identity. Despite widespread agreement about the importance of identity as a theoretical lens, there is ambiguity about its definition. As such, rather than pitting one definition against another, in this chapter I draw from several conceptualizations of identity to consider their relationship to one another and to map out how those relationships influence the ways in which I will use identity to frame my research.

2.2.1. Internal and external frames of reference

Regardless of the context in which identity is being studied, it is viewed as dynamic, processual, and unfixed (Jenkins, 2008). Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop (2004) suggest: “identity is not something one has, but something that develops during one’s

whole life” (p. 107). Identity is a way that people make sense of their experiences and biographies in relation to the experiences and biographies of others. In this way, when identity (or identification) is viewed as a process, there is an emphasis given to *becoming* over *being*. Individuals negotiate their identities within the interactions of people and context, each of which is forever changing. By keeping this in mind, people come to understand their own identities (and those of others) as they negotiate an internal sense of themselves (self-image), with their perception of how others view them (an external, public image). According to Jenkins (2008) our identification occurs at the boundaries of internal and external perceptions of self.

Jenkins (2008) extensively examines the internal and external dialogue, considering how it influences the development of self. He provides a clear summary of this interplay between external encounters and the internal voice in individual’s heads that helps them to make meaning. Jenkins (2008) contends that identification is a social construct as “individual identity is not a meaningful proposition in isolation from the human world of other people” (p. 40). To be clear, what we think about ourselves is no less significant than what people think about us, thus illustrating the balance and negotiation of internal and external dialogues. Often it is the external dimension that validates one’s internal notion of self but to complicate matters, the external and internal can be knowingly or unknowingly in conflict. In the context of this research, this has strong implications for the relationships between the professional and personal. This interaction should not be denied as people can take on, or internalize, the identities that others place upon them (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Gee & Crawford, 1998). Jenkins

(2008) reminds readers the voices of “power and authority are critical in determining whose definition [of one’s identity] counts” (p. 71).

Sociologist Erving Goffman (1959) famously used the metaphor of a theatrical performance to help explain how people make sense of themselves and others in the social world. In particular, he explained that people are simultaneously conscious of (a) the image they have of themselves on the metaphorical stage of life and (b) the image the “audience” has of them. Although Goffman (1959) was specifically referring to and using the concept of the *self*, there are strong links and a vibrant history that view the concepts of *self* and *identity* as overlapping (Mead, 1934; Erikson, 1968; Goffman, 1959; Jenkins, 2008). Goffman (1959) describes how people constantly evaluate their social interactions and convey themselves to others:

... when an individual appears before others his [sic] actions will influence the definition of the situation which they come to have. Sometimes the individual will act in a thoroughly calculating manner, expressing himself in a given way solely in order to give the kind of impression to others that is likely to evoke from them a specific response he is concerned to obtain. Sometimes the individual will be calculating in his activity but be relatively unaware that this is the case. Sometimes he will intentionally and consciously express himself in a particular way, but chiefly because the tradition of his group or social status require this kind of expression and not because of any particular response (other than vague acceptance or approval) that is likely to be evoked from those impressed by the expression. Sometimes the traditions of an individual's role will lead him

to give a well-designed impression of a particular kind and yet be may be neither consciously nor unconsciously disposed to create such an impression. (p. 6)

Goffman's (1959) quote is valuable as it illustrates the complexity of internal and external interactions. It also shows the ramifications these forces can have on the ways people manage and present their identities in their personal and professional lives. To continue with the theatrical metaphor, Goffman (1959) suggests that even before an individual comes in contact with others, the dramas begin. This notion of actor and audience bound in a drama is a metaphorical example of how humans process information and assumptions at a fast pace due to the preservation of an internalized sense of self in the public image/s they present.

The metaphorical theatrical stage is in constant flux – the audience, scenery, plot, costume, and other actors on the stage constantly change. Goffman (1959) suggests this informational exchange can include both the actor's and individual audience member's socio-economic status, conception of self, attitudes, competence, and trustworthiness. In turn, we differentiate our delivery of messages (verbal and non-verbal) for the audience that we are presenting ourselves to. This creates a constant tension of negotiating a well-rehearsed script to present oneself in a favourable light to the given audience, knowing that judgments have been quickly concluded before words are even spoken. All of these interactions and elements influence an individual's image of self, they help people interpret situations, and they frame the expectations of actor and audience. Goffman's (1959) point is that any actor taking the stage is either implicitly or explicitly aware of their interactions with the audience and they project themselves in such a way that they

feel they can receive the audience's most favourable reaction. It is Goffman's (1959) backstage metaphor that allows people to "rehearse" their presentation of an internalized version of self to the myriad audiences that they will appear before. This allows individuals to be themselves in private in preparation for the social world as their stage.

2.2.2. Selfhood

The terms identity and selfhood are often confused, so much so that they are often used interchangeably. As with identity, the "literature about the self is so vast, and so varied" (Jenkins, 2008, p. 50), that it is easy to understand the misuse of the term self when identity might be what is being considered. Jenkins (2008) provides some focal points to the meaning of self as: similarity, differences, reflexivity, and process. These points lead Jenkins (2008) to propose a definition of self as "an individual's reflexive sense of her or his own particular identity, constituted vis-a-vis others in terms of similarity and difference, without which she or he wouldn't know who they are and hence wouldn't be able to act" (Jenkins, 2008, p. 49). Thus, the *self* informs one's identity. In line with the internal and external frames of identification, Jenkins (2008) distinguishes between the self and the person, suggesting, "the self is the individual's private experience of herself or himself; the person is what appears publicly in and to the outside world" (p. 50).

Jenkins (2008) and other scholars before him have drawn on the works of Mead (1934) to understand identity. Mead (1934) explored the *self* in relation to society: the internal (self-definition) and the external (definitions of oneself offered by others). Mead's (1934) work is most notably recognized for the distinction between the *I* and the *me*. The *I* is the ongoing moment of unique individuality – it is the way in which an

individual considers her or himself. In contrast, the *me* refers to the way an individual internalizes the attitudes of significant others or the attitudes of others which one assumes. While these various concepts and terms are complicated and highlight the complexity of identity, Jenkins (2008) connects all of the terms and concepts very simply by returning to the interaction of internal and external frames of reference when thinking about the self and identity: “we can’t see ourselves at all without also seeing ourselves as other people see us” (Jenkins, 2008, p. 41). While identification can be an individual process, the ways we identify can reflect collective processes.

2.2.3. Collective identification and categorization

Collective identification occurs in the way individuals become identified as members of groups and categories. Collective identification is thus an important classification system that contributes to the individual identification. Small informal or formal groups and categories each come with their own status and rubric of understanding (Jenkins, 2008). Through considering our experiences and biographies and the experiences and biographies of others, we come to develop a sense of belonging to one or more groups. The members of the group can share a set of experiences or exhibit similar characteristics, while also embodying their own identity or identities. Groups and organizations can survive with individual members coming and going (Jenkins, 2008). For example, curriculum specialists can be classified as a group, as can physical education teachers. To be classified as a member of each group requires that individuals develop and enact skills, attitudes, behaviours, and attributes that enable a person to perform tasks in an organization (such as a school board or government). While recognition of these criteria allows people to be identified as belonging to these

groups, it also allows the identification of others who *do not* belong to the group. As Jenkins (2008) suggests, “one of the things that people have in common in any group is precisely the recognition of other groups or categories from whom they differ” (p. 23). Identification is a valuable process that we can use to compare and contrast groups or categories and individuals within them.

While there are similarities with a category or group there are also intimate differences between the individuals within the group. For instance, group identification can be portrayed through how we present ourselves through dress, uniforms, profession, and ethnicity. People have perceptions of these identified groups and yet there are individuals in the group with their own identities. Groups are thus bundles of individuals who identify according to similar experiences, characteristics, skills, values, interests, and beliefs. Each individual within the group can have their own unique identity or identities, yet they can start to assimilate to the group’s identity and lose “themselves” or internalize the external labels of the group (that is, the names or terms that other people or groups give to one group). This concept of basic group identification is often considered the most powerful form of identification and should not be taken for granted (Jenkins, 2008). Therefore group categorization plays an important role in the ways in which people identify themselves and are identified by others.

2.2.4. Labeling

One way that both individuals and groups are categorized and classified is through labeling. Fletcher (2012) claims that, “identifying an individual (or self-identifying) as a kind of person in a given context, such as teaching, often results in labels being attached to, or just as important, withheld from that person and their actions” (p.

381). When internalized, the labels given to or withheld from an individual have a powerful influence on the ways in which he or she identifies himself or herself both individually or collectively (Jenkins, 2008). Further, “in everyday interaction and in institutionalised labeling practices, individuals identify themselves and are identified by others, in terms that distinguish them from other individuals” (Jenkins, 2008, p.102).

Historically, labeling perspectives were conceptualized in the late 1930s, with a formal model being developed in the 1960s. In Erving Goffman’s (1963) text *Stigma*, he utilized labeling perspectives on social stigmas such as physical and mental exceptions that he defined at the time as deviant. Goffman’s (1963) descriptions and views of deviance contributed to the classifying or categorizing of people who may be socially “normal or abnormal” and thus introduces people to the underpinnings of how labels we give to people, to ourselves, are very important in the processes of identification.

Jenkins (2008) aptly affirms how, through labeling and the language labeling requires, “others don’t just perceive our identity, they actively constitute it” (p.96). Labels are rooted in words that can influence a person’s views of themselves and their perception of how others view them. There is good and bad, beauty and ugliness all wrapped up in a label. Labels may or may not change one’s identity but if they are internalized due to the context, frequency of use, and power and authority of the source, they can completely change one’s life or how one feels about oneself; thus, labels can become especially meaningful (Fletcher, 2012; Jenkins, 2008). Labels can be translated from one to another in terms of how people respond and acknowledge one another.

While labels can be particularly powerful constructs of identification, individuals can, to some extent, construct their responses and control what they derive from a label.

Through using one's agency, a label alone is often not enough for an identity to "stick". Jenkins (2008) reminds us how the "labeling perspective provides the basis for a general model of external moment of individual identification" (p. 98). Just as negative labeling words may "hurt" people, the opposite is possible too. For example, if teachers use labels such as "capable", "smart", or "strong" with students, an individual student may internalize those labels, particularly if others (such as friends or parents) repeat them in a meaningful context. These positive labels may then lead the student to feel empowered.

There is a constant flow of identifying ourselves, identifying others and others identifying us. This internal-external dialectic (Jenkins, 2008) is important to everyone and can be particularly powerful in helping to understand the ways in which identities develop in professional contexts. Theorizing identity is played out every day in my personal and professional life. It is my intent to discuss how this dynamic conceptualization of identity is made meaningful to me in the context of the work I do as a curriculum specialist. Specifically, I will consider the consequences and implications for my practice as I navigate the harmony and discord between actor and audience.

2.3. Research on professional identity in education

For the purposes of this study, I am considering the processes of my identification in the context of my work as a curriculum specialist. While acknowledging the intertwining of my multiple identities in multiple contexts, the notion of *professional identity* – the processes of identification as they relate to work as an education professional – provides an important theoretical layer to this research. The development of teachers' professional identities has been acknowledged as an important and emerging research area since the late 1980s. Yet, scholars who have studied professional identity

hold similar beliefs to scholars of identity in its broader sense: it is widely viewed that to define identity—either generally or with specific reference to professional identity—is very comprehensive and challenging, and it is perhaps an under-used and loosely defined theoretical approach when studying those who work in the education profession (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Lasky, 2005; Thomas & Beauchamp, 2011). For example, Izadinia (2013) concludes that student teacher identification has its challenges and complexities and “remains an elusive construct” (p. 707) but is a valued process and one that should be made more explicit. Beijaard, et al. (2004) support this claim in their extensive review of identity in teaching and teacher education. From the research they reviewed, they concluded: “professional identity was defined differently or not defined at all” (p. 125).

Researchers who have studied professional identity have done so by drawing from some of the theoretical traditions identified in the previous sections. For example, Goffman’s (1959) and Jenkins’s (2008) insights and interpretations about the role of interactions in studying identity have been used in many fields, including teaching. To illustrate, from their extensive review of literature, Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) state: “a teacher’s identity is shaped and reshaped in interactions with others in a professional context” (p. 178). Beijaard et. al (2004) highlight the presence of an unstable and shifting identity due to the range of internal and external factors that are experienced by teachers. This interplay and understanding has been recognized as a “key component of teacher development and therefore of the shaping of identity” (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009, p. 179). In line with Jenkins’s (2008) notions of identity being processual, multiple, and in flux, many scholars interpret the development of a professional identity as an ongoing,

fluid process that entails the “making sense and (re) interpretation of one’s own values and experiences that may be influenced by personal, social, and cognitive factors” (Flores & Day 2006, p. 220).

2.3.1. Sub-identities

Danielewicz (2014) claims: “Every person is composed of multiple, often conflicting, identities, which exist in volatile states of construction and reconstruction, reformation or erosion, addition or expansion” (p.10). In line with the multiple identities people hold in their everyday lives (for example, a sister, mother, triathlete, educator, music lover, and so on), a person’s professional identity consists of multiple sub-identities as they relate to the self, context, and relationships being examined in the workplace. Sub-identities can sit very close to the person’s core (for example, their identification in terms of gender, race/ethnicity, sexuality, or family) or in some moments be at the outermost boundaries of the internal self. The location of the identity according to the core or periphery is important because “the more central a sub-identity is, the more costly it is to change or lose that identity” (Beijaard, et al., 2004, p. 122).

The notion of sub-identities connects to Goffman’s (1959) work of the actor and the presentation of multiple selves during the contextual performances on the stage. To use the example of teachers, they draw upon their sub-identities as they navigate relationships, contexts and changes throughout their careers. Sub-identities can emerge to present certain “characters” or assume certain “roles” to create a balance between context and relationships. Furthermore, whoever we believe we are or claim to be, appearances and actions may not adequately reflect reality. Sub-identities can be summoned into action depending on relationships, contexts, and interests.

Beattie (2000) conducted a number of studies using narrative inquiry to explore the processes of identity formation in becoming a teacher and learning to teach. Reflection was used to examine prior knowledge and to question the “taken for granted in their lives, to find patterns and connections, and to think critically and creatively” (Beattie, 2000, p. 1). The narratives originated from pre-service teachers who have framed an identity (or identities) from other careers before entering the teacher education program and subsequently brought their respective notions of “self” to the program. With this particular focus on identity, Beattie (2000) believes pre-service teachers have a preconceived notion of what it is to teach due to their past and current experiences and practices of schooling, personal biographies, family histories, culture, ethnicities, genders, experiences of growing up and the groups and organizations in which they belonged. The narratives demonstrate the complex and real impact of identification in becoming a teacher. The manifestation of the “self” in relation to others was central to learning how to teach and becoming a teacher (Beattie, 2000).

Fletcher’s (2012) study delves into the complexities of teacher identity by examining how pre-service classroom teachers’ sub-identities informed their physical education practices. The two females in his study were challenged by the “label” of physical educator and the idea of the gymnasium as a stage as they internalized previously used identifying labels such as non-athletic, softball player, dancer, or fat/skinny. They drew from their experiences of physical education “as school pupils to envision the qualities and identities that they thought were necessary to be a teacher of physical education; qualities and identities based upon images of how their bodies ‘should’ move and look” (Fletcher, 2012, p. 391). His findings led him to confirm that

“pre-service teachers who did not feel comfortable with their changing bodies during adolescence acknowledged [the open nature of gymnasium and bodies exposed to public scrutiny...] as being particularly problematic and led to distress and anxiety, which could act as a barrier to their learning to teach physical education” (Fletcher, 2012, p. 383). During their time in separate teacher education classes, both females were involved in reflective activities where they shared and critiqued their personal memories of school physical education and the ways in which their identities influenced their experiences, and vice versa. This de-constructing led them to interpret their identification processes of becoming a “classroom teacher”, and reconsider what it means to be a teacher of physical education.

2.3.2. Professional Categories and Labels

Studies have shown that professional identities are an intimate and dynamic detail of becoming a physical educator (Fletcher, 2012; Casey & Fletcher, 2012) but very few studies have considered the realities of categories and labels within the hierarchies of education with the particular focus of teacher, physical education teacher, curriculum specialist and all the occupational transitions and tensions that may occur with this type of career. One example of literature examining personal tensions of (beginning) teachers was illustrated by Pillen, Den Brok and Beijaard (2013). Some of the contrasting identification labels used by participants in their research were student versus teacher, competent versus incompetent, the personal and professional side of being or becoming a teacher, and the caring versus tough teacher. Other tensions to consider that may have influences on professional labels are: investing time in practicing teaching versus investing time in other tasks that are part of the teaching profession and misconceived

career perspectives about the teaching profession. They conclude the professional identity tensions incurred by experiences, internalized labels, and categories brought mostly negative emotions for those beginning their teaching careers (Pillen, et al., 2013). Several coping strategies were utilized to balance the feelings of helplessness and insecurity. Actions such as reflection, and a deeper relationship with a mentor or colleague may increase the resilience of new teachers and aid in their understanding of professional categorization. In this way, autobiographical forms of inquiry, such as autoethnography or self-study may help those adjusting to new professional lives cope with the transition.

While it is important to consider categories and labels of caring, toughness, and expert teacher, Sachs (2001) explains how general categories of primary, intermediate and high school teachers can be further delineated into sub-identities according to subject or discipline. Teachers may see themselves labeled by their “generic category” in terms of what level or year they teach, they may also identify with their areas of specialty. Such categories and labels may “serve the needs” of educational authorities by providing a framework of external identifications but it is the internalization of these categories and labels that can shape the identity of teachers.

“Taking on” a way of identifying or playing a particular professional role is a dynamic, social negotiation at every level or category of teaching. Each category involves distinct interpretations of acting—even as superficial as wearing certain types of clothes for the roles that are played and the script that is communicated. Thomas and Beauchamp (2011) claim: “the development of a professional identity does not automatically come with experience, and that some form of deliberate action is necessary

to ensure that new teachers begin their careers with the appropriate tools to negotiate the rocky waters of the first few years. More attention should be paid to raising the awareness of the process of professional identity development” (p. 767).

Considering this, understanding one’s identity helps one set goals and reveal what routes to take with jobs, positions, and the reputations of each throughout teaching careers (Beauchamp and Thomas, 2009; Beijaard, et al., 2004). Teachers in general would benefit in the knowledge regarding sophisticated processes of the identity formation within their professional categories as we are allowed to frame and reframe identities, discard groups, navigate throughout the education system, build on who we are and present who we want to be.

MacPhail’s (2014) research of her own professional identity formation into “becoming” a physical education teacher educator via her practice was a continual process to “establish and re-establish” what a physical education teacher educator should “look like”—both to herself and to others (p. 58). MacPhail’s (2014) entry as a “newcomer” in the PETE community left her professional identity “suspended” between novice (learner) and expert (mentor) (p. 58). This was also compounded by the fact she felt there was “no community in which she could undertake roles and responsibilities that would allow her to be an expert in one domain and a novice in another” (p. 58). While all of these studies have been conducted in the broad field of education (or physical education) most involve practicing teachers or teacher educators, both of which are distinct professional groups. Each has their own idiosyncrasies, nuances, institutionalized processes, and so on.

While these studies highlight the importance of identification processes to help new and established professionals develop insights into their work, there is a gap in understanding the identification processes of professionals in the context of the work that I do as a curriculum specialist. Just as teachers and teacher educators are distinct professional groups, so too are curriculum specialists. As explained previously, despite all of one's efforts to be objective, the work of curriculum specialists are always value-laden, personal, and subjective. That is, the decisions and actions of curriculum specialists are inextricably linked to their identities.

2.3.3. Identity and the curriculum specialist

Little is known about the lived experiences of a curriculum specialist and the curriculum making process (Oh, You, Kim & Craig, 2013; You, 2011). Therefore the exploration of the processes of identification and the ways in which lived experiences shape curriculum specialists' identities will provide a valuable contribution to the literature. As explained in Chapter I, my research draws inspiration from You's (2011) self-study of a national curriculum specialist in physical education. You's (2011) research was one of the first that spoke directly to and highlighted some of the issues I faced on a daily basis in my role as curriculum specialist of PEI.

What prompted You's (2011) study was her realization of a "lack of mutual understanding between insiders and outsiders concerning how curriculum making takes place" (p. 87). She demonstrated that there can be tensions within opposing groups during curriculum development, similar to the tensions of opposing sub-identities (You, 2011). Change to both over time is inevitable and both identity and curriculum are subject to the external and internal. You (2011) addressed her insider's account of

several obstacles that she encountered during her time as a national curriculum specialist. Through her self-study she attempted to make sense of the curriculum making process but fell short of analyzing the ways in which her experiences shaped her identity as a curriculum specialist. There is a subtle undercurrent of identity dialogue as You (2011) labeled herself as a young, marginalized female. She also refers to her “image, role, and position” (You 2011, p. 105) during her public and private participation as curriculum chairperson. Most notable is reference to her “curriculum-maker self to be vulnerable yet resistant, tentative yet knowing, hurt but inconsolable” (You 2011, p. 105). While these phrases hint at the ways her identities shape and were shaped by the curriculum making process, there is still much to be done to understand the interplay between identity and actions of curriculum specialist in physical education, and how that interplay shapes the making of curriculum.

One central element in considering the ways in which identity can shape the work of a curriculum specialist is by considering gender. Historically, physical education curriculum has been created by and has privileged males (Kirk, 2010). Feminist researchers such as Nel Noddings have called for a reworking of curriculum that may, “infuse the school curriculum with a caring approach that takes into consideration the needs, backgrounds, and desires of all students” (Woyshner, 2004, p. 26). Woyshner’s (2004) study examines the women’s movement of the 1970s, exploring how this movement sought to shape the school curriculum. By Woyshner’s viewing this major period of women’s influences it illuminates that, “women reformers played a pivotal role in shaping the school curriculum by interpreting and popularizing the writings of leading male educators and social scientists”. In so doing, “they helped shape the goals and

purposes of education, in one sense by lobbying for changes in the formal course of study [...]” (p. 26). She concludes that we have much more to learn about educational reformers outside of their professional roles and how their personal and professional experiences shaped curriculum. Kirk (2010) deeply examines the past, present, and future of physical education and reminds us of the masculine influence on physical education but as social forces opens the doors for females to exercise their power and influence on the profession, this will in turn enable all genders to experience equal opportunity to shape the future “essence” (Kirk, 2010, p. 16) of physical education.

While there is more to learn about educational reformers, Macdonald and Hunter (2005) see curriculum specialists along with other factors as a service, “to privilege and marginalize particular knowledge and skills through the distribution of human discursive, and material resources” (p. 112). Curriculum specialists are the gatekeepers who decide what is left in the curriculum document and what is kept out. Despite their powerful and influential role, we know little of the identities and processes of identification of these gatekeepers and how these processes influence their important work.

2.4. Using reflection to understand one’s identity

As explained at the outset of this chapter, identification is not just a theoretical technique used by sociologists to explain the human world. There are very practical reasons why people identify themselves and others in order to understand their own worlds and better make sense of their life experience. To this end, reflection has been used in education as a technique, strategy, or lens for understanding one’s identity and thus serving as a form of professional development. In the following sections, I consider ways in which reflection has been used to help various education professionals make

sense of the intertwining of their personal and professional worlds – their personal and professional identities. In turn, I lead the reader to conclude about the logic of using methodologies of reflection to guide how I conduct this research.

2.4.1. Reflection

Hargreaves (2005) offers a glimpse into the power of reflection as a tool for considering identity. By looking back at thoughts and actions in one's professional life, one can begin to look forward with a renewed vision of what worked and what did not work in a particular context. Reflective practice may help a teacher anticipate and inform their professional identification or the "shaping of teacher's identity -- establishing of goals or vision of a future identity, perhaps the 'ideal self'" (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009, p. 183). Reflective practice may allow the freedom to explore the breadth and depth of experiences, find meaning, and control a dynamic ongoing metamorphosis of self. Beijaard et. al. (2004) agree that it is "impossible to speak of the self when there is no reflection", arguing that "through self-reflection...teachers relate experiences to their own knowledge and feelings" (p. 114).

According to Walkington (2005), "reflection on action assists in the development of the functional role of a teacher, and also provides strategies to nurture the ongoing development of a teacher identity that has been shaped and will continue to shape over a long period of time" (p. 99). Internalizing and interpreting events, people, and places through a reflective process also support a teacher's identification process and helps develop a stronger sense of self. Reflection can be an interactive endeavour although it tends to be an inward activity for the betterment of self.

Using metaphors and narratives, Thomas and Beauchamp (2011) asked teachers to reflect on their experiences of “becoming” teachers and the developments of their professional identities. The use of metaphors was used to explore identification and was intended to encourage teachers to (re)frame and interpret their professional experiences and define a meaning or purpose for these defining moments. Metaphors have been used to represent a teacher’s own voice, helping them to understand their identity and to attempt to explain the difficulties they encounter in their reflections. Goffman’s (1959) dramaturgical provides us with a useful theoretical tool for considering the use of metaphor. Along with his work, Tannehill and MacPhail (2014) used metaphors to help physical education pre-service teachers negotiate their beliefs about teaching and learning to teach. They embark on analyzing the relationship between teacher metaphor and teacher identity and the power of narratives to explain the varied roles teachers assume daily thus understanding the self. These self-narratives, taken together, showed how metaphors can change or be extended, “as a result of the narrative process, teaching practice experiences and pedagogical strategies encountered in coursework” (p. 155). Metaphorical images such as painter to potter referred to the changing self as this teacher’s pedagogical work evolved from teacher centered to a more student-centered approach. Several other metaphors including director, conductor, baker, gardener, and carpenters were used to acknowledge the interplay between teacher and student. These metaphors illustrate the need for teachers to continue to explore the realities of teaching and deepen their identity understanding so they can be effective and reflective learners and teachers.

In an attempt to understand the importance of reflection and how it can be used to describe the development of professional identity, Beauchamp and Thomas (2009)

suggest the following:

- It can be used to frame or a lens to examine aspects of teaching and the range of influences and experiences
- It can be used to confront tensions and contradictions in careers
- Reflecting on identity can be used as an organizing element in a teacher's professional life, providing a resource to explain, justify and make sense of themselves in relation to others and to the world at large.

Self-study of practice (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009) is one methodological tool that can help develop a fuller picture of who a person is and who a person is becoming. This development can be aided by using reflective writing. This form of writing from life experiences is not just about catharsis - writing out what is thought and felt about a particular situation, event, or attitude. It promotes the construction and de-construction of identity in addition to lending to the transformative process of self-study. Reflecting aims to help those doing self-study to understand the way the self is embedded in practice and view the self with a habit of inquiry in order to improve.

Reflecting through self-study gives voices to the multiple selves present in professional practice, can provide meaning and direction to the practitioner carrying out the research, and permits a safe "place" to question, share, and express pre-existing and newly forming identities. Self-study is innately a dialogue and examination with and about the self but cannot be done alone but done in collaboration at the first moment one starts to write words. It is by capturing these reflections and courageous conversation

with a critical friend that shapes a quality self-study. Sharing relevant internal-external dialogues and interactions with others will ultimately enhance, support and position self-study as a rich methodology (Fletcher & Bullock, 2014; Ovens & Fletcher, 2014; Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009; Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2015).

2.5. Conclusion

Using names, labels, and categories have real impacts on people and they matter especially when internalized (Jenkins, 2008) and portrayed (Goffman, 1959). What is also clear is the complex nature, development and intertwining of the conceptual *self* and identity. Such meaningful self-constructions are socially constructed between the interactions of the internal and external - actor, performance and audience (Goffman, 1959). This didactic dialogue of learning about the *self* is not static and is inherently transformed by the exchanges amongst the *I* and the *me*. The *I* emulates the embodied voices of the characters one portrays while the *me* is the result of the internalized and adopting of the treatment and attitudes of meaningful others. This personal and professional “unification” can be emotional and salient.

Identity therefore is co-constructed and shaped by adopting or resisting social forces. Through the understanding of the past, present, and pending future self, one may become aware of what is at the heart and soul of identity and how identification is a meaningful and viable construct that is acted out, provides meaning and direction to our daily lives.

In this chapter I have outlined how key theoretical concepts of identity such as the internal-external, categorization, and labeling will be used as a guide to conduct my research. I have also reviewed the sparse literature on the identity of curriculum

specialists, identifying a gap in which I situate my research. In the following chapter, I outline the methodology and methods that I used to carry out this work.

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter I describe the methodology and methods I used to conduct this research. To address the research questions, I took a qualitative, interpretive, and contextualized approach using self-study methodology and methods. Self-study aims to provide deep insights into professional practice by giving voice to those practitioners who are embedded in the professions in which they work and conduct research (Zeichner, 1999). This self-study involves the systematic analysis of challenges and turning points (Bullock & Ritter, 2011) that arose in the practice of developing curriculum and developing an identity as a curriculum specialist.

My self-study was designed to be flexible (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) and demonstrate how alternative views and interpretations have been taken into account in shaping my understanding of practice and my identity. How I proceeded was based on my theoretical assumptions (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007), particularly related to identity theories which I discussed in the previous chapter. Ambiguity within the underpinnings of self-study methodology (Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2015) does not permit low levels of rigour but does add to the challenge of my methodological choices. Closer examination into qualities of rigor in self-study (e.g., LaBoskey, 2004) helps legitimize my study of self as a foundational, core practice of professional improvement for my self to be shared with others. What makes my self-study so powerful is not just employing rigorous data sets, design, analysis and reporting, but the knowledge about the

underpinnings of my own pedagogical practices and the ways in which my identity is implicated in the work I do. In turn, it is my hope that through sharing the findings from this research, others will learn from the insights about my practice as a curriculum specialist, the processes of curriculum development, and how identity plays a role.

As previously noted in Chapter I, the three research questions this study sought to answer are:

1. What are the lived experiences of a curriculum specialist trying to enact change?
2. How do my identities as a curriculum specialist shape my lived experiences and how do those lived experiences shape my identities?
3. How can self-study provide insights into a curriculum specialist's practice?

This chapter has six sections. In the first two sections, I offer a contextual setting for this study. The value of contextualization will allow the reader to “generalize beyond my personal experiences” (Casey, 2014, p. 76). My context can shape and situate the reader's view on my thoughts and actions that constitute the world in which I work, and allow others to make sense of that world when thinking about how the findings might relate to their own work in their own context. Context “can affect the perception of authenticity” (Ovens, 2014, p. 95); thus, adequately framing the context and setting in self-study is imperative (Ovens & Fletcher, 2014). Qualitative research “demands that the world be examined with the assumption that nothing is trivial, that everything has the potential of being a clue that might unlock a more comprehensive understanding of what is being studied” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 6). In my case, what is being studied is my self-in-practice, with my practice being that of a curriculum specialist. Sharing the context and setting will help to position the reader in my shoes and afford them a better

understanding of the perceived or real “professional sphere of influence” (Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2015, p.7) in which I operate.

In the third section I describe the participants, followed by the fourth section on methodological approaches. In the fifth section, I explain the data collection methods used for the study followed by data analysis. Finally in the last section, I articulate how I have tried to establish trustworthiness and its relationship to validating a quality self-study, along with a brief discussion of the ethical issues of the research.

3.2. Setting

As explained in Chapter I, the contextual setting for my research is a provincial government education department in Prince Edward Island, located in Eastern Canada. There are two schools boards within the province: English and French. My work as a curriculum specialist occurs within the English School system, which has 56 schools, ten of which are high schools. The ten high school settings consist of grades 10-12 (three high schools encompass grade 9) with grade 10-12 student populations from the 2014-15 school year ranging from 101-911 students. All but three high school settings would be classified as rural with the others being urban. Although I provide general curricular support to approximately 117 physical education teachers and 540 health teachers, and to teachers teaching elective “family living” courses, the focus of my study surrounds the curriculum development work that directly impacts 27 senior high school physical education specialist teachers. I am the sole physical education curriculum specialist responsible for each of the province’s related curricula and also work closely with government officials, other seconded teachers, community partners, and colleagues

within the DEECD, other government branches, and post-secondary colleagues from across Canada.

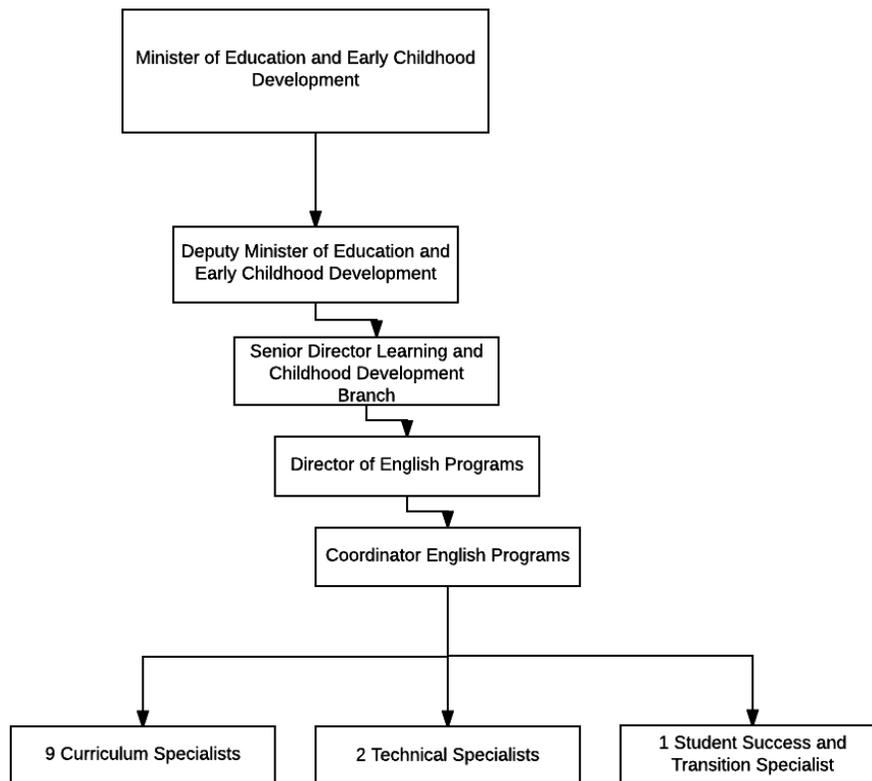
Across Canada, education is a provincial/territorial responsibility. In PEI, legislation administered by the DEECD clearly states in the School Act (2014), “The Minister shall provide leadership and coordination in developing curriculum, define curriculum, articulate curriculum standards and assess and evaluate programs at each level from kindergarten to grade 12” (p. 7). Once curriculum is implemented, the local school boards are responsible for the continued implementation of the provincially authorized curriculum; which suggests that the DEECD is gradually released from its responsibilities.

3.2.1. Curriculum specialist and government

In PEI, curriculum specialists work as public servants for the publicly elected government – much of this was explained in Chapter One. Once committed to the job of curriculum specialist, we become intimately aware of governmental organization and election cycles with critical announcements that are not part of our roles. There is an expectation that we do the work that is assigned to us. We do not have the authority to make decisions, but we can influence them. Ultimately our job is to implement decisions and support the lawmakers. The public and the institution create the values in which we take on but how we manage these values is a delicate balance between our personal views and professional responsibilities. To this end we have choices as seconded teachers to stay or leave to return to teaching after three years of service. Once our six years of secondment is complete we return to teach at any school in the province.

The politicians who we serve may not be the content experts in curriculum but we must be able to lead them to do the best work they can. Professionally, my work title is curriculum specialist and I try to be proficient in all the above-mentioned characteristics and descriptions. To enable a clearer understanding of my position in the department and the myriad relationships I manage in my role, Figure 1 outlines the educational leadership team who is accountable to the Premier and to the Minister of the DEECD:

Figure 1: Organizational Chart for English Programs in PEI



3.3. Participants

Because this research is a self-study of practice, it follows that I was the main participant in the research. There is, however, an obligation for self-study researchers to

interact with others—critical friends, students, colleagues, texts—so that interpretations of data gathered and insights generated can move beyond an overly intrapersonal form of “navel gazing” (Ovens & Fletcher, 2014). For this reason, I surrounded my self with critical friends, colleagues, and texts throughout this research. A critical friend is defined as a “trusted person who asks provocative questions, provides data to be examined through another lens, and offers critique of a person’s work as a friend” (Costa & Kallick, 1993, p. 50). Baskerville and Goldblatt (2009) suggest that critical friendship provides a means for practitioners to challenge their assumptions, confront realities, and consider new ways of thinking about pedagogy.

Over the course of one calendar year (2014), I studied my role as a seconded physical education teacher/curriculum specialist working with the mandate to renew the Grades 10-12 physical education curricula at the DEECD. I am an educational leader driven by the moral purpose of ‘raising the bar’ for physical education and health and closing the achievement gap for all students. Before being the successful candidate and taking on the role as a curriculum specialist at the DEECD, I taught health and physical education on PEI for 21 years. During the year in which this research was conducted, I was in my third and fourth years of a six-year secondment. During my 25 years within the education profession, I have experienced substitute teaching, full time employment at the intermediate and consolidated level (eight years) with my last placement being part-time time at a Grades K-8 consolidated school in a farming community. This part-time decision was conscious and deeply personal, as I wanted to stay home to raise my two sons and maintain my professional identity as a physical and health educator.

In addition to my past roles teaching physical education and my current role as a curriculum specialist, I have also served as: (a) President of the PEI Physical Education Association, (b) Board member of Physical and Health Education Canada and (c) Board member of Parasport/Recreation PEI and (d) Board Member of the PEI School Milk Foundation. Other related roles included race director for the first Canada Games triathlon event in 2009, co-chair of the first PEI Inclusion Summit for physical education teachers in 2014, as well as chair of several Provincial physical education professional learning days. I am an active executive member of the PEI School Athletic Association and have collaborated with partners to develop the PEI External Sport High School Credit, as part of the provincial External Credentialing Minister's Directive. I have attended multiple conferences and presented to teachers in the Atlantic region, was a member of the curriculum writing and pilot team for the Grades K-6 physical education curriculum and Grades 7-9 physical education curriculum (2010-11). I have also coached a variety of sports, organized major national, provincial, and regional sporting events for elite and student athletes. Later in my career I balanced coaching competitive school sports with the offering of "recreational" after-school programs for students; finding greater satisfaction serving more students and allowing them to maintain or reach their requirements of daily physical activity in a safe and free environment. I try to maintain a conscious commitment, appreciation, and belief that everything one does, feels, and thinks impacts the well-being of self and others. This holistic, balanced approach to living is the quality of life that I share with my family, in particular my two strapping young men who bring me all my joy. My reasons for describing these past professional and related experiences so extensively are to establish a connection for the reader to the

researcher and to give a sense of the multiple identities I brought with me to the role of curriculum specialist.

The other participants in my research were during times of collegial collaboration: “a point on which most literature agrees in the need for self-study to be” (Vanassche & Ketchtermans, 2015, p. 9). My research collaborators were a constant for me throughout the research process: critical friends, confidantes, motivators, and believers. They were my trusted and valued “team” to check against. My collaborators took me “out of my own narrow range of experience and helped me to perceive experiences from a range of viewpoints and potential scenarios” (Bolton, 2010, p. 10) and were intentionally chosen when I sought alternative perspectives and interpretations. They were my soft landing when I needed comfort in times of chaos. All were White and all worked in the educational system at multiple levels: post-secondary institutions from across Canada, roles in school boards and government, classrooms and physical education departments. The participants ranged in age with most ranging mid-way in their profession or closing in on retirement. They have decades of educational experience among them and shared their time, thoughts, and guidance with me. Their diverse views of education and government afforded me with rich insights.

My primary critical friend, the person I turned to most frequently during the most challenging of my experiences, was a White, middle-aged female with deep expertise and a successful record of accomplishments in the design, development, implementation of provincial curricula, programs, and policies. She has proven to be an enthusiastic educational leader who coaches and collaborates with others to create a compelling vision and lead change. I have known her for approximately five years and we have shared a

strong personal and professional relationship throughout that time. She proved to be a powerful person to consider alternative interpretations of my lived experiences and data. She created a safe and trusting place for me to share personal and professional introspections. She would guide me on governmental form and function processes, and share her own personal and educational professional experiences and lessons learned. We connected and reconnected on many levels and dimensions, both personal and professional. The time invested in these collegial moments was invaluable for me as it nurtured my relationship and trust with her so we could mine deeply into my core business of curriculum writing and work with teachers who recreate this curriculum. I believe she wanted to hear and learn more about my internal dialogues in the face of my professional stressors and pleasures; in doing so she asked me inquiry questions and provided me critical feedback. Investing in “us” allowed for care and respect, and in turn we created confidence and trust in our knowledge exchange. We repeatedly explored my many tasks and experiences (past and future) and would carve out time to scrutinize existing or new creative, innovative, and reflective approaches to determine how I could best improvise and use these approaches to solve problems and to intensify my own personal and professional development. In the end, she helped me come to recognize and understand many complex and difficult moments (Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2015). All of my critical allies offered psychological support for my efforts to improve my practice and fostered the synergy, communication, and interactions that I wanted and needed (LaBoskey, 2004).

3.4. Methodological Approach

This research used a qualitative approach. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) define a qualitative approach as: “an approach to social science research that emphasizes collecting descriptive data in natural settings, uses inductive thinking, and emphasizes understanding the subject’s point of view” (p. 274). Other characteristics consistent with qualitative research are: evolving, flexible, and having a general procedural direction (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). In contrast to quantitative approaches, qualitative research tends to focus on gathering rich data from a small number of participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Further, the uniqueness of the contexts in which each piece of research is conducted -- the time, the place, the participants, their informants, the socio- and geo-political landscapes -- means that qualitative findings are not meant to be generalizable to other people living in other times and places. Instead, readers are invited to enter into the qualitative researcher’s world and consider the extent to which the descriptions and interpretations offered, “ring true” based on the reader’s life experiences. For these reasons, I believe that a qualitative approach best suited my study because my goal was to develop an understanding about my lived experiences as a curriculum specialist trying to enact change and how my identity shaped these experiences.

For this study to be rigorous, I had to be honest and transparent in my processes, which required me to be vulnerable in exposing how I came to understand identity, identification, and how these concepts underpinned my actions and reactions to my becoming a curriculum specialist. Unlike those who expound a positivist view, I do not have a hypothesis to test. I examined one particular case, which was my self-in-practice, in the natural setting in which my practice occurred. The findings are grounded in

sustained, purposeful, and descriptive data collection. From a constructivist perspective, I found and created meaning by using strategies and procedures that are established guidelines while engaged in the methodology of self-study.

As stated previously self-study of practice methodology guides my research. Vanassche and Kelchtermans (2015) describe self-study as: a form of “practitioner-owned research in which practitioners carry out research in their own practice” (p.1). Despite the potential of self-study as a powerful tool to help practitioners improve personally and professionally, Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) stress, “determining just what it means to be involved in self-study research has proven to be very difficult” (p.14). They further consider how one demystifies a quality self-study by identifying aspects of self-study that are “borrowed” from other traditional methodologies such as action research, narrative inquiry, and autoethnography. This “blurring of lines” (Hamilton, Smith & Worthington, 2008, p.18) tends to muddy the specificities of a self-study.

Ovens and Fletcher (2014) and Samaras and Freese (2009) distinguish self-study from two close methodological cousins: action research and autoethnography. According to these authors, action research has a distinct focus on understanding and improving practice, while autoethnography has a distinct focus on understanding and improving the self. While there are examples of action research and autoethnographies that also blur methodological lines (for example, an action research study that includes an autobiographical component), the explicit focus on the self-in-practice in self-study research serves to differentiate it from the other methodologies described here (Ovens & Fletcher, 2014).

Ambiguity within the underpinnings of self-study methodology does not permit low levels of rigour but does add to the challenge of the researcher's methodological choices, "virtuosity" and/or innovation. Bullough and Pinnegar's (2001) examination into quality self-study could "help legitimate the study of self as a foundational practice" and influence the "reconceptualist movement in curriculum studies" (p.13). Because self-study borrows from other methodologies, it has been called "a mongrel" (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001, p.15): but mongrels can find a place of care and appeal. Many have tamed this self-study beast by ways of quality methods, analysis, and reporting. Loughran (2010) states, "what makes... self-studies so powerful is not just the rigour of the research design, data sets and analysis, but the knowledge about practice that is derived from the study itself" (p. 221).

In a seminal essay on establishing quality and rigour in self-study research, LaBoskey (2004) typified self-study according to the following five criteria:

1. It is self-initiated and focused;
2. It is improvement focused;
3. It is interactive;
4. It includes multiple, mainly qualitative methods;
5. It defines validity as a process based in trustworthiness.

The first criterion is that a self-study is self-initiated and self-focused, providing insight into the mindset and problems faced by the practitioner-researcher. I am working in a fertile environment for self-study and see and feel the value in a self-study as an avenue for thinking deeply about ways to come to solutions to my disputes and predicaments in my job. Importantly, the methodology and methods used in this study

help me to better understand my self-in-practice, in particular, a new personal and professional practice of developing curriculum. However, in order for this research to reach beyond the self, I have to articulate and acknowledge implications and transformations (Ovens & Fletcher, 2014) not only for me but also for other curriculum specialists, teachers, and students.

The second criterion places personal and professional improvement at the centre of the inquiry. The continuous and intentional inquiries inherent in a self-study can enhance the breadth and depth of my skills as a novice female curriculum specialist, allow me to discover pathways and solutions to cope with working as a public servant in a politically and culturally driven working context. Using self-study helps identify issues that arise and allows me to pinpoint solutions that, as an educator, can improve my practice and potentially the practice of others. While the inquiry might not necessarily provide me with improved means of “effectiveness”, it is important that I improve in my understanding of the complexities of the practice I engage in.

The third criterion, interaction, not only brings up the interaction that happened between me, my journal writing, and the self-reflection that process involved, but it also fosters the synergy needed with a trusted “critical friend”, as well as with the literature, the curriculum process, and other “interactions of the private and public worlds of the educational process” (Hamilton, 2004 p. 394). As a self-identified introvert, the trust and self-disclosure needed to engage in a meaningful and worthwhile critical friendship may be a difficult process, however, it is a function that is crucial to the process of self-study. One should not overlook the powerful ways a trusted critical friend can serve as fundamental method and thus contribute to serving as one of multiple data sources

(Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2015). Coia and Taylor (2013) demonstrated this vital partnership while writing their own literature as a team: two critical feminist “friends” scribing and sharing their co/autoethnographies.

To locate a person who understood the context, environment, and conditions in which I am working, someone who comprehends government, education, curriculum writing, and the hierarchy within this environment proved very difficult to locate. Upon searching for someone who I thought I could work fruitfully with as a critical friend, I still needed to ask: Can they be trusted? Does my friend need to have a similar or diverse background of knowledge and experience? Can they just be a “friend” who could be relied upon to prompt me to reflect deeply about my professional complications? Should I let them in on my self-study solely to meet the criterion of being interactive? Pending the answers to my quandaries, interaction and reflectivity are keystones for a self-study methodology that needed to be addressed (Hamilton, Smith & Worthington, 2008). This self-study may have felt like a very solitary and highly personal methodology but through purposeful interactions with colleagues, texts, and data sources, the inquiry was not conducted alone and this interaction provided me with the means to achieve a crystallized view of the data I generated and was gathering.

The fourth path to quality in self-study is through gathering multiple data sources through multiple methods. Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) acknowledge the importance and difficulty of using multiple methods by stating, “What counts as data expands greatly, researchers face the difficulty of representing, presenting, legitimating, analyzing, and reporting one’s own experience as data and of doing so in honest not self-serving ways... this demands much from the researcher” (p.15). Methods or pathways

are balanced in evidence that can encourage readers to feel connected to the critical, emotional moments of self-study. Establishing these emotional connections is one way to address trustworthiness in self-studies. Some of my data collected have therefore exposed vulnerable parts of my personal and professional self as they related to educative matters.

The data were generated over the course of 17 months and came mainly from: (a) journal entries of close to 40,000 words (b) personal responses to emails (c) field notes with critical friends (d) multiple forms of public texts and artifacts (see section 3.5 *Data Collection Strategies* for a more complete description of the data collection strategies used). The multiple pieces of data supported the rigour and validity of my research by providing different sources through which to consider the research problem and questions. Triangulation/crystallization from these multiple forms of data sources is a means of validating and aiding in the believability of what it is I am discovering (Clift 2004; Laboskey 2004; Loughran 2004;). Self-study researchers need to know and acknowledge their values and beliefs, find their best personal and professional self through intimate, compelling stories of the self and be open to how the self is free to change, to fail and to improve. To expose these complexities and not be content with the status quo provided the impetus for me to believe that I can be a change agent.

The fifth criterion of a quality self-study is trustworthiness. “Validating (rather than validity) is seen as a social-constructivist process of knowledge creation, in which establishing and judging the trustworthiness of a study is the key element” (Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2015, p. 11). By means of making public my self-study, trustworthiness will be assessed by the reader. When my self-study of professional practice “rings true”

for the reader (Loughran & Northfield, 1998) and when the reader can relate to what I am saying then validity will be met (albeit temporarily and partially). This validation relies on the researcher's lived experiences resonating with and making sense to others.

Validation is accomplished when the results of the study come to be viewed as sufficiently trustworthy for other investigators to rely upon in their own work. See also the section titled "trustworthiness" for a more detailed explanation of how I sought trustworthiness in the research process.

3.5. Data collection strategies

Over the last four years performing the work of a curriculum specialist I have made a concerted effort to produce and collect several forms of data while personally exploring the multidimensional constructs of wellness (The Grade 10 PEI physical education curriculum 401A Grade 10, 2014) and the theoretical framework of identity. The data to be collected thus took the form of whatever methods were most needed to understand my practice. Given this assumption, the following data collection techniques allowed me to progress deeper and deeper into my own practice with the intent of improving it (Hamilton, et al., 2008).

Journal entries. Reflection has appeared frequently in the literature and would need to be considered as one of the most valuable characteristics of self-study (Loughran, 2004; Oh, et al., 2013; Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009; You 2011). Since January 2014 I have written freely in an electronic journal. It was a self-generated, freely written task involving the documentation of my experiences, private thoughts, highlights and struggles, in addition to my actions and reactions during the piloting and implementation of the Grade 10 physical education 401A curriculum. While I consider my writing to be

“free” (that is, open ended) I was conscious of attending to the research questions described early in the thesis. I did not allow any format or set time frame to dictate my introspective thoughts. I wrote in solitude. I documented my deep thoughts about my practice, not just as a confession (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001) or a story about compliance and frustrations, but as an intentional recording of, sharing of, and searching for solutions so I could better understand and improve my practice. I did this in ways that will hopefully resonate with readers and make my self-study worth reading and thus be ‘of value’ to others.

I wrote in my journal two to three times per week for 17 months. This reflective exploration generated approximately 150-1200 words per entry with at least half of those words from my journal entries qualifying as data. The entries not included as data were passages where I engaged in personal reflection not suited for the purposes of this study. For example, I do not include entries where I wrote introspectively about my professional interactions with others whose anonymity must be respected. This was a crucial consideration in conducting ethical research. My reflective practice of journaling was with purpose. During this time I quietly recorded and released the stories and voices in my head to find deeper meaning and solutions to work with the goal of the betterment of my self. During critical moments I found solace crafting my journal entries as this allowed me to process my work in a meta-cognitive way. I have made my entries known only to my critical friend as I have often spoken to her about the journals as part of my reflective process.

Emails. Over the course of the development of the Grade 10 physical education 401A curriculum, I generated and collected a large amount of correspondence through

email. These emails were a critical form of electronic dialogue with teachers, colleagues, advisors, friends and decision makers and have guided me throughout this journey. Not only did these emails direct me and my work, but they provided descriptive feedback for my learning; at times emailing a trusted friend allowed me to vent my frustrations and share accomplishments. This form of communication provided another avenue to reflect broadly and deeply about my tasks and the uncertainties I faced as a curriculum specialist. This form of data generation has demonstrated the vast and complex issue of working as a curriculum specialist and how I attempt to meet the needs of the people and changes around me.

In the context and setting of my work, emails are within the public domain (that is, they can be searched and retrieved within the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act). Knowing this, I fully intend to protect the identity of others whose emails prompted me to think about any aspects of my practice. I recognize their right to anonymity and so only those emails sent by me and the context/rationale for my email response/s will be used as data.

Field Notes from Conversations with a Critical Friend. Regardless of the answers to my quandaries, interaction and reflectivity are keystones for self-study methodology (Hamilton, et al., 2008). This self-study felt at times like a very solitary methodology but through purposeful interactions the inquiry should not need to be alone.

In fact, Ovens and Fletcher (2014) argue:

The study of self-in-practice is never a solitary endeavour since practices are sets of culturally bound activities emerging from the collective actions, culture, and relationships with others also working in the same setting or

community of practice. The practice of self-study is always interactive, particularly in the way the researcher sustains a dialogue with others co-participating in the practice, with data sets, with related theoretical and research literature, and with co-researchers and colleagues. (p.10)

My trusted and compassionate critical friend claimed to be “honoured” to be part of this learning journey of mine and it was a privilege to have these intimate interactions with her. Engagement in this critical friendship process was a commitment on her behalf. Invitation was extended only after it was deeply considered by me and by her. She welcomed this collegial and purposeful study of self. The stage was set after a clear conversation explaining full disclosure that my interpretations of future conversations and critical moments within our conversations would be securely recorded by me as field notes. She agreed to this proposal before I recorded any field notes as data. She also reflected on and understood that she retained the right of refusal to deny the inclusion of any data points that involved her. In the spirit of wellness we would passionately interact while walking along the water on our local boardwalk. I would share my personal thoughts and, step-by-step, she would ask me questions that would cause me to pause and think. It felt good to walk and talk about the messiness and complexities of my work. Her in-depth skills, knowledge and experiences of governmental and curriculum work coupled with penetrating questions and multiple views (Loughran, 2005) laid the groundwork for my deep reflection and made for a wonderful partnership on my quest for improvement. I always prompted our walks and she always graciously made time as my essential friend.

Our journeys started in November 2013 but in January 2014 the “critical friendship” began in earnest and would be at least two times per week (rain or snow, day or evening) and approximately an hour in length. Frequently we ran out of boards on the boardwalk so we sat on her doorstep to finish our thoughts. I left our walks invigorated from the sea air and with the validation, confirmation, breath of humanity, and new reflective thoughts she afforded me. On occasion, we would have tea. At the beginning of the research process I would occasionally record our conversation. After a while I found that it seemed contrived and not natural—inauthentic—to this process. It was these reflective, interactive moments that forced me to focus on my curriculum speciality practice and my self. With each step taken we not only moved our bodies but she moved my mind towards the ultimate goal of improvement. I would classify her as my primary critical friend but at times I sought out other critical friends who I believed guided, calmed me and looked at issues with a telescopic lens. Suggesting these interactive moments were informal would not be correct. During this time of data collection I was acutely aware of the rich moments of learning and made notes of main points, questions, ponderings and realized the need to promptly record these ripe forms of interactivity.

Following my interactions with any of my critical friends, I recorded the key points, questions, problems, and solutions that were identified as a part of the interactive process. Conducting audio-recorded interviews or conversations are important supplements and complements to my other data collecting methods. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) explain that deliberating ideas and the sharing of stories with a (critical) friend could take the energy out of a situation thus comments, actions, and reactions should be captured as soon as possible before the ideas “may no longer compel [me] to record

[them]” (p. 172). Bogdan and Biklen (2007) have recognized this process of fieldwork by stating, “fieldnotes [are] the written account of what the researcher hears, sees, experiences, and thinks in the course of collecting and reflecting on the data in a qualitative study” (p. 119). My fieldnotes provide my study with a deeply personal log that helped me “keep track of the development of the project” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 119) and to remain aware of the research questions. This time was for me, alone with my computer.

Artifacts and other forms of text. Throughout my curriculum development process there was an abundance of “official” materials produced and gathered. These materials included meeting notes from work and community groups, day book recordings indicating meeting dates and times, the edited notes of curriculum documents, formal resources supporting the curriculum, records of discussion during the curriculum writing phase, and support document drafts. In addition, newspaper and magazine articles, text messages, curriculum meeting assessment results, research articles, and textbooks were utilized in my decision-making and reflection. All of these sources served as data, however, only those that were in the public domain were used in this research. Although most of my work occurs in the public domain and is accessible to the public, I am also conscious of the rights of people with whom I interact and so did not draw directly from information provided by them in written or verbal form.

Over the course of curriculum development I collected and produced several pieces of evidence I will call artifacts. These artifacts include, sticky notes, cards, photos (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007), and motivating quotes. These artifacts were either sent to me

in times of difficulty or were produced by me to support the complex and multiple approaches taken to inform my methods (LaBoskey, (2004).

3.6. Data analysis

The analysis of data has involved building and sifting through themes, inductive coding, synthesizing, organizing, inquiring questions and answers, insights into self, and looking for patterns for the purpose of discovering my findings (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). This was intense, time-consuming, and rigorous work. I looked at problems through multiple lenses and angles, which brought about a crystallization of the data. Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) speak of the importance of balance in analyzing a quality self-study.

The balance can be struck at many times during the self-study process, but when a study is reported the balance must be in evidence not only in what data have been gathered and presented, but in how they have been analyzed (p. 15).

It should be acknowledged from the outset that my research was informed by my research questions. I conducted my analysis by mining the data through using a realist/constructivist thematic analysis across my data corpus (Braun & Clark, 2006) and searching for *turning points* (Bullock & Ritter, 2011). Along with the use of a peer-reviewer who acted as a sounding board for certain issues in the analytic process, I assessed ethical and prudent themes that presented a valid story to the reader about my experiences and that answered the research questions. According to Braun and Clark (2006) a qualitative researcher always plays an active role in identifying patterns and themes by implementing thematic analysis, which, “is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (p. 79). This thematic analysis

method allowed for flexibility and fluidity. The end game is to answer the research questions with the guidance of a theoretical framework (in this case, identity theories). Themes that came up repeatedly were considered meaningful. These themes will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

Once my reflective journal and other generated data was gathered, read, and re-read many times (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007), I began to sort and code all of the data for major themes. I also began engaging with relevant literature as issues arose during the analysis to enhance my insights and link to previous work conducted by others. I chose to do this manually instead of using a software program because I felt more comfortable with going through this personal material myself, and had already experienced with this from a former and smaller research project. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) affirm: “many different computer programs are available for analyzing qualitative data” (p. 184) but the principles of the analytical process remain whether one uses these specialized computer programs to sort the material or not. Ultimately, it is the researcher who identifies the themes regardless of whether or not an analytic software program is being used.

Coding is a system developed to organize data used by qualitative researchers (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Developing a coding system involves searching through data for patterns, emotions and topics that emerge. I created a list of codes that were the ‘headings’ of words and phrases that I wrote down as a means of separating the data that I generated. While manually coding I looked for words, phrases, and paragraphs (units of data) in my fieldnotes. In phase one I wrote comments and ideas in the margin of pages, highlighted key points, and used sticky notes to indicate overlapping and repetitive themes (Braun & Clark, 2006). Bogdan and Biklen (2007) recommend marking “each

unit with the appropriate coding category” (p. 187), which I did by using coloured pencils/markers to label and code.

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) forewarned me that I may experience indecision during the coding process, however, the decision to “limit codes is imperative” (p. 186) and is part of the process of refining the codes while building the idea of themes. Thus, I applied process codes to ensure I identified appropriate and meaningful themes. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) define process codes as words or phrases that aid in categorizing key turning points, sequences of events, and changes over time such as status in careers, and transitional periods.

Once I had identified salient pieces of data and coded my data, I sought to organize and analyze the coded data by focusing on identifying and interpreting *turning points* as an “organizing framework used in self-study methodology” (Bullock & Ritter, 2011, p. 175).

Bullock and Ritter (2011) began a formal process of self-study to capture their tensions of moving from expert classroom teachers to novice teacher educators. This brought about focused writing on their identity construction rather than other perceived problems. This analytic process aligned with my intentions theoretically and practically; that is, I wanted to understand the ways in which my identity construction informed and framed my practice as a curriculum specialist. Their data analysis focused on identifying and interpreting what they referred to as *turning points*. *Turning points* were described by the authors as “rich description of a problematic issue” (p. 174) and are similar to tensions or nodal points (a significant moment in time). Bullock and Ritter (2011) consider four characteristics when defining the term *turning points* in data. They are:

1. There is an affective (emotional or motivational) element to the data.
2. The data frame a problem of practice.
3. The author of the data is implicitly asking for help from the critical friend.
4. The data are bounded by the action-present; there is still time to take action on the problem.

I applied this understanding and definition of *turning points* as I made my way through my data analysis.

Once this non-linear process was complete whilst reading and rereading my data, looking for *turning points*, coding, searching, reviewing, and naming themes (Braun & Clark, 2006) I was able to address the research questions of this inquiry.

3.6.1. Trustworthiness

Central to the analytic process in self-study is trustworthiness. Ham and Kane (2004) also refer to a quality self-study as one that is creditable, valid, authentic, and trustworthy. Trustworthiness is created through reflection and triangulation of the data (Hamilton, et al., 2008, Oh, et al., 2013). Bogdan and Biklen (2007) refer to triangulation and its use in social sciences as qualitative researchers often use the term to explain how the researcher has applied a variety of methods or pieces of information to “convince the reader that his or her work is carefully done” (p. 115). They suggest not using the term triangulation because of the misinterpretation of the word. Because of my transparent, holistic approach to data collection and full explanation of my analytic process I use the terms triangulation or “crystallization” as ways to add to trustworthiness and validity. Others (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) view triangulation as a tactic or strategy to confirm

findings “as one sets out to collect data and double-check findings, using multiple sources and modes of evidence” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 267).

Validity and trustworthiness are significant and must be paid attention to so others will see the value in my work (Fletcher & Ovens, 2014) when I make my self-study “open to public scrutiny and hence judgements of trustworthiness” (Tinning, 2014, p.157). When comparing narrative, self-study, and autoethnography, Hamilton et al. (2008) suggest:

Researchers engage in elements of good research. Detail, clarity, application of good research practice, an ethical commitment, attention to clarity and detail are all components. Because researchers in these areas have struggled for recognition, taking care to be explicit about research practices is critical. (p. 25).

Loughran (2010) takes care to position self-study as more than story telling. Loughran (2010) supports the notion that all self-studies are not just about the story but “the sharing of knowledge in ways that will influence policy makers” (p. 223). As curriculum specialist, we consider the development of curriculum as a type of policy document. Curriculum is the legal document that outlines provincial expectations. Despite this understanding I am still not in the position to make unilateral changes in policy direction but it is my hope the insights and understandings revealed in this thesis, when connected to the work of others, carry the potential to inform and influence governmental educative policy change, and inform teaching theory into practices (Oh, et al., 2013). Thus, I must ensure that my “stories” provide enough insights and

interpretations of practice so that when they are shared, others may trust the findings to the extent that they can use them to inform their own practice.

Research issues regarding credibility were safe guarded with proper documentation in my journal. Personal reflections were recorded in private along with sharing of many lived experiences and stories with my trusted critical friends. These levels of my interaction and collaborations add to the trustworthiness of my data thus providing “greater confidence that the resulting decisions are as well informed as possible” (Metzler, 2014, p. 123). Results of thick and descriptive documentation were produced in an attempt to provide an accurate depiction of my reality to which readers could readily relate.

The gathering and analysis of multiple data sources have kept me focused and assisted me in holding my self “accountable for what I do” (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006, p. 27) as my research is linked to my actions (Trumbull, 2004). The concern was with “the process, not a fixed product” (Penney & Jess, 2004, p. 272); this stands in contrast to curriculum developing, where both process and product are considered. Following Bruce (2014), I used Loughran and Northfield’s (1998) guidelines for trustworthiness. Bruce (2014) cites Loughran and Northfield (1998), stating:

[Loughran and Northfield (1998)] suggest that a report “includes sufficient detail of the complexity and context of the situation for it to ‘ring true’ for the reader; provides and demonstrates some triangulation of data and a range of different perspectives around an issue; and makes explicit links to relevant educational literature...” (p. 13).

Trustworthiness, variation, and depth in the self-study were created by collecting data through a number of interactive processes, and through investigating and sharing the data analysis and findings with my mentor (critical friend) (LaBoskey 2004). I sought to establish trustworthiness by applying Feldman's (2003) suggestions of providing clear and detailed description of the how and what of my data collection, of how I constructed the representation of my data, triangulation and use multiple sources of data and evidence of the value of the changes in our ways of being a curriculum specialist. When done collaboratively, publicly and concentrating on one's self, one's actions and one's ideas, I hope readers will find that my study "rings true... [providing] something useful and informing" (Loughran, 2002, p. 33). Hamilton (2004) suggests, "self-scholars seem more committed to a conscious, clear, trustworthy research path where they demonstrate their integrity through research action" (Hamilton, 2004, p. 407). In this way, I hope that my research supports other teachers/curriculum specialist in the pursuits of improving self and practice.

3.7. Ethics

The Chair of Ethics Committee from the School of Human Kinetics and Recreation at Memorial University of Newfoundland approved this study in December 2013. The Chair of the School's Ethics Committee conferred with the Chair of the University's Interdisciplinary Committee on Human Research (ICEHR) about the study's aims, methods, and ethical considerations before granting approval. This research project and the methods used to collect data did not pose greater than minimal risk to my self or to my critical friend. Informed consent from my critical friend was a verbal agreement because our interactions occurred as an informal verbal conversation that was ongoing

before, throughout, and beyond the “official” research process. Informed consent was not a crucial component to my study because the information gathered from my critical friend was based on her professional and expert knowledge, experience, and willingness to share for research and support my professional self-improvement. My thesis work is a self-study, which means that the data gathered and analyzed were self-generated, self-focused, and did not make explicit reference to people or organizations. The organizational context in which I conducted my work (and thus my research) provided me with the setting for my research, however, all data collected and analyzed was self-generated or conducted with few other participants. As a self-study, this self-initiated, self-focused, qualitative form of research engages professionals who can investigate their own practice and thus serves as both a form of research and professional development.

I shared the process with my critical friend and anonymity of any persons were protected during my critical friend inquiry, support and/or making my research public. I also extended to my critical friend many times the option to not record any of our conversations (in either written or audio form). As mentioned previously, we have engaged in these processes from a time before this research began--that is, our critical friendship pre-empted the research I am conducting. In this way, any data that would be used from this context would be secondary. I shared my work on this study with my critical friend at all stages of the process, and, upon her agreement (or disagreement) to provide informal informed consent, I have worked with her to determine if she is comfortable with me using and making reference to our interactions, and that I have maintained her anonymity throughout all stages of the process. She was not made to feel pressured to participate, or that there were negative consequences to her rejection to

participate. Her right to choose to participate or opt out was respected as she always had the option to decline participation in this study.

Following the selection of data in personal journals, reflective interactive field notes, personal emails, artifacts and public documents in the study, I have selected and used pseudonyms for critical friends, or if any other situation demanded it during the making public of any of my study (thesis, presentations, presentations, etc.). Much of the data has been for my reflection only and has not been made public. For example, I have not used or reported any situations that may place my professional reputation or those of my colleagues or organization in jeopardy: put simply, any contentious professional issues I have dealt with while conducting this research I chose not to report on in this study, despite the implications those situations had on helping my understand my identity and practice as a curriculum specialist.

My personal data and artifacts (day books, etc.) will be retained for life as a valued evidence of my personal and professional growth. All other public documents belong to the DEECD. The findings reported have focused on my processes, my learning, my insights into becoming and being a curriculum specialist.

3.8. Summary

The current research methods, methodology, and findings will be particularly useful for anyone considering the role of a curriculum specialist in practice, educating how a curriculum specialist's identity shaped those lived experiences and illuminating how those experiences shaped my identity. The findings of this study can help physical education teachers make better decisions regarding the complex nature of curriculum development and identity. This study will also help physical education teachers in

similar situations understand the practice of curriculum development, working within government and engaging in a self-study to improve one's practice. Seeking to re-create this study is not a goal but to collect data using guidelines for a quality self-study and to allow readers to understand my point of view is. To inform people of the lived experiences of a physical education teachers becoming a curriculum specialist during high school curriculum reform and have this study "ring true" to others may prove to be an effective way to meet the queries of other physical education teachers considering this unique and privileged job and work of a curriculum specialist.

Chapter IV

FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

My task in this chapter is to analyze the data in a way that directly addresses the three overarching research questions. Specifically, I explore the ways in which self-study enabled me to identify insights into and understandings of my role and practice as a curriculum specialist. Two major themes were generated from the data: (1) Insider/Outsider and (2) Being and becoming a curriculum specialist. These themes are described and discussed in relation to my research questions and identity theory.

This chapter has four main sections. Within these sections I provide a description of how I came to develop a newly shaped view of who I am as a curriculum specialist by contrasting my insider identity as a teacher of physical education with my newly developing outsider identity as a curriculum specialist. In addition to this, I explain the results of my self-study and the bearing they had on the processes of my identification in being and becoming a curriculum specialist during my task of high school physical education curriculum renewal and reform.

4.2. “Hello. My name is...”

I clearly remember at my first public meetings as a DEECD representative, I would rehearse my “title” of curriculum specialist and the Department’s full name. It was so foreign to me and it took at least a year to become familiar with my new role. Each day was a new adventure with many days not even involving writing high school curriculum. The loss of control over what I was doing on a moment-to-moment and day-

to-day basis was significant and represented such a contrast to when I crafted my own programming my entire teaching career. Other people had scheduled my workdays, even my holidays. I was at the whim of unpredictability, diversity, and randomness. On January 23, 2014 I wrote about feeling “scattered and pulled in all directions.”

September 9, 2014 was particularly disjointed when I reflected on my day of “emails, phone calls and meeting with community groups that seemed to have me running and thinking all over the map”. This was captured again on March 6, 2014 when I wrote to my critical friend:

Cyber bullying, mental health, safety eye wear for badminton, condoms, and inactivity amongst PEI students are on my plate today. Tough for me or a PE teacher to be the expert in so much but here I go. The road is not so lonely today and thank you!

In my role I have come to understand that through implicit and explicit ways I share *me* (to use Mead’s 1934 conceptualization of I/me) with whomever I meet, through verbal and body language, as well as through other “textual” interactions (such as my writing). By sharing these parts of my self, my identification is made a social phenomenon because the people I am sharing my self with form opinions and views of me from their perspective. My identity negotiation is about alignment with who I believe I am at my core and how I am seen by those in the world around me (Goffman, 1959; Jenkins, 2008). When there is a perceived misalignment or transitioning from one version of my self with another I seem to experience an internal challenge. Jenkins (2008) suggests that it is in the moments of misalignment that identity transformation occurs.

In making the transition into my new role as a curriculum specialist, my former identity as a physical educator was under pressure because I sensed that to others in that community I was being viewed as an outsider. A major challenge that came along with this shift was that I was not yet an insider as a curriculum specialist. I was in ‘no-man’s land’ in terms of how I identified professionally. In the early days of my new government position, I had to quickly modify how I projected my identity as a physical educator as I engaged in the day-to-day tasks of a curriculum specialist. In order to adjust to my environment throughout my six-year secondment I would need to adapt, change, and align how I viewed my self professionally with how I perceived others in my new professional world viewed me. This was challenging because in trying to become an insider in the curriculum specialist role, I was simultaneously letting go (albeit with some resistance) of my insider identity as a teacher of physical education; an identity that I felt I clung to more naturally.

To understand these processes, self-study has provided me with the mechanisms to address some tensions in my identification, ease the challenging work environment, and reflect on my past, which in turn, helped me deal with several current and (likely) future situations. It is intriguing how life can surprise you with twists that, in the moment, feel crushing but in the end can turn into something surprisingly wonderful and rewarding. Heartbroken to leave my students and school community but hopeful, I officially left my school behind and started to become the new PEI physical education curriculum specialist.

4.3. Insider-Outsider/Outsider-Insider

As mentioned in Chapter II, regardless of the context in which identity is being studied, it is viewed as dynamic, processual, and unfixed (Jenkins, 2008) and something “that develops during one’s whole life” (Beijaard, et al., 2004, p. 107). Identity is a way that people make sense of their experiences and biographies in relation to the experiences and biographies of others. When identity (or identification) is viewed as a process, there is an emphasis given to *becoming* over *being*. Individuals negotiate their identities within the interactions of people and context, each of which is forever changing. By keeping this in mind, people come to understand their own identities (and those of others) as they negotiate an internal sense of themselves (self-image), with their perception of how others view them (an external, public image).

My self-study illustrated that the processes of transforming my professional identities and becoming a curriculum specialist was both a blessing and a curse. This may be because “identities are resistant to change” (Geijsel & Meijers, 2005, p. 423). The movements from outsider to insider and insider to outsider were dynamic and in flux throughout my self-study research. They were always in play. The shift in identifying as an outsider to an insider was in relation to my role as a curriculum specialist, where I was becoming immersed in government offices and politics. I had to quickly learn, change, adapt, and grow. However, while this process was unfolding, I was also transitioning from insider to outsider as a teacher of physical education. In the following sections I will specifically explore my identity as it relates to a changing process of learning about my self and the interplay of “being” an outsider in the world of a curriculum specialist while “becoming” an insider in that role.

4.3.1. Holding on while letting go: Tensions in coming to identify as a curriculum specialist

I never planned on being a curriculum specialist. I thought writing curriculum would be one of the worst jobs in the world due to working in an office, with no students, and in the bureaucracy of government. It is ironic that somehow I was prompted and encouraged by colleagues to apply for the job, which I did with serious considerations. Now that I am firmly entrenched in doing this work, I ask my self: “Who knew writing curriculum would become something I feel so passionate about”?

My reflections gathered throughout the 17 months of the research show how I have come to revel in my role as curriculum specialist, despite the doubts and uncertainties I possessed upon induction to the role. This job opportunity catapulted me out of my school and into a new role at the age of 45. The position of physical education curriculum specialist arose at the exact moment I perhaps needed a change or a new challenge. Little did I know I was embarking on the creation and the re-creation of my professional identity as well as engaging in new forms of professional practice.

In coming to the role of curriculum specialists as an outsider I was unfamiliar with the job and naïve about the scope and processes of the work. Even though I had glimpses of the workings of the DEECD as a pilot teacher who contributed on the grades K-6 and 7-9 physical education curricula in 2011-12, I did not know how to work in and for government as a public servant. Due to the experience as a pilot teacher, at that time I had the conclusive mindset that curriculum was adopted from other provinces and not truly “created”. I welcomed and valued changes made to both the elementary and intermediate curricula with its specific and clear learning outcomes. These “guides” were

used in such a way that I could build my teaching practice upon them and felt physical education on PEI now had focused and aligned language and goals. I welcomed these “guides” as I thought others did at the time and they helped anchor me to a professional world with which I was familiar.

Unfortunately, these anchors were not always strong enough to maintain a sense of confidence that I was ready for during my transition. When my curriculum specialist journey began in August 2011, I remember vividly sitting in my vehicle crying, feeling ill-prepared, vulnerable, out of control, scared, inadequate, and fearful. Moving from a one-school context to a multi-layered system of government was a monumental shift. The following journal excerpt on November 3, 2014 demonstrates some of the major shifts I was experiencing even more than three years into the role:

My environment has changed drastically. My role has changed drastically. Instead of doing the things I knew in my gut or when I asked my students what they thought, I now need to base every thought and action on evidence. My thoughts seem not to be my own anymore. I like the critical thinking part but it is the kids that I miss. Yes I am reminded by my critical friend that I am impacting all kids now and not just my own (students), but am I truly? How is this curriculum recreated? Can I support the teachers the best that I can to make this change to wellness? I feel detached. My self has been pulled in so many directions. There are many layers to my identity. Who am I? Am I a PE teacher, health teacher, curriculum writer, curriculum specialist (whatever that means), athlete (former as I am out of shape and tired all the time), Mom (this will be my

#1 role ☺), politician, community liaison person, marketer, speechmaker, etc. Who am I? Who do I want to become? Or better yet, can my identity sustain this role in which I choose to undertake? Let us be honest tonight. I am a PE teacher whose identity has been transforming since I began but since drilling down through the surface of this topic it is just now that I have acknowledged how my new environment has impacted me. I feel that I have pushed this image of myself, this public image. I am a blue personality, don't like talking much and get so worked up with public debate. It is very hard work for me. I know myself as a teacher but is this the new me?

One aspect from the quote above that highlights a major challenge of my shifting identity was my recognition of the new groups of people I would be interacting with and who would ultimately shape how I was identifying my self professionally. This realization represents one of the major turning points in my analysis. Interestingly, it is a slow moving turning point that has been revolving for more than a year. Much of the work of curriculum specialist excited me, however, being mostly around adults rather than children was something I struggled with. I further reflected in my journal on November 3, 2014:

I interact more with adults than I have ever had. My world has been with children, students and my boys. My boys are my love and now they are grown and have changed, perhaps like me in some way.

Coming to realize that my new role would focus on working *for* children more so than working *with* children took a lot of time, however, once acknowledged, it helped me

to reconcile and feel more comfortable with who I was becoming and could become, and how I could make positive change happen. These changing thoughts of working *for* children were captured in my journal on Jan. 31/15:

I chatted with a PE 10 teacher on Friday. I need to be more trusting and build relationships with these folks. They are really some great teachers out there who are making this curriculum come alive. I need to remember I guess to get at the students [...] I need to go through the teacher now!

4.3.2. Becoming a curriculum specialist

Although a major disruption in my professional identity occurred in that August of 2011, it is something I still find moving underfoot five years later. For example, at the beginning of my journaling for this self-study in January 23 2014 I stated:

I have been feeling scattered and pulled in all directions. I feel a need to get organized. I am overly worried about the mental health outcome in PE 10. I need to prepare the PE teachers as best as I can. I wish someone could tell me that this course will be required. At least we will know that all students will get “this” if it is mandated. What can I do to move this forward?

As this quote shows, some of the feelings of the first day of my work—vulnerable, frustrated, and fearful—remained years later. Underneath the feelings of angst there is a spirit of will and desire to do “right” by the students and to forge ahead. As I wrote on Jan. 30, 2014, “I need to let the Board know that I am staying at the Department. I need to stay and finish this work”. Despite staying, I have come to a

strong and recurring realization that the unsettled and possibly insecure feelings of my first days are still with me. My journal reflection from Feb.6, 2015 shows this:

What do I give and what vibes do I give off? The need for me to be impeccable with my words and represent government/teachers/students and lastly or is it firstly myself can be exhausting when I am at my best. When I reflect on each encounter and this presentation of self and hyper-analyze words and action, sometimes I am proud of what I did and said and other times when this defensive stance drops I am filled with self-judgments and fear. How much can I give and how much can I give off? I can be made to feel over exposed and vulnerable, or try to be cunning and brave all the while attempting to express myself in the most advantageous, balanced way given each particular environment. How much or little can I control of others as I cannot control how people think and feel about me.

The whole premise of only seconding people for a short period is that the DEECD wants new and fresh ideas coming from people who currently work in the system. They want people who are from the “front lines” of teaching. As a seconded teacher I have also had the choice every year to “go back” to teaching— not that I feel there is regression in returning to that role and identity. Teachers coming and going from the DEECD is the practice enacted over decades and across different teaching contexts. As mentioned above, when the time came to stay at or leave DEECD, I decided to stay to finish the work I had signed on to do. No matter how rugged my days were, I learned to be resilient and stay the course. In addition, I was not asked to leave. This shows that while my identification was being strongly shaped by those around me, I was also willing to push

back against some of the perceptions I had of how they viewed me. There was a large part of me that was determined to do the job of curriculum specialist well, revealing the extent to which my internal identification was reaching out to meet or push past the external forces of identification.

With that said, as a curriculum specialist I took on all decisions that were in my control, just as I did as a physical education teacher. What was different is that I had lost the autonomy of seeing these decisions in action or being in control of final decisions. This loss of autonomy caused me some frustration and uncertainty:

I struggle letting these moments roll off my back. Curriculum reform and renewal is most difficult. I am just one person. I have pulled a few people into the drama of this work from work. I am feeling bad about this as I hate drama and I hate being out of control. In my gym I was in control. I have given this control topic some deep thought today. (Nov. 22, 2014)

One of the main reasons I felt I was losing control was because I felt I had lost the connection to students. I had to stay true to what was best *for* students; not only in a one-school context but now as a decision-maker for the teachers and students across the province. This was where my internal identification as a teacher was at its most vulnerable.

As an outsider becoming an insider working within government, my curricular decision-making was influenced by my knowledge and understanding physical education teaching practice, research of best curriculum from Canada and internationally, and the enrichment and immersion of my new self into clear and concise curriculum development policies, practices, and collegial discussions. I believed this to be a shared understanding

with others who worked in that role, but realized through collaborative efforts with other physical education teachers that there was a gap that was often difficult to bridge. This was one of the first moments when I realized I was at a cross roads with my professional identity. Cautious to let go of one identity (physical education teacher) and apprehensive to take on another (curriculum specialist), I was finding it difficult to have both, despite my understanding that one can have multiple identities (Jenkins, 2008). My self-study has led me to the understanding that I was not completely in control of how I identified; many other actors in my spheres of work had significant influence on how I was coming to view my self. Upon reflection, this realization was the start of my being and becoming a curriculum specialist.

Over time, I came to embrace the role of curriculum specialist due to learning the rules, routines, and practices of working in government, establishing relationships with my colleagues, and feeling that I was now being seen as a peer by many of them. In short, I was becoming an insider. I wrote in my journal on June 12, 2015:

I got my ergonomist assessment today for my standing workstation. She asked me what I did and I told her: “I write the curriculum for high school students (not moving in my conviction for students and not totally grasping that curriculum is for teachers and not really for students) and try to help K-12 health and PE teachers out the best way I could”. She said that I must love my work. I said: “It is a privilege to do what I do”. She said: “No, you LOVE what you do”. I said: “Yes”. She said that when I talked about my work MY EYES LIT UP! Holy crap, do I really love what

I do? I thought I loved to teach? I do love to teach but not this government stuff do I? She left me pondering...

While this quote shows me embracing my work, my role, my new way of identifying (“I write the curriculum...”), it masks an internal dilemma I was having as a result. I thought I could straddle both of the communities with whom I was working – government and the community of physical education teachers. I always felt safe within my physical education community. I was confident and competent. Everyone in PEI feels like they know each other, but my experiences in transitioning to a new role showed that we really don’t. After taking on the curriculum specialist position, physical education teachers identified me as someone working in government before I identified myself that way. I had accomplished much on PEI within physical education and I was grounded in the workings of a quality physical education program. Physical education and the students were my sanctuary. They provided validation to what I had done in the past as a teacher. Now, I believed the majority of my colleagues (I intentionally do not say former colleagues, though they may disagree with this view) did not see me this way. Except perhaps for my former Director, as she would say to me when I left to visit teachers at schools to “make sure and come back” (meaning come back to the DEECD). I perceived teachers looking at me differently, treating me differently. As a result, I was losing the Cheryl I had known professionally by way of acting, dressing, and thinking. Rarely static, “teacher identity is in the process of being shaped by past experience and current circumstances” (Hong, 2010, p. 1535). These experiences represent another turning point; a time when I came to understand that I was beginning to more strongly identify myself as a curriculum specialist than as a teacher.

4.3.3. Insider to Outsider: Losing my self as a physical education teacher

Walking through the front doors of a building does not automatically make you an insider. Yet, I became an outsider to many members of the PEI physical education teacher community within days, if not minutes, of walking into the bricks and mortar of the DEECD. I feel it was a combination of what I was learning by being part of the teaching group who participated in the pilot curriculum and using effective instructional and assessment strategies in my practice that somehow, someone or some people took notice of the work I was doing as a physical education teacher. I was doing my job and giving my best for the students in front of me. During the time I identified and was identified by others as an insider, I thought that I was “typical” in the physical education community and that understanding would be maintained as I transitioned to the DEECD. Knowing and experiencing this, and with out being consciously aware of not knowing what I did not know, I excitedly but anxiously, accepted challenge of reforming and renewing high school curricula without fully understanding the complexities of the work and the highly personal nature of it. I was about to embark on a newly shaped view of who I am and becoming yet had little understanding that the upcoming year would be the hardest as I transitioned from one version of my self to another.

I felt physical education teachers did not see me as the Cheryl they knew, nor did they understand or know of the internal struggles I was experiencing. They saw me as someone who was going to impact their work from the top-down. While I had great hope for teachers and students with this new curriculum, I think most felt I was impacting their work negatively. My perceived competence and my confidence were shaken, just as I was beginning to settle into my new role personally and professionally.

I feel uncomfortable with PE teachers now...is it me or them? Some I smile at like old times but others I hardly know and I don't want them to truly know me. They may think they know me, judge me, but they don't know me. I push an image everyday depending who I am with or in the context. It is rare that I let my guard down. Playing defense is hard to do all the time. When I do let my guard down and worry afterward of what I did or said and how others judge my public stage. I was told that I have been in "government too long" about a year ago. This hurt me. (Nov. 14, 2014)

External identification (the views that others have of an individual) can have significant effects on how an individual comes to identify herself or himself. This often occurs through labels being offered or withheld (Jenkins, 2008). My interactions with colleagues, who were still entrenched in the physical education community in PEI schools, made me aware of labels that were being used or withheld to identify me – labels that were attached to my professional role. According to Jenkins (2008), labels become meaningful when the people to whom they are given or directed internalize them. This holds clear significance when labels lead to actions. In the following journal excerpt, it is clear that the external identification I was perceiving from the physical education community led to actions that served to entrench the processes of identification I was experiencing:

It is the PEIPEA day and it will be the first one that I will not buy my membership. I am lost and so is my identity. I have always been a member of this professional group and now I don't belong. If I don't

belong there where do I belong? I am alone, vulnerable and SCARED. I am very sad as well. I feel that I am not good at the Department BUT I know I was a great teacher and now I don't belong as "one of them".
FUCK... (Nov. 20, 2014)

Prior to me taking on my role as a curriculum specialist, most members of the physical education community likely saw the professional similarities between them and me, just as I did. Yet now, it was the differences that stood out. As Jenkins (2008) suggests, a key role of identification with groups comes down to a simple matter of similarity and difference. Thus, another aspect of external identification had now become internalized. In becoming a curriculum specialist, I was reluctantly and unwillingly losing how I was being and becoming a teacher of physical education. Importantly, this was something I did not want to let go of. My self-study is showing that, as much as I tried to resist, this decision was thrust upon me more by the forces of external identification than the innermost desires I held.

4.3.4. The importance of critical friendship in moments of negotiating professional identities

The process of conducting self-study thus led me to develop deeper understandings of my self-in-practice; however, I had to be patient with that process. In order for it to be of utmost benefit, I had to establish strong and trusting bonds with my critical friend. To build the necessary rapport took time; in this case over a year. As a result of that patience, my critical friend enabled me to find a sense of autonomy (control) and to be more confident in making my own decisions. She read or listened to my lived

experiences of success and “being stuck” so I could realize my own professional development process and progression.

In conjunction with the space my journal provided to do some of the “in-dwelling” required in self-study research, the strengthening relationship with my critical friend helped lay a foundation for me to realize there is a safe and knowledgeable place within the demands of my becoming a curriculum specialist, despite the challenges offered to me by the interactions with my professional communities. There was an unwavering commitment and establishment of an environment of trust that provided the “wrap around” support I wanted and needed in the moments when I was struggling with the internal processes of my identification and figuring out to which groups I belonged and to which I did not, which groups’ views of me aligned with my own.

My critical friend had a solid understanding of the core business of curriculum writing and had strong interpersonal and problem solving skills that set her apart from other like-minded professionals that surrounded me. Through our conversations I came to understand that I shared her visions and ideas of curriculum and respect for the people who impacted the work. Through our critical friendship, she also provided me with an angle from which to identify someone in the community I was becoming embedded in. Specifically, she was significant in my process of becoming a curriculum specialist because I was seeing strong similarities rather than differences in how I identified her and how I was coming to identify my self. As well as seeing connections in several professional qualities, we also shared similarities on an emotional level regarding our workplace practices. My critical friend made it known she felt empathy and understanding for me during the times I was feeling overwhelmed, anxious, frustrated,

and angry. I reflected on the following interaction with my critical friend regarding a work situation on March 7, 2014:

So we walked and talked. She too was disappointed; almost angry at the situation. We talked about responsibility. This is what she had to say:

“Wow. That is a powerful statement that, once again internalized, could transform our lenses on our leadership. Wise people have been telling me that, in their own words, for years”. I believe this statement to be true.

However freeing, I continue to struggle to strike a balance with adopting this philosophy while remaining passionate and driven to do the right thing for kids. We are a work in progress. The statement put things in perspective and causes a gut-check to realize our place in the world.

My critical friend constantly reminded me to do what I believed was best for students while keeping me grounded in the role and position that I held at the DEECD. Realizing we shared a nurturing approach to students fortified a strong connection between the two of us that impacted my approach to my practice and how I was establishing a sense of confidence in my new role.

Analyzing my reflections about the benefits and risks of many of my work choices made me feel less out of control and provided me with a plan. Our collegial conversations helped me drain the pool of deep negative emotion I experienced at times and freed me to move forward. Over time my critical friend got to know and provide supportive critique about my work, goals, strengths, abilities, and personality. The commitment from me also was critical to any professional growth I might gain from the experience in unpacking the challenges of my evolving identity. I needed to be honest

and open and make my self vulnerable in exposing my experiences, thoughts, and practices. Her professional and personal beliefs, non-judgemental approach, and dedication to my study proved she saw potential in me to find meaningful solutions and growth in my self.

During my self-study I realized there was a role for my critical friend beyond the role of providing me with a rigorous approach to conducting research (LaBoskey, 2004). Some will test me, some will care for me, and some will teach me. But the one that was truly important was the one who brought out the best in me. She was rare and amazing, and reminded me that I was worth it; my work was worth it. On two occasions I documented the trust we had established and the significance it was having on my professional practice.

... what can I say about my critical friend? My colleague and now a dear close friend. I walk with her. What the boardwalk could say? She is close to this work but understands it intimately and I value her as a friend and as some one who is extremely intelligent and logical. I trust her explicitly. (Mar 7, 2014)

My critical friend asked me who I trusted at the DEECD? Who? I trust her. (Sept. 6, 2014)

Among the reasons I trusted her was because I saw her being grounded in her core identity as a change-maker for students. I saw her work and adapt systematically every working day(s). I saw her clearly as an insider who was once an outsider having a core teaching identity; much like my self. Perhaps ironically, my critical friend and I based our visions of caring deeply for students in our teaching backgrounds—foundations we

took pride in. If our communities would no longer identify us as teachers, we could identify each other that way. This provided yet another layer of support and comfort. She had experienced the pressures of competing external agendas, some cases emotional and some cases political. Watching and learning from her made me realize that some insurmountable work experiences were outside of me and to remember that a smooth sea never made a skilful sailor.

Our conversations helped me remind my self to deal with the world both in the way it is *and* the way I wished it to be. I needed to appreciate the journey and where I am in it and realize as a professional that challenges make me evolve and be better. Working in a complex government system I began to understand that I needed to function and play by the rules of this complex system in order to enact a paradigm shift by the rule makers of this system. Our interactions have enabled me to become more strategic in order to actualize my vision. I realized that I needed to support the decision-makers to my full capacity so they could actualize the best ideas and suggestions I offered.

4.4. Establishing metaphors for my identity and practice as a curriculum specialist

Using metaphors and narratives, Thomas and Beauchamp (2011) asked teachers to reflect on their experiences of “becoming” and the development of their professional identities. The use of metaphors were used to explore identification and was intended to encourage teachers to reframe and interpret their professional experiences and define a meaning from significant moments. Several examples of metaphors include director, conductor, baker, gardener, and carpenters – these were used to acknowledge the role of and interplay between teacher and student. Metaphors illustrate the need for teachers to continue to explore the realities of teaching and deepen their identity understanding so

they can be effective and reflective learners and teachers. These metaphorical images are about the lived experiences of teachers, symbols of understanding of the life and work being lived.

On November 14, 2014 I used the metaphorical image of a sail to try to understand and come to terms with my identity processes and transformation, and the practices I was engaging with in my role:

I was thinking tonight about my identity. How my career pathway unfurled. I was thinking of the metaphor of a sail. At the beginning of my hiring as a PE teacher my sail or identity was tightly bound, waiting for wind or for someone/something to untie the sail from its foundation/mast. Unpredictability of the wind (people, context, emotions) can allow the sail to unfurl to full capacity and yet on calm wind days the sail remains in its tight, bound state or maybe that is reversed. Do I wait for the wind to unfurl my sails or do I do this by myself? Did I create an opportunity to be at the job I am at? What qualifies me for this work... being a great PE teacher in the province? What do I know of curriculum writing? If people only knew of my insecurities... maybe they do ☹. I wake up curious everyday but is curiosity enough to lead PE teachers through the curriculum process? I try to lead by example but is this enough? When is enough, enough? Was I a sailboat waiting for the wind... a sail all scrunched up... do I command my own sail and the direction in which I travel or I do feel out of control and lost at sea? Do I feel safer scrunched

up and not unfurled to fully expose myself or my struggles with my identity?

The use of a metaphor like the sail was a statement about me and how tightly bound I am/was to being a physical education teacher. I clutched closely around the mast (school, teaching). I also see my self as the sail as it becomes unfurled as engaging in risky processes, practices, experiences. I unfurled me. I took the risk to work at the DEECD. A risk to the sail or to me is becoming unbound and unfurled, being taking in new directions, facing new and unpredictable conditions, new forces. However, these risks may also lead to exposure of the beauty and potential in new and unexplored places. The sail metaphor allowed me to think about the beauty of the sails when in control and pulling the ship (curriculum) with its crew, working in harmony with one goal. It allowed me to think about staying in one place (physical educator) or unfurl my sail and see where the wind would take me. This metaphor helped me realize that I had and have the power within to withstand the calm of the sea or take on the storm.

As I came to get a better sense of the complexity of my role and the ways in which the work I was doing was having a strong influence on how I was identifying myself, I remember also using the metaphor of “wild horses” with the new Grade 10 curriculum serving as a fence to constrain them. It had been over 22 years since this curriculum was renewed and the “fence” was coming upon them to contain them and their teaching outcomes. My thoughts about this were captured on February 1, 2015:

I have been thinking about the statement “wild horses” and I clearly remember using this metaphor about the High school teachers and “corralling them like wild horses” -- the curriculum being the corral (or a

fence, if you will) to bring some containment on some of the programs and practices of high school PE. The curriculum is not prescriptive; teachers can still make it their own (agency) but at the end students will be learning 8 core outcomes 2 being optional. Like wild horses I suppose some do not mind the fencing in BUT there are older horses (teachers) who are extremely affected and will fight this uncomfortable state of being. Yes, I am fully aware of effecting and affecting identity...it is a 2 way street...we are all uncomfortable; even some names of teachers evoke an internal response from me that I try to suppress in the company of others.

The metaphor of the corralling was a statement of me coming in with the fence (curriculum) as the rancher and the owner of the ranch. I did not situate my self as a former horse as I always worked within the fence (curriculum) at that moment of implementation; free to roam within the fence of curriculum but knew I had set boundaries. I had my rancher hat and my cattle prod in my back pocket! I was so naïve thinking all I needed was a curriculum fence. I even had a bushel of apples (resources for the curriculum and guest presenter). I was walking into a field of wild horses with a fence feeling very much like an outsider and not one of the former horses. It was clear that these high school physical education teachers treated me like a rancher and not like a lost horse. I felt very much like an outsider to them and did not realize how strongly they identified me as an insider in government.

This metaphor helps me to understand how I interacted with others in my new role and how they interacted with me. Both processes strongly informed how I understood my identification as a curriculum specialist. Throughout this self-study, I

have considered whether, and the extent to which, one can let go of an identity to assume another. My reflective journal provided insights into the process of being a physical educator and becoming a curriculum specialist— through creating and recreating the self, in ways which have been influenced and shaped by my work experiences and by the experiences of others. Like most of the curriculum specialists on PEI, we are former schoolteachers. Despite this common background, one of the most significant findings from this research has been the deep understanding I have gained of how complex and challenging it has been not only to undergo the process of becoming a curriculum specialist, but of not-becoming or no longer becoming a physical education teacher. In regards to this, on November 22, 2014, I wrote of being scared. I was presenting the DEECD updates at a meeting, and this experience led to a meaningful turning point in my processes of professional identification:

Well, I heeded my critical friend's advice. I wrote up my "speech" with a dry mouth but with conviction. I did not go early nor did I arrive late. I was professional with my attire but also casual. My session with the elementary folks was set. Outcome sheet done, verb sheet done, and off I went. I took a minute in my truck outside the school to gather my thoughts and write a couple of things down on my speech. My critical friend told me to set the stage and after this only go on my OWN terms. She gave me suggestions on what to say to get out of a bad situation. She is such a fantastic support and has so much wisdom and is a survivor on my levels. I arrived at the school with all my stuff. There was no one in the hallway. I say hi to the person who invited me and was going to

introduce me. I told her exactly what to do and say when I was done my speech. I am not a member of the PEIPEA, and I am very upset about this (lost identity of being a PE teacher). I feel that I am not welcomed. I told her that I will speak to the group, say thank you and for her to get up and thank me and I will promptly leave. I feel I am in enough shit with PE teachers (I cannot help how I feel) that I need to watch every word, how I act, how I move, and how I even look (fit, not fit, scared, YES, calm NOPE but I do have my game face on). Funny most people don't even know how I feel at that moment. They don't know the lack of sleep over the last few days, the tears I cried last night, the shivering that I could not stop...I really don't know how many times I can do this? I will get better at this job but with no training, no direction, I feel very lost, and certainly not confident BUT I am confident in the PE 10 curriculum. I digress. So I see another PE teacher (I still think of myself as a PE teacher, never lost in my heart) in the hallway and he said he was sorry for the actions of some people. He also asked me how I was doing and I was honest with him and said not great and it (this job) is very difficult.

On this day I wrote for a long time in my journal, reflecting on this "turning point" (Bullock & Ritter, 2011). Scared of being a curriculum specialist and scared of losing my identity of physical educator. I continued writing, "I remember thinking, don't let the papers tremble as I cannot let people see how scared I am". I was one of them; a seasoned teacher, but now I am situated as a novice curriculum specialist. To them, and increasingly to me, I am clearly not one of them.

4.5. Summary

The findings section of my work revealed a number of interesting factors. I positioned my self within a self-study examining my own assumptions, perspectives, vulnerabilities, and practices while embroiled in high school physical education curriculum renewal and reform. This positioning generated evidence of the different paths, thoughts, and questions that I had while journeying from *being* a physical educator and *becoming* a curriculum specialist.

As a former physical educator I had a desire to understand how my identity as a curriculum specialist shaped my lived experiences and how those lived experiences shaped my identities. The tensions buried within these situations, interactions with people, and my new environment caused inner turmoil that was deeply shared with my critical friend. With her guidance and trust she allowed me to shine the flashlight within and produce the best work I could for teachers whilst always having students in the center. In the end, although *being* a physical educator is at my core, examining the struggle of letting go of this identity, I came to realize that in *becoming* a curriculum specialist is the combination of many identities and perceptions. Few physical educators will have created the opportunities to *become* a curriculum specialist nor have the privileges and insights into the world of education and the workings of government that I had. The main improvement in my practice came from understanding the ways in which identification has a powerful influence on how we go about our daily work.

Chapter V

DISCUSSION

5.1. Introduction

The purpose of this self-study was to deeply explore areas of my self-in-practice as a curriculum specialist, as well as learn from both the process and the outcomes so I might critique how they become meaningful for me and potentially for others. In pursuing the research questions, I sought to take charge of my own personal and professional development so the knowledge and understanding I gained could improve my practice and inform the practices of others. I analyzed data using identity theory as a framework to help me make sense of my initial interpretations. In this final chapter I will summarize the findings related to the research questions. I will also return to the literature to identify how these findings scaffold upon previous scholarly works and address gaps. Finally, I offer some recommendations and reflections that have implications for how readers *interpret* the practices, experiences, and identities of curriculum specialists, and for ways in which physical education teachers might better prepare themselves to *be* and *become* a curriculum specialist.

5.2. Addressing the Research Questions

In Chapter 1 the following research questions were provided:

1. What are my lived experiences as a curriculum specialist trying to enact change?
2. How do my identities as a curriculum specialist shape my lived experiences and how do those lived experiences shape my identities?
3. How can self-study provide insights into a curriculum specialist's practice?

Using self-study methodology I documented my professional development and lived experiences as a curriculum specialist trying to enact change/s through creating and implementing a suite of high school physical education curricula using wellness concepts and learning outcomes. As my research showed, the practice of a curriculum specialist is far more complicated than simply developing curricular outcomes for students. Self-study allowed me to describe the feelings, emotions of becoming and being a curriculum specialist and work experiences of a curriculum specialist. It also allowed me to focus on the problematic experiences and the unexpected features of practice related to identity formation which may be the most interesting and relevant to the research community (Bullock & Ritter, 2011).

During the process of analyzing my results, creating curriculum “for” students emerged as a major theme in my approach to practice as a curriculum specialist. Noticeably this analysis unearthed a vision grounded in the interests and needs for PEI high school students. This developmentally appropriate created curriculum moved students from exploring to utilization of skills, tactics, and strategies to supporting student wellbeing while discovering their physical literacy potential. This new grade 10 curriculum would have students deeply reflect on their own understandings and motivations so they can face their wellness future with confidence and competence. I did not want a curriculum that repeated over and over again what students were learning and perhaps being assessed on (Kirk, 2010). Committing to this student-centred vision and once I researched global best practices, I began the process of creating clear learning outcomes that would need to be supported by learning/teaching resources, and adequate

professional learning for educators so they may effectively re-create the intention of the curriculum.

This was a new way of thinking and doing for me as *the* physical education curriculum specialist in my province. Like many starting a new job or role in education I felt many things. Key words such as *vulnerable, fearful, resilient, tired, uncertain*, and the feeling of being “pulled in many directions” were highlighted in the findings.

Although these highly emotive words were commonly felt by sharing these feelings with my critical friend, it created real-life learning opportunities and in turn these words of wisdom instilled confidence and fortified me with grit, persistence, and determination.

These emotions resonate with findings expressed by many others who have conducted self-study research in teaching and teacher education (Casey & Fletcher, 2012;

Hargreaves, 2005; Lasky, 2005; Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2015; You, 2011).

However, my findings added to the literature by being among a very small number (i.e., You, 2011) that have used self-study to examine the experiences of a curriculum specialist.

5.2.1 Identity work of/as a curriculum specialist

Identity theory helped to show that the basis for many of these feelings was partly due to (re)labelling in my professional identities, and subsequently, the new categories that others and I saw my self as occupying. External identification (the views that others have of an individual) can have significant effects on how an individual comes to identify herself or himself. This often occurs through labels being offered or withheld (Jenkins, 2008). For example, there were tensions in how the label of *physical education teacher* was applied, with others being reluctant to continue to use that label to identify me

professionally, while I steadfastly sought to cling to that part of my identity. As I explained in Chapter 1, I relished guiding and teaching students to be their best selves. This is all I knew during my career up to the point of becoming a curriculum specialist. It was the joy I got from nurturing of students as a physical educator that initially drove me to become a curriculum specialist, and was a key part of my internal way of identifying as a professional. As explained in Chapter Four, there was some level of fear that crept in while working in government that my internal identification as a teacher may become lost. I cherished and remembered the faces and relationships with my students plus my confidence in my abilities to teach and took these memories to my new role in government.

As I made the transition to government, my interactions with colleagues, who were still entrenched in the physical education community in schools in PEI, made me aware of labels that were being used or withheld to identify me—labels that were attached to my professional role. Early in my new role, I was not in control of my identification and I did not know what I did not know—that many other actors in my spheres of work had significant influence on how I was viewed and how I was coming to view my self. This had very practical implications for my work because I interpreted it as the loss of my physical education community, a professional community I had been a key figure in for more than a decade.

Regardless of the position I took in the physical education community, I always did believe my job was to address and meet students' needs and interests. However, by switching jobs I found my self taking care of students' needs as well as those of teachers. I felt this added responsibility in a visceral way. Through my experience I perceived that

some physical educators felt constrained by the new provincial physical education curriculum. Upon further reflection it is reasonable to interpret it in this way because I was about to test the beliefs about teaching and learning of some teachers. I did not realize the fostering and nurturing I needed to provide some teachers and the energy it would take from me to see this shift in physical education culture.

5.2.2. Critical friendship for research *and* practice

My research showed that throughout my experience I was certainly vulnerable but also became more confident. This confidence and competence comes over time; time spent within and around government, and for me in particular, with curriculum colleagues and community stakeholders who challenge and support your work. Of vital importance was my critical friend whose trusted voice not only provided personal support, it ensured the research stayed on task and prevented the occurrence of “navel gazing” (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2004; Fletcher & Bullock, 2014; Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2015). The importance of this interactivity allowed me to remain focused on the self-in-practice, build in self-reflective investigation, checking of data and interpreting my actions alongside my critical friend. These collegial interactions, mostly verbal and while walking at least every week, challenged my assumptions, revealed my vulnerabilities, and expanded and crystallized my findings (LaBoskey, 2004). My critical friend was instrumental in guiding me; allowing me to practice and prepare my self for tasks that seemed monumental at the time. Importantly, she allowed me to gain deeper insights and come to new understandings of the work of a curriculum specialist, particularly the strong role that identity and identification plays in the day-to-day work of a curriculum

specialist, and, indeed almost any professional role. In essence, she allowed for an improvement in how my practice could be understood by others and my self.

5.2.3. Using self-study to provide insights into a curriculum specialist's practice

While I was immersed in systematic educational transformation I was also experiencing my own professional transformation. This was all hard work and using self-study methodology proved to be authentic and valuable in my journey of being a physical education teacher to becoming a curriculum specialist (You, 2011). My experience suggests that beginning curriculum specialists can also use self-study as means of professional learning by improving their practice, coming to understand themselves, and sharing their new ideas. Being involved in self-study over time allowed me to become acutely aware of the dedication and perseverance it takes to transform one's self within the physical education teaching and learning paradigm. In her self-study, You (2011) wrote about her own difficult journey as a national curriculum writer and claims she played a "role" during her time of struggle and negotiation as a young female physical educator in a leadership position. I felt a strong sisterhood to You (2011) as she also experienced "a construction and reconstruction" (p. 104) of her identity while establishing her new role. She too tried to live and work while in the views of others, comprehend how they responded to her identity and role, how she perceived herself and what she believed the role to be. Not only did we consider the internal dynamics of being a curriculum specialist—how we thought about our role and our identities—we both brought to the surface ways we "acted" as a curriculum specialist while in a leadership position (Goffman, 1959, 1963; Jenkins, 2008). This shows that identity work has very practical implications for the actions of individuals in a professional setting.

Before taking on this investigation I had no prior experience of carrying out academic research, therefore learning how to do this (and be a researcher) was a major undertaking. You (2011) sparked a keen interest in self-study, as we were both practitioners carrying out research in our own practice, specifically in our work as curriculum specialists. This is a vital characteristic in self-study research (Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2015). Self-study methodology was critical in supporting our personal and professional selves (Ovens & Fletcher, 2014; Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2015). My research, like You's (2011) clearly showed improvement in generating a deeper understanding of our respective selves-in-practice as we analyzed qualitative data related to our own experiences and practices as a curriculum specialist evoking change.

The use of LaBoskey's (2004) criteria for self-study set the guidelines in designing and implementing the research provided for an appropriate level of rigour. The use of multiple forms of qualitative data supported claims about trustworthiness in the study. As mentioned previously, the methodological role played by my critical friend was central to the process and outcomes of this research. As a beginning curriculum specialist while coming from a physical education background I had questions to be answered and questions not yet discovered. I found this safe and collaborative investigation into my developing theories and identity with my critical friend a powerful experience. My findings demonstrated that with her trust and internal moral and professional compass, I came to understand the complexities of curriculum and working in government. From there I could contextualize and make sense of my work from the perspective of an outsider in tandem with my own insider perspective, working in two worlds (Loughran, 2004). The self-study process enabled me to implement a rigorous inquiry into what has

shaped my experiences and my work as a curriculum specialist, thus supporting me in improving my practice and shaping and reshaping my identities. I share these insights in the hopes they may help others to better understand their own practice and the concept of identity.

Over time and with evidence from my research I conclude that self-study methodology can support a reconceptualization of one's practice and beliefs. The findings of the study indicate that conducting self-study research into one's practice supports academic growth, continuous personal and professional development, knowledge generation, and the enrichment of self-confidence (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2004; Fletcher & Bullock, 2014; Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2015; You, 2011). The research process was a major learning experience for me as physical education teacher educator in the midst of becoming a curriculum specialist for PEI. As a result of conducting self-study research I have discovered that there has been significant learning regarding the influence of insiders and outsiders, holding onto past identities while creating new ones, discourses of "becoming" a curriculum specialist, use of metaphors and the importance of a critical friend. My findings support an important characteristic of self-study—self-improvement. I have improved the quality of my practice by learning how to create student-centered curriculum, trusting my growing abilities and realizing the complexities surrounding the process of identity formation and knowing the impact lived experiences can have on one's identity.

As my confidence grew, so did my realization that the tensions I was experiencing in my identification were not unlike another curriculum specialist in the field of education (You, 2011). By reading You's (2011) self-study and by making my findings

public, the knowledge and understanding of who curriculum specialists are, the tensions of the work and job, and unpacking identity formation may be informative, relevant and useful in the landscape of self-study research.

5.3. Final recommendations, reflections and conclusion

In a global context, the people who work as curriculum specialists share research, visions, frameworks, best practices. Writing curriculum and working in government changes who you are once you have a deep understanding of the big provincial educational system. It changed the way I looked at my province and my self. Clearly, it changed the way people look at me.

What happens when my six-year term is over? Will I be positioned to have the most impact in a leadership role to have the maximum impact on my colleagues or will I be “placed” in short term substituting contracts because the system does not understand nor value my enhanced knowledge and skills? How am I prepared to transition my self back into this role as teacher and how is the system prepared to welcome me and fully utilize me for the benefit of raising the level of teaching and learning? How have other curriculum specialists coped with this transition? Are they aware of the insights of identity and how identity is shaped? These questions mirror those that I asked my self as I embarked on this research and that I have attempted to answer in the previous sections of this chapter. It appears they are just as relevant as I possibly enter new professional roles (which may involve returning to old ones). It also appears they are relevant for others who may enter the world of being a curriculum specialist—not only in physical education but in other subject areas, provinces and many other educational contexts.

So what advice do I have for those who are about to enter the world of being a curriculum specialist? Teachers who are brought into government and curriculum development need a high functioning, knowledgeable team. They need a safe place to learn and to shape new identities. People come in and think they keep doing what they are doing as a teacher, but this is not the case. There needs to be an intensive study plan on curriculum design, time and supportive environment to “test” out your new knowledge and skills through a gradual release of responsibility. This study plan should also include how to work in government as a public servant and understanding the accountability to the taxpayers of the province. There needs to be an intentionally formed professional learning community to challenge your ideas and make them better. Reflection should be a critical component of our practice, not unlike having a critical friend. If you can think of someone who would be a good critical friend, someone you trust, who knows you and your role, and who is willing to push back at both your views and those of the people making curriculum decisions, do what you can to get close to this person. It helps. There needs to be strong leadership and high, unyielding expectations for curriculum specialist to produce the very best curriculum for students. The role of the leader is to nurture and care not only for the work but for the person who does this work. One needs to be open to critical feedback and learn how to accept and give critical feedback. There also needs to be a formal protocol for how work is done and feel that this work is being done by a team (not in silos). Clear roles, reporting structures, responsibilities and accountabilities for the work of a curriculum specialist is also recommended.

Post-secondary institutions should prepare future teachers who may choose to expand their opportunities and work in the area of curriculum development. The

definition of curriculum has different meanings at different levels of education (i.e., public grades K-12, university, college, apprenticeship). Providing these different perspectives of curriculum would offer more clarity and help all of us communicate effectively. Ways that curriculum is defined, taught, and evaluated at post-secondary level is vastly different than the curriculum I have come to understand. We need to bridge the gap in our understanding to prepare future teachers and curriculum specialists. To not be grounded in the understanding of learning outcomes and how the cognitive and knowledge dimensions intertwine during the teaching and learning process is bordering on professional negligence. Post-secondary institutions have an immense opportunity to fortify future teachers in this understanding of curriculum thus raising the bar for all teachers who aspire to become curriculum specialist and learn to navigate the waters of government.

The purpose of this research was: (1) to capture my lived experiences as a curriculum specialist attempting to enact change, (2) to investigate how my identities as a curriculum specialist shape my lived experiences and how those lived experiences shape my identity and (3) provide insights into a curriculum specialist's practice through self-study. My analysis revealed the usefulness of identity theory in deepening the understanding of the lived experiences of a curriculum specialist. By completing this work I will have achieved diffusing some of the unknowns regarding the work and lived experiences of a physical education curriculum specialist working in PEI, in particular, about the identities of those who work in curriculum development and how their identities influence their daily practice (You, 2011). It is in these gaps that this self-study is situated. It is my hope that I cultivated the limited body of research and

generated the interests and efforts of physical education teachers contemplating the opportunities to become and be a curriculum specialist. Now completed and by sharing the resulting findings from this research, I believe this self-study will 'ring true' and connect to those who have the lived experiences of becoming and being a curriculum specialist whilst others can learn from my insights about my practice and processes of curriculum development and identity formation. By adding to the value, importance, and application of self-study and identity theory, I hope this research will inspire and impact those who read and reflect upon it

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