

# Autoethnographic narratives and challenges for physical education in Physical Cultural Studies

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## ABSTRACT

This study explores Physical Cultural Studies as a field of dialogue for developing collaborative and theoretically informed research that can contribute to teaching and research experiences in Brazilian physical education. From the autoethnographic approach, the ways in which different experiences with the Physical Cultural Studies touched our identities were revisited, imprinting marks that (re)build us in our teaching, research, and intervention in social reality. The narratives that result from this joint and collaborative effort carry challenges that (re)signify experiences or aspects previously unexplored in our subjectivities, offering us the possibility to rethink and restructure our embodiment. Finally, besides sharing our narratives in the dialogue with Physical Cultural Studies, this field (epistemological, ontological, and methodological) is useful for dialogue with physical education in the Brazilian context.

## KEYWORDS

Physical Cultural Studies; culture; embodiment; autoethnography.

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## NARRATIVAS AUTOETNOGRÁFICAS E DESAFIOS PARA A EDUCAÇÃO FÍSICA NOS ESTUDOS CULTURAIS FÍSICOS

### RESUMO

Este estudo explora os Estudos Culturais Físicos como um campo de interlocução para o desenvolvimento de uma investigação colaborativa e teoricamente informada, que possa contribuir para o ensino e a pesquisa na educação física brasileira. A partir da abordagem autoetnográfica, revisitamos as maneiras pelas quais experiências distintas com os Estudos Culturais Físicos tocaram (e tocam) nossas identidades, imprimindo marcas que nos (re)constroem em ações de docência, pesquisa e intervenção social. As narrativas que decorrem desse esforço colaborativo carregam desafios que (re)significam experiências ou aspectos anteriormente inexplorados em nossas subjetividades, oferecendo-nos a possibilidade de repensar e reestruturar nossas práticas de *embodiment*. Por fim, ao compartilharmos nossas narrativas na interlocução com os Estudos Culturais Físicos, entendemos esse campo (epistemológico, ontológico e metodológico) como profícuo para o diálogo com a educação física no contexto brasileiro.

### PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Estudos Culturais Físicos; cultura; *embodiment*; autoetnografia.

## NARRATIVAS AUTETNOGRÁFICAS Y DESAFÍOS PARA LA EDUCACIÓN FÍSICA EN ESTUDIOS FÍSICO CULTURALES

### RESUMEN

Este estudio explora los Estudios Culturales Físicos como un campo de diálogo para el desarrollo de investigaciones colaborativas y teóricamente informadas, que pueden contribuir a la enseñanza y a la investigación en educación física brasileña. Desde el enfoque autoetnográfico, revisamos las formas en que diferentes experiencias con que Estudios Culturales Físicos han tocado nuestras identidades, imprimiendo marcas que nos reconstruyen en acciones de enseñanza, investigación e intervención social. Las narrativas que resultan de este esfuerzo colaborativo conllevan desafíos que resignifican experiencias o aspectos previamente inexplorados en nuestras subjetividades, ofreciéndonos la posibilidad de repensar y reestructurar nuestro *embodiment*. Finalmente, mientras compartimos nuestras narrativas en el diálogo con Estudios Culturales Físicos, entendemos que este campo (epistemológico, ontológico y metodológico) es útil para el diálogo con la educación física en el contexto brasileño.

### PALABRAS CLAVE

Estudios Culturales Físicos; cultura; *embodiment*; autoetnografía.

## INTRODUCTION

Physical Cultural Studies<sup>1</sup> (PCS) are a terminology used for a field of studies in the process of construction and consolidation (Andrews, 2008; Silk and Andrews, 2011; Andrews and Silk, 2015; Silk, Andrews and Thorpe, 2017), which has guided the work of researchers commonly linked to universities in the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. According to Lara and Rich (2017, p. 1312), PCS is a “controversial and nebulous name that has been referenced by the respective literature as project, intellectual formation, framework, movement, field of investigation, sensitivity, mission, and approach.” This diversity of PCS interpretations can be considered something healthy as this project is under development based on discussions involving the (in)active body and physical culture amid different contexts and power relations.

It is difficult to say when and where, exactly, Physical Cultural Studies have arisen, as there is no consensus among researchers (Silk, Andrews and Thorpe, 2017). However, in general terms, it is possible to say, based on Lara *et al.* (2019), that this field of studies was developed both as a result of the Cultural Studies that emerged in England, in the post-war period, and as a consequence of disciplinary struggles in the departments of Kinesiology, over the last decades in the United States. The bases of PCS, “launched more than 20 years ago, do not contain fixed disciplinary histories or trajectories; on the contrary, they have different empirical, theoretical, or methodological traditions” (Lara *et al.*, 2019, p. 229).

Silk, Andrews and Thorpe (2017) explain that PCS are a political project in which researchers aim to understand the effects of power and power relations, as they start from the assumption that societies are organized into hierarchical lines of differentiation, such as, class, ethnicity, gender, ability, generation, nationality, race, and/or sexuality. These hierarchical differences are manifested in the existence of cultural inequalities or injustices, advantages or disadvantages, qualifications or restrictions, empowerment or disempowerment. Therefore, PCS researchers, committed to progressive social change, critically engage themselves with physical culture, considering it a place where such divisions are staged, experienced, and, at times, contested.

In an attempt to contribute to the understanding of the PCS approach, Andrews (2008, p. 54-55) describes it:

Physical Cultural Studies (PCS) advance the critical and theoretical analysis of physical culture, in all its myriad forms. These include sport, exercise, health, dance, and movement-related practices, which PCS research identifies

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1 The translation of Physical Cultural Studies (PCS) to *Estudos Culturais Físicos* in Portuguese occurs as a possibility of approximation and dialogue with this field based on our identity processes in the Brazilian context. Although we carry out the translation of the term, we will keep the acronym PCS in the text, as this field is usually endorsed by researchers who have explored it.

and analyzes within the broader social, political, economic, and technological contexts in which they are inserted. More specifically, PCS are dedicated to the contextually based understanding of the corporeal practices, discourses, and subjectivities through which active bodies become organized, represented, and experienced in relation to the operations of social power. Therefore, PCS identify the role played by physical culture in reproducing, and sometimes challenging, particular class, ethnic, gender, ability, generational, national, racial, and/or sexual norms and differences. Through the development and strategic dissemination of potentially empowering forms of knowledge and understanding, PCS seek to illuminate and intervene in physical cultural injustice and inequity. Furthermore, since physical culture is both manifested and experienced in different forms, PCS adopt a multi-method approach toward engaging empirical knowledge (including ethnography and autoethnography, participant observation, discourse and media analysis, and contextual analysis). PCS advance an equally fluid theoretical vocabulary, utilizing concepts and theories from a variety of disciplines (including cultural studies, economics, history, media studies, philosophy, sociology, and urban studies), when engaging in and interpreting the particular aspect of physical culture under scrutiny.

Physical Cultural Studies incorporate a relational and pluralist understanding of physical culture, whose expressions of active embodiment<sup>2</sup> are experienced and examined based on socio-structural, discursive, institutional, community, subjective, and corporeal processes (Silk, Andrews and Thorpe, 2017). From this perspective, this project contributes to critically and empirically based, theoretically informed, politically incisive, and methodologically rigorous investigations about physical culture, which includes sports practices, physical conditioning exercises, health, recreation, dancing, among others, identified and analyzed in the political, economic, and technological contexts in which they are socially inserted (Andrews, 2008; Silk and Andrews, 2011).

Given the complexity of this investigative field, Physical Cultural Studies (Lara and Rich, 2017; Lara, 2019; Marani, 2019; Marques, 2019; Sá, 2019) have become the focus of systematic studies carried out by the Body, Culture, and Playfulness Research Group (GPCCL) at the Universidade Estadual de Maringá (UEM), Brazil. The contact with such readings has aroused interests that led us to engage in practical experiences, such as using the PCS approach in teaching and even seeking direct contact with researchers who work in this field.

We have developed this study based on readings and analyses of theoretical productions guided by Physical Cultural Studies. We explore PCS as a form of

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2 In general terms, embodiment can be understood as a live, experienced, and incorporated body (Lara and Rich, 2017); that is, a conscious body, which perceives itself holistically. An embodied movement can be understood “as a social practice that is profoundly intertwined with the historical, sociocultural, political, and economic power relations that shape everyday life” (Fullagar, 2019, p. 65).

dialogue for collaborative and theoretically informed investigation. Therefore, we chose to use an approach with autoethnographic narratives<sup>3</sup>, in which we revisited how different experiences with PCS touched (and still touch) our identities and (re)shape the way we teach, research, and intervene in social reality.

Autoethnographic research seeks to position the “self” as a leading character in the narrative of thoughts and interpretations related to certain events (Markula and Silk, 2011). From this narrative report, the voices of researchers are celebrated as ways to provide experiences organized from a significant totality, highlighting biographical elements and social relations that integrate the narrated events (Markula and Denison, 2005; Rego, 2014; Calha, 2017; Silva, Oliveira and Souza, 2018). In this perspective, there is an emphasis on the active role of the researcher, moving them away from neutral writing performed in the third person, which commonly classifies them as objective observers who are distant from the experiences they want to report (Markula and Denison, 2005).

Supported by autoethnography, we seek to propose reflections that provide readers with access to the ways in which our academic positions have been developed amidst the experiences that have contributed to our reports. In this sense, the idea is to take insights from our trajectory involving different experiences with PCS, organized from three topics that aim to deepen such discussions from different perspectives, namely: initial incursions into PCS, through a postdoctoral internship at the University of Bath, UK; pedagogical experiences built from the sensitivity of PCS in an undergraduate subject offered locally at a Brazilian federal university; and, finally, elements of an interview conducted with Prof. Dr. David L. Andrews during an institutional visit to the University of Maryland, USA.

The narratives that result from this joint and collaborative effort allow us to rethink and restructure our embodiment practices and our ways of doing research. Throughout each topic, elements are offered that help us make autobiographical reports based on the experiences we had. Then, we reflected on the subject to help us think about ways in which Physical Cultural Studies can contribute to qualifying debates in physical education in the Brazilian context.

## INITIAL INCURSIONS INTO PHYSICAL CULTURAL STUDIES FOR A CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE

Larissa Lara — The interest in researching topics related to body and culture in physical education from a dialogue with human and social sciences is the result of 22 years of research, 15 of which were dedicated to coordinating the Body,

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3 Autoethnographic studies have played a relevant role in Physical Cultural Studies as they enable constant relationships between text and body, writing and experience, all marked by self-reflective and political elements that permeate academic authorship. As examples of autoethnographic investigations in PCS, we can mention: Giardina and Newman (2011a), Thorpe, Barbour and Bruce (2011), King-White (2012), Smith (2017), and Thorpe and Marfell (2019).

Culture, and Playfulness Research Group, together with the Universidade Estadual de Maringá, Brazil, linked to the National Education and Research Council (CNPq). In this journey, the body, in its gestures and embodiment practices, was investigated in Afro-Brazilian religiosity, popular culture, *quilombola* communities, and in the production of knowledge in Latin American physical education, with the contribution of references from Critical Theory, Social Anthropology, and Sociology (notably the British and Latin American Cultural Studies). Recently, I have guided my investigations using Physical Cultural Studies references motivated by studies developed in the senior postdoctoral internship<sup>4</sup> at the University of Bath, the United Kingdom (October 2016 to July 2017), with the collaboration of Professor Emma Rich<sup>5</sup>.

Upon learning about the Physical Cultural Studies Research Group<sup>6</sup> (PCS/Bath) at the University of Bath, I saw myself in the way they committed to identifying and made interventions in different physical cultures concerning gender, disability, ethnicity, race, social class, and sexuality, examining the relationships between physical activity, health, sports, and well-being and culture, technology, environment, urban space, pedagogies, poverty, inequalities, and power relations. I was very positively affected by how the concept of physical culture was outlined in the aforementioned field of investigation, structured based on fundamental theories of the group, including Cultural Studies, which have also guided the research study I develop in Brazil. In these incursions, the structuring of physical culture into Physical Cultural Studies caught my attention, which is linked not to a culture of physicality, but densely understood and developed in its social, discursive, and corporeal dimensions, as well as in its power, domination, and resistance relations<sup>7</sup>.

My initial contact with PCS occurred through a text by Giardina and Newman (2011b) named *What is this “physical” in Physical Cultural Studies?* The authors begin their reflections by mentioning the contributions of Ingham (1997) and Andrews (2008) regarding PCS, referring to the call for *critical studies in physical culture*. This introductory reading encouraged me to investigate how an episteme of the body and bodily practices has been constructed and developed from PCS, which culminated in the organization of a work plan to take a postdoctoral internship in the United Kingdom. A second approach

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4 The postdoctoral internship developed at the University of Bath was supported by the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel — Brazil (CNPq-Strategic Programs) — Financing Code 001.

5 Emma Rich is a professor at the Department for Health, University of Bath, UK.

6 The Physical Cultural Studies Research Group, created in 2008 at the University of Bath, has recently changed its name to Physical Culture, Sport, and Health in order to respond to new concerns arising from the group of researchers that comprise it. About the Group, cf. available at: <http://www.bath.ac.uk/health/research/physical-culture-sport-health/>. Accessed: July 16, 2019.

7 In addition, I believe it is important to mention the fact that PCS is linked to the Department of Health, linked to the Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences, at the University of Bath, which refers to the understanding of health in a broader perspective.

to this field was the digital access to a lecture held at the Universidade de São Paulo (USP) by David Andrews, in which the researcher presented his thoughts included in the publication “Kinesiology’s inconvenient truth: the physical cultural studies imperative” (Andrews, 2008), one of the main texts that makes an urgent call for the organization of a group of researchers in the sociology of sport, engaged in disseminating and consolidating PCS as an intellectual project for social reality intervention.

The work plan proposed for the postdoctoral internship considered these initial dialogues while proposing to face the challenges posed by academic collaboration abroad. Through this investigative opportunity, I was able to get to know the Physical Cultural Studies project (in its origin and epistemic, ontological, and methodological contributions) and the work developed by the PCS/Bath group. I assumed that the PCS research findings, when confronted with the reality of Brazilian physical education, could contribute to developments in its epistemological field, especially in the so-called socio-cultural and pedagogical subfields. However, the encounter with PCS was much more intense than I had expected. I identified myself with forms of investigation that dialogued with cultural studies, as well as with queer theory, media studies, sociology of the body, sociology of sport, among others, through discourses, embodiment practices, and intervention in social reality guided by democratic and fair access to physical culture.

My dialogue with PCS, which began in 2016, has continued through some institutional actions. One of these concerns the knowledge acquired in graduate studies (masters and doctorate) together with the Associate Graduate Program in Physical Education at the Universidade Estadual de Maringá (UEM) and the Universidade Estadual de Londrina (UEL), both in Brazil, which offered the subject *Special Topics — Physical Cultural Studies: contemporary readings in body, health, and sport* in 2018 and 2019. Another action concerns the systematic study of publications related to PCS in our research group (GPCCL/UEM/CNPq), with the participation of researchers, graduate students, research initiation students, and undergraduate students. The study carried out by this group has motivated some of my doctoral advisees to develop their own theses with the contribution of Physical Cultural Studies and contact researchers working in this investigative field in universities abroad, a process that was initiated at the University of Maryland with the collaboration of Professor David Andrews<sup>8</sup>.

My contact with PCS theoretical production has also intensified my practice of embodiment as a professor and researcher in a public institution of higher education in Brazil. The defense of a graduate program that is not focused on academic productivity but on quality production, to be developed with time and capacity to intervene in social reality, started to be strengthened with the contributions of Silk,

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8 David Andrews is a professor/researcher at the Department of Kinesiology, University of Maryland, USA.



Francombe-Webb and Andrews (2014), by proposing a “slowing social science”, and with the text of Silk, Bush and Andrews (2010), by carrying out a social criticism of the university and science from a market perspective, placing the crisis in the sociology of sport in this context.

Currently, given the disastrous Brazilian (federal and state) government discourses, practices, and policies that violate people’s constitutional rights concerning education, physical culture, diversity, and freedom of expression, addressing PCS in its several dimensions (Silk, Andrews and Thorpe, 2017) inspires and motivates actions aimed at collective engagement and at advocating the existence of university institutions that are not subordinated to privatization thinking and its market logic. Consequently, I understand that Physical Cultural Studies, by investigating different realities plagued by neoliberalism and the increasing privatization of education, can contribute to raising awareness about the need for actions to change social reality and can help ensure people’s rights to education, physical culture, and freedom of expression, now threatened as public assets.

## PEDAGOGICAL INTERVENTIONS BASED ON PHYSICAL CULTURAL STUDIES IN A BRAZILIAN UNIVERSITY

Vitor Hugo Marani — I had my first contact with Physical Cultural Studies when I started my doctoral program, in 2017, by talking with a professor who had just arrived from her postdoctoral internship at the University of Bath. That year, I started to explore PCS references and, therefore, I broadened my perspective on this field of study<sup>9</sup>. By reading the work *Routledge Handbook of Physical Cultural Studies* (Silk, Andrews, and Thorpe, 2017) and considering the knowledge I acquired from a specific subject on PCS offered in the Associated Graduate Program in Physical Education at UEM-UEL, I had access to several writings in this field of study (Andrews, 2008; Silk and Andrews, 2011; Silk, Francombe-Webb and Andrews, 2014) and to texts disseminated in Brazil on the topic (Lara and Rich, 2017; Fullagar, 2019; Lara *et al.*, 2019).

Within this scenario, I visualized investigative possibilities that could support my pedagogical interventions as a professor in the Physical Education Program at the Universidade Federal de Mato Grosso – Campus Universidade Araguaia (UFMT/CUA), in the Mid-West region of Brazil. From the works I read, the excerpts that draw my attention addressed the relations between Physical Cultural Studies and Critical Pedagogy, as well as methodological innovations linked to intervention strategies created from the efforts of PCS researchers. At the same time, the readings showed its criticisms concerning the lack of studies beyond the spaces of classrooms/laboratories in search of public and, in fact, incorporated pedagogy (King-White, 2012; Francombe-Webb, Silk and Bush, 2017).

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9 Currently, I am developing a sandwich doctorate (Scholarship PDSE/Capes — Notice No. 41/2018) at the University of Maryland, under the supervision of Prof. Dr. David Andrews, as well as serving as a member of the Physical Cultural Studies Laboratory/School of Public Health/University of Maryland.



With the contributions of PCS authors, I was able to reflect on university education based on an active engagement aimed at a democratic dialogue in the classroom for a critical – theoretical and empirical – understanding of physical culture. Based on such assumptions, I had the opportunity to build a proposal in the subject Topics in Culture and Ethnic and Racial Diversity, in 2018. Focused on investigative experiences, the scope pointed out how different power devices operated in contemporary society, in particular, based on race and ethnicity markers. Thus, the intention was to build knowledge from public involvement, contributing to a dialogic community based on a reflective engagement for social change (Freire, 2018a).

The classes, consisting of 64 hours distributed in weekly meetings, was designed, at first, based on the study of categories, such as culture and identity (Hall, 1997, 2000, 2003), education (Giroux, 1997, 2013; Freire, 2018a, 2018b), and ethnic and racial relations from documents that guide such dimensions in Brazilian education (Brasil, 1996, 2003, 2004, 2008). Subsequently, the students, working in pairs, were challenged to develop research projects about how their subjectivities were touched during the discussions held in class. These projects should specifically involve ethnic and racial issues that, in some way, could be incorporated into their agendas.

Deepening ethnic and racial discussions were something necessary in that reality, given the sociocultural characteristics of the region, which is marked by the presence of indigenous peoples who constantly find themselves in a condition of social marginalization. This type of discrimination drew the attention of two students (black women) who perceived the lack of a space to foster respect and appreciation for differences in physical education at school. From this observation, they sought to understand how “ethnic-racial” bodies experienced physical education through cultural disputes held there.

When conducting interviews to understand how power relations operated in that context, they found that the physical education teacher did not know/acknowledge the indigenous cultural characteristics and, therefore, had a generic representation of the ethnic identity of these students, and this oppressed their practices, including bodily ones. Thus, the students sought to build ways to challenge the structures of social power dissipated in physical education classes. The first stage included a dialogue with the teacher, helping the teacher recognize ethnic and racial narratives in the regional context, and a critical reflection on how such narratives could contribute to subverting representations of power in the classes. As a result, stage two involved four classes based on an embodied pedagogy, in which indigenous elements were recognized in physical education. By experimenting with games, sports, dances, and fights of the *Xavante* ethnicity, it was possible to break, with bodily expressions, fixed cultural identities dissipated in different social spaces that are often structured, as explained by Giroux (2013), in a way to marginalize other cultural forms.

Based on the assumptions of Physical Cultural Studies, Critical Pedagogy, and embodiment, the pedagogical action carried out was based on reflective awareness and knowledge building supported by an intervention that included the public

involvement of students with social reality. Therefore, the students and the teacher involved became aware of power relations and privileges, addressing these forms of appropriation to social and cultural contexts beyond the walls of the university — or school. This provided them with an opportunity for social interaction and analysis in which they used their bodies to understand broader discussions, specifically, based on the relationship between education, race, and ethnicity.

## PHYSICAL CULTURAL STUDIES FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF DAVID ANDREWS: A FIRST APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING THIS FIELD

Ariane Boaventura da Silva Sá — Physical Cultural Studies came to be part of my investigative interests once I started my doctorate program. My first and immediate contact with the topic occurred through a subject entitled *Physical Cultural Studies: contemporary issues in health, body, and sport*<sup>10</sup>, which I took in July 2018. In this subject, I had access to some basic texts from this field of study, among which is the article “Kinesiology’s inconvenient truth: the physical cultural studies imperative”, written by David L. Andrews, in 2008. In this article, the author seeks to reflect on the scientific *doxa* that makes up the formation of kinesiology, in universities, and the epistemological crisis resulting from the hegemony of biological sciences in relation to social and human sciences within the area.

According to Andrews (2008), the “inconvenient truth” is the predominance of appreciation — in terms of financial resources and general recognition — of hegemonic knowledge in kinesiology based on criteria focused on the quantitative, predictive, and traditional science model. He claims that the two areas (biological and social) need each other to form a larger field, which is Kinesiology. In this sense, the author understands that

without PCS, they [the biological area] are integrative biology (whatever that is); with PCS we are able to realize the promise of kinesiology. This might be an inconvenient truth to some, but one that we, as a field, neglect at our peril (Andrews, 2008, p. 59).

In January 2019, I visited the University of Maryland in the United States and interviewed professor Dr. David L. Andrews<sup>11</sup>. At the time, the interview<sup>12</sup> was guided by a script with seven questions to address the origin of PCS, its dis-

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10 Subject offered by the Associated Graduate Program in Physical Education at UEM/UEL, Brazil, taught by professor Dr. Larissa Michelle Lara, with 30 hours/class.

11 I am currently developing a doctoral internship at the University of Maryland, USA, under the supervision of Prof. Dr. David Andrews and Prof. Dr. Shannon Jette.

12 This study is part of the research project ‘The Theory of Physical Cultural Studies in the Sociology of Sport and Beyond: contributions to the sociocultural and pedagogical subfields of the Brazilian physical education’ (P. 8363/2017-UEM), carried out at the Universidade Estadual de Maringá, Brazil, under the coordination of Prof. Dr. Larissa Michelle Lara.

semination in several countries, and its potential contributions to sports and media studies, the latter being addressed in my doctoral academic research.

I asked Andrews about the “inconvenient truth” — a discussion initiated in the publication mentioned above that was fundamental to the emergence of PCS (Andrews, 2008) — to understand whether that finding still made sense. In response, he stated that the dominance of biological sciences over social and human sciences in kinesiology remains steadfast. Therefore, the “inconvenient truth” continues to exist. Andrews believes that PCS professors/researchers — as an ongoing project, seeking to expand the vision of kinesiology to an epistemic and ontologically comprehensive and inclusive field — have to keep fighting for equity in terms of curriculum structure, financial resources, and recognition of university managers.

Andrews explains that the University of Maryland was the first to systematize PCS based on the curriculum that makes up kinesiology. Thus, as pointed out by the professor, PCS stands out at the university as an innovative project, with positive results and institutionally positioned at the university. After all, despite its limited budget, the professors involved are part of PCS and are highly engaged with academic publications, projects, and teaching along with subjects of the basic curriculum of undergraduate and graduate programs<sup>13</sup>. However, Andrews points out that, despite the advances, they could find themselves in better academic conditions.

Furthermore, in recent years, Andrews reports that this field of study has spread considerably and progressively, both epistemologically and geographically<sup>14</sup>. According to him, a critical look at physical culture in general, and not just at sport, is among the pillars of this expansion, which broadens the focus of the investigation. However, Andrews reinforces that PCS is not restricted to a mere analysis of physical culture as an empirical object because investigation also has to commit to the understanding of how power and power relations operate within and through the physical culture being analyzed. Therefore, for him, the study of physical culture does not necessarily mean carrying out a study along the lines of Physical Cultural Studies.

In the final part of the interview, the questions asked to Andrews were related to sports and media studies in PCS, especially because I identified similarities between this approach and the research study I have carried out throughout my academic trajectory. These approaches are especially revealed in the opportunity to unveil how power relations operate in society through the articulation between sport and the media (Greenberg *et al.*, 2005; Silk, 2011; Andrews, 2012; Silk, Fran-

13 Of the subjects offered at the University of Maryland, USA, we mention some of them, namely: Physical Cultural Studies: Research & Writing Seminar; Research Design: Physical Cultural Studies; Physical Cultural Studies: Culture/Hegemony/Articulation; History of Sport and Physical Culture; Theories of Physical Cultural Studies; Feminist Physical Cultural Studies, among others.

14 The geographic expansion of researchers who discuss PCS can be seen in the work organized by Silk, Andrews, and Thorpe (2017), which includes researchers from the following countries: United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Sweden, Japan, China, Italy, and Brazil.

combe-Webb and Andrews, 2014; Andrews, Lopes and Jackson, 2015; Hawzen and Newman, 2017).

In order to understand the dynamics of research on sport and media within PCS, I asked Andrews about his perception of the contribution of PCS to this area. In response, he explains that studies on media representation and ideology have emerged less frequently, as the focus of PCS research in recent years has been on ethnographic investigations involving the body, whose experiences are largely valued. This might happen, according to him, for reasons related to the American labor market because experimental ethnographic studies have been advantageous in relation to media studies when competing for job openings at universities. However, Andrews stresses that PCS is an empirically complex project and does not have a single focus; PCS is a sensibility that encompasses, above all, culture and physical activities. For this reason, he believes a thematic range should be created. The researcher believes that, for a study on sport and media to be in accordance with the principles of PCS, it must have a political objective associated with making the politics of popular representations transparent.

At the end of the interview, Andrews states that increasing the number of research studies on Physical Cultural Studies is imperative, turning to the decoding of media discourses by the audience that receives them, even though he recognizes it is difficult to carry out research in this sense. Hence, it is possible to infer that conducting research on sports and media, guided by PCS, can result in topics that are still little explored by this complex field of investigation, thus contributing to add elements to the discussion of physical culture.

## REFLECTIONS ON PHYSICAL CULTURAL STUDIES: CONTRIBUTIONS TO OUR INVESTIGATIVE FIELD

Physical Cultural Studies are a complex and comprehensive field that has instigated us, touched our subjectivities, and drawn our attention to its theoretical references with a view to understanding the sensitivity of this approach. Therefore, PCS have influenced our actions, pedagogical practices, and academic research.

PCS support reflections on physical education teaching, especially in higher education — as we work as professors in Brazilian public universities. The production of PCS, in its pedagogical sense (Bush and Silk, 2010; Rich, 2011; Burrows and De Pian, 2017; Rich and Sandlin, 2017), invites us to (re)think the construction of curricula, the design of teaching plans, and the proposition of classes from a critical and innovative perspective, specifically, through the ideas of Paulo Freire and Henry Giroux, who focus on ways of taking “individuals and groups to discern, challenge, and potentially transform existing structures and power relations as they are manifested and experienced in the complex field of physical culture” (Silk, Andrews and Thorpe, 2017, p. 8, our translation).

In this sense, with PCS, we push ourselves towards a type of public education focused on contesting traditional academic boundaries (Francombe, 2013;

Francombe-Webb, Silk and Bush, 2017) and spaces that create subjectivities with the potential to think and act considering the social operations of power (Giroux, 1997, 2013; Monteiro, 2017; Freire, 2018a, 2018b). In addition, this way of teaching is grounded in a “public pedagogy designed to impact learning communities within academia, classrooms, and wider audiences” (Silk, Andrews and Thorpe, 2017, p. 8, our translation).

Another important aspect concerns the self-reflective dimension of PCS research, made up by a subjective commitment — moral and political commitment — of the researchers who are part of it. This occurs because, when “doing” Physical Cultural Studies (in the sense of putting it into action), intellectuals make their choices explicit within a research study through a critical approach with humanistic objectives, thus avoiding presumed objectivism with no value, disseminated by positivist sciences (Silk, Andrews and Thorpe, 2017). From this perspective, the self is, therefore, situated and incorporated in the relationships addressed in the research, which also outlines the reflexive decisions made as the investigation unfolds, as the needs for change in response to institutional, historical, social, and/or cultural conditions faced in the scientific act are recognized.

In addition to the aforementioned aspects, there is also a concern in PCS to look at the elements of physical culture as places in which power relations operate and social injustices and inequalities have fertile ground to emerge and spread. After all, PCS analyzes how (in)active bodies become organized, represented, and experienced in relation to the operations of social power in all the myriad forms of physical culture — including, but not restricted to, practices related to sport, exercise, health, dance, and movement. Thus, PCS identifies the role played by physical culture in reproducing standards and differences imposed by social hierarchies (Andrews, 2008).

In this sense, PCS is a political project in which researchers aim to understand the effects of power and power relations, as they start from the assumption that societies are shaped by hierarchical lines of differentiation, manifested in the existence of cultural inequalities or injustices, advantages or disadvantages, qualifications or restrictions, empowerment or disempowerment. Insofar as, within physical culture, social power manifests and operates itself in places of political struggle that can be changed, carefully observing this dynamism to better organize the strategies adopted in PCS is of utmost importance (Andrews, 2008; Silk and Andrews, 2011; Silk, Andrews and Thorpe, 2017). Therefore, PCS researchers, committed to progressive social change, seek to promote intervention actions in society where differences are latent to minimize discrepancies.

Through the autoethnographic narratives presented in this article, with different focal points in terms of experiences, we can identify that the self-reflective, pedagogical, and political sensibility that permeates PCS has driven our research and our teaching practices. In other words, we state that this field of study has contributed to reconfiguring our embodiment, and this affects the way we teach and research at the university. Therefore, we believe that the sensitivity of Physical

Cultural Studies can contribute to a comprehensive, inclusive, and socially committed approach to teaching, research, and extension practice in the Brazilian context and, specifically, in physical education.

## FINAL REMARKS

The experiences described in the autoethnographic narratives developed in this study reveal, in a way, how Physical Cultural Studies — an investigative, complex, and broad field — directly impact our subjectivities and academic practices. Throughout the narratives, we discuss our approach and identification with PCS, especially in its pedagogical and political aspects, revealing how our embodiment has been reshaped by this field, as well as how it has impacted our ways of teaching and researching at the university. In addition, PCS also directs our gaze towards Brazilian physical education, leading us to reflect on how fruitful this dialogue can be towards a type of physical education that is engaged, critical, and guided, making access to physical culture more democratic.

When thinking about the gradual construction of a fruitful dialogue between PCS and physical education in the Brazilian context, we recall part of the interview conducted with Professor David Andrews, when we asked him about the possibility of Physical Cultural Studies existing in Latin America — in the sense of how this approach would be if it considered its own local characteristics. In response, he mentions that the existence of Latin American PCS would definitely be viable and necessary given that PCS research would be relatively more reliable if it were developed by researchers who are immersed in the local context, mainly because PCS is fundamentally contextual. Above all, for him, it would be necessary to create a connection between the persons who are already producing studies along the lines of Brazilian PCS or Latin American PCS to verify whether there is consistency that would support a larger project.

The autoethnographic narratives we explore here represent unique forms of dialogue between PCS and physical education in Brazil, which tend, gradually, to be improved by new experiences and other players. PCS encourage us to fight for physical education that significantly and effectively contributes to developing persons and communities through social intervention practices that respect different bodies (gender, disability, ethnicity, race, abilities, others). In addition, PCS help us to remain vigilant about the operations of power that fall on (in)active bodies and that occur in the intricacies of the various elements of physical culture. Perhaps, in the near future, we may have elements to support the emergence of Brazilian or Latin American Physical Cultural Studies in the context of Brazilian physical education. The idea is not merely to reproduce this field of study in our reality, but to study it, scrutinize it, examine it, engaging in dialogues that can impact our subjectivity, our ways of teaching and researching, and our collective engagement with local, cultural, and identity appropriations conceived contextually in their own power relations.



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