Faculty Members Engaging in Transformative PETE: A Feminist Perspective

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to describe sport pedagogy faculty members’ (FMs) efforts at engaging in transformative physical education teacher education (T-PETE). T-PETE stresses the importance of FMs creating social change through their pedagogical approach and begins by asking preservice teachers (PTs) to reflect on their perspectives and practices (Tinning, 2017; Ukporodu, 2009). Participants were three white, female, able-bodied, lesbian/gay sport pedagogy FMs. The study was conducted in the United States. Feminist theory and feminist pedagogy drove data collection and analysis. Data were collected by employing a series of qualitative methods. An inductive and deductive analysis revealed that FMs had specific T-PETE goals, content, and pedagogies. Furthermore, several factors served to facilitate and limit the FMs’ effectiveness when engaging in T-PETE. The findings suggest that program-wide PETE reform is necessary in the United States for creating social change, and influencing PTs perspectives and practices. In addition, they suggest that American PETE programs might benefit from greater diversity among the FMs who staff them.

Keywords: Transformative pedagogy, Physical education teacher education, Social justice, Critical consciousness, Feminist theory, Feminist pedagogy, Critical Ethnography
Faculty Members Engaging in Transformative PETE: A Feminist Perspective

A growing number of scholars have argued that current practices in teacher education, schools, physical education teacher education (PETE), and physical education (PE) contribute to the inequalities that exist in Western cultures (Fernández-Balboa, 1993; Kirk, 2009). This state of affairs can be blamed in part on the influences of neoconservative and neoliberal ideologies on educational policy in general (Fernández-Balboa, 2017; Ovens, 2017), and the globalization of private markets in particular (Azzarito, Macdonald, Dagkas, & Fisette, 2017). In terms of PETE and PE, critics argued that these influences have led to foci on the control, health, beautification, and mastery of the body (Cliff, Wright, & Clarke, 2009; Kirk, 1998). In turn, they suggested that these foci have led to performance and health pedagogies being prioritized in PETE (Cliff, 2012; Kirk, 2009), and the performance of sport and the production of what the culture deems to be fit and healthy-looking bodies prioritized in PE (McCuaig & Enright, 2017). From this perspective, PE is viewed as an ableist, elitist, racist, sexist, classist, and healthist subject which privileges some groups of students over others (i.e., generally able-bodied, high-skilled, White, male, middle and upper-class students, with bodies that conform to societal norms of beauty and health over disabled, low-skilled, non-White, female, lower class students, with bodies that do not conform to societal ideals) (Fernández-Balboa, 1993; Rovegno, 2008).

A more equitable and relevant PE, some sport pedagogists have argued, should prioritize a critical examination of sociocultural issues by students (Cliff, 2012; McCuaig & Enright, 2017; Philpot, 2016; Ruiz & Fernández-Balboa, 2005; Walton-Fisette et al., 2018). Educators adopting a sociocultural perspective use the medium of physical activity, sport, and health to guide students to reflect on and gain an understanding of the groups in a culture that are dominant, dominated, privileged, oppressed, powerful, and marginalized (Flory & Walton-Fisette, 2015;
Rovegno, 2008). The ultimate goals of this kind of PE are to influence students’ beliefs, values, and actions in order to play a role in the construction of a more equitable, socially just, and democratic society, and to help students understand that knowledge is socially constructed by raising their critical consciousness (Cliff, 2012; Cliff et al., 2009; Philpot, 2016).

Consequently, the production of PE teachers willing and able to deliver PE with a sociocultural focus necessitates university faculty members (FMs) taking the same perspective during PETE (Ruiz & Fernández-Balboa, 2005). Specifically, this involves FMs enabling preservice teachers (PTs) to acquire a critical perspective themselves (e.g., being aware of how PE, physical activity, sport, and health might contribute to the inequities in a culture) and arming them with some methods they can use in schools (Fernández-Balboa, 1993; Ukpongodu, 2009).

Such transformative pedagogy (TP) (Tinning, 2017; Ukpongodu, 2009) employed by FMs stresses the importance of educators creating social change through pedagogical approaches. TP consists of multiple activist pedagogies that are underpinned by criticality for practice and are part of a FM’s educational philosophy (Tinning, 2017; Ukpongodu, 2009). Therefore, transformative-PETE (T-PETE) includes asking PTs to reflect on sociocultural issues such as privilege and dominance associated with the body, race, class, and gender. In recent research on over 70 international PETE faculty, Walton-Fisette et al. (2018) found differences among PETE faculty teaching sociocultural issues to PTs. Faculty based in Australia, New Zealand, and England taught sociocultural issues through an intentional and explicit approach. In contrast, faculty in the United States were less likely to plan or teach sociocultural issues directly. Instead, they took advantage of teachable moments related to equality issues when their PTs were engaged in early field experiences and teaching practice. Intentional and explicit pedagogical approaches employed by FMs during teacher education have been summarized by Ovens (2017),
Ukpokodu (2007) and Walton-Fisette et al. (2018). They included storytelling, discussion and debate of critical cases, place-based pedagogies, peer teaching, inquiry-based learning, role-play, critically-focused clinical experiences, negotiation, project-based learning, reflective journaling, and asking PTs to examine their biographies.

To date, the small number of studies completed suggests that T-PETE has been ineffective in terms of influencing the perspectives and practices of PTs. The T-PETE studied was either embedded within methods courses taught by sport pedagogy FMs (Curtner-Smith & Sofo, 2004; Gerdin, Philpot & Smith, 2018; Flory & Walton-Fisette, 2015) or carried out within one education course designated for the purpose and taught outside the core PETE program (Walton-Fisette et al., 2018). Limited evidence suggests that neither of these two strategies has been powerful enough to overcome the dominant performance and health-focused ideologies into which PTs have been socialized during their own schooling, within their other PETE coursework, and when in the PE profession (Cliff, 2012; Curtner-Smith & Sofo, 2004; Gerdin et al., 2018). This lack of potency appears to be partly because the FMs teaching such courses do not have the requisite preparation or content and pedagogical knowledge to teach critically (Ruiz & Fernández-Balboa, 2005; Gerdin et al., 2018; Ukpokodu, 2007; Walton-Fisette et al., 2018), work alone, are pitted against university regulations which privilege traditional teaching methods, and expect change in PTs to occur too quickly (Fernández-Balboa, 1995; Fernández-Balboa, 2017; Flory & Walton-Fisette, 2015; Ovens, 2017). The objective of this study was to build on the limited amount of research previously completed on T-PETE. Its purpose was to describe American sport pedagogy FMs’ efforts at engaging in T-PETE. The specific research questions we attempted to answer were (a) What content, organization, and methods did three sport pedagogy FMs employ in order to influence PTs’ perspectives and practices? and (b) What
factors served to facilitate or limit the three sport pedagogy FMs’ effectiveness when engaging in T-PETE?

**Theoretical Perspective**

The number of sport pedagogy scholars engaging in feminist research has increased dramatically since Scraton and Flintoff’s (1992) influential text. To our knowledge, however, there have been no studies of T-PETE that have been grounded in the feminist perspectives described by bell hooks (1994; 2015a, 2015b). In this study, we drew on hooks’ work for two reasons. First, we believed that the central constructs of her work would be useful in guiding data collection and analysis, and help frame the findings of our research. Second, we hoped to draw attention to hooks’ work with the hope that other sport pedagogy scholars might also see it as useful in their research.

Feminism is one of the most powerful social justice movements of the postmodern era (hooks, 2015b) and serves the needs of all individuals through advocating an end to sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression of all kinds (hooks, 2015a). Since the feminist movement is aimed at providing peace and well-being for all, it has transformative potential for a more equal and equitable society for all persons. Thus, transformation contributes to the vision of a more ethically conscious and socially responsible society. Central constructs to feminism include political consciousness, sisterhood, and using work as a place for activism (hooks, 2015b). Politically conscious individuals commit to being educated on political matters. Subsequently, they form political solidarity with other feminist advocates. Specifically, advocates seek to challenge White supremacy, domination, heterosexism, genderism, classism, and racism, forming sisterhoods where allies come together in support of one another. To show a
commitment to the movement, feminists take their perspectives into their workplace and advocate to end all types of oppression.

Feminist theory was also appropriate to use in this paper because the participants in this study identified as women, and collectively they embodied and engaged in the feminist struggle as educators within higher education (hooks, 1994). Therefore, key concepts were also drawn from feminist pedagogy (hooks, 1994). Feminist pedagogy seeks to raise the critical consciousness of PTs, whereby students gain a heightened sense of awareness related to inequality in society. Raising critical consciousness is an essential component of feminism because when individuals become aware of injustices, they can use sociocultural knowledge in action to combat them. Furthermore, as hooks (1994) suggested, teaching is a political performative act that is dialogical, reciprocal, communicative, critical, non-conforming, and engaging. Thus, teaching opposes standard direct teaching methods, is largely conversation based, includes injustice topics, and draws on students’ knowledge.

Method

During this study, we took a critical ethnographic qualitative approach (Madison, 2012). Feminist research is linked to feminist politics (Scranton & Flintoff, 1992), therefore, by taking this approach, we had a political purpose to describe, analyze, and dialogically uncover power and assumptions which evoked social consciousness and change (Thomas, 1993). Specifically, following Madison (2012), we attempted to challenge the traditional norms of research through a mutual and reciprocal participatory design that provided opportunities for ourselves and the participants to engage in ongoing reflections, reciprocal dialogue, and negotiation with the goal that all of us would be empowered. In this sense, we hope that the research would be emancipatory and enable the participants and ourselves to further the social justice agenda
(Azzarito et al., 2017). Prior to commencing the study, we also recognized that since researchers are agents within systems of power, some of our findings were likely to be to privileged and others censored (Foucault & Deleuze, 1977). In an attempt to curtail the extent to which this occurred, we made every effort to ‘let the data speak to us and listen[ed] closely’ (Thomas, 1993, p. 63) to our participants’ voices.

**Participants and setting**

Participants were three White, female, able-bodied, lesbian/gay sport pedagogy FMs who considered themselves socially liberal. They worked in different universities in the United States, and their primary role was to educate PE teachers within 4-year undergraduate PETE programs. The FMs were purposefully selected because of their scholarly focus on critical issues and due to their engagement in T-PETE for a number of years, thus answering calls for research and the long-term effects of delivering T-PETE (Ovens, 2017). During the academic year in which the study took place, all three FMs taught courses in which they attempted to employ T-PETE. Prior to the study commencing, each FM signed a consent form and selected a pseudonym for herself.

Harper was in her late 30s and had worked in a medium-sized public research-focused university situated in the Midwest for 10 years. As well as teaching in the undergraduate PETE program, she also served as her institution’s director for teacher education. Harper attempted T-PETE within a secondary methods course, her department’s introduction to kinesiology course, six content courses (fitness & health, target & fielding games and general secondary content) and a seminar for late-stage PTs. Typically, the enrollment in Harper’s classes ranged from 10 to 20 PTs.

The second FM, Eva, also worked in the Midwest at a large public research-focused university. She was in her early 50s and had been employed at her institution for 20 years. Eva
taught within her department’s graduate program as well as working with undergraduate PTs. She attempted to conduct T-PETE primarily within an elementary methods course and courses on content for upper elementary children, adventure-based learning, sociocultural issues in PE and sport, and disability sport. The latter two courses included students from other kinesiological majors as well as PTs. Her class sizes ranged from 20 to 50 students.

The third FM, Tara, was in her late 30s and had worked at a large public, research-focused university situated in the Southeast for 8 years. Tara attempted to carry out T-PETE within a secondary methods course, three content courses (middle school adventure education, the tactical games approach, and high school sport education; weight training; and physical activity/fitness), the culminating student teaching internship, and two seminars for late-stage PTs. Her class sizes ranged from 14 to 29 PTs. Tara also taught in her department’s online PE master’s program.

**Data collection**

The methods by which data were collected were discussed and agreed on by the first author and the participants once they had indicated a willingness to take part in the study. Subsequently, data were collected by employing six qualitative methods. In congruence with the FMs’ suggestion, a *formal interview* via Zoom with the first author was a key data collection method. These interviews were conversational in nature. During the formal interviews, FMs provided pertinent background and demographic data, described the pedagogies and methods by which they attempted to conduct T-PETE, and noted specific facilitators and barriers to taking this kind of approach to teacher education. Formal interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. They ranged in length from 114 to 127 minutes.
The FMs also took part in a face-to-face 97-minute focus group interview, during which they were asked to collaborate to create an ideal T-PETE curriculum in terms of courses, content, and pedagogies. The active participation in the focus group interview, we hoped, would be a transformative experience for the FMs in that it would enable them to learn from each other and produce something that was new to each of them. The focus group interview was also audio-recorded and transcribed.

A third source of data was 29 free-written email conversations between the three FMs and the first author in which the contents, successes, difficulties, and failures of FMs’ recent T-PETE classes were discussed. The emails were informal, often involved a number of exchanges, and completed at the FMs’ convenience. FMs also shared 236 relevant written materials they used or had created as part of their efforts to conduct T-PETE. These materials were uploaded to a shared Google Drive or emailed to the first author and subjected to content and thematic analyses (Bowen, 2009).

Tara and Harper also uploaded entries to an electronic journal to the shared Google Drive. These entries included their thoughts and reflections as they taught their T-PETE classes regarding their methods and pedagogies and the barriers and facilitators they perceived as negating or promoting any successes and failures. Reflections were critically-orientated, honest, and focused on pedagogical improvement.

Eva supplied three film snippets of herself (233 minutes) via email, which illustrated some of the key pedagogies she employed while attempting T-PETE. The first author made notes on the contents of these film snippets which included descriptions and commentary as well as direct quotes of Eva (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In a follow-up conversation with the first author,
Eva expanded on what had been portrayed in the film snippets and so improved our understanding of her T-PETE.

Finally, Harper suggested that one of her colleagues be contacted as part of the study.

Juju (a self-selected pseudonym), a White male, was a new faculty member at Harper's institution. At the time the study took place, he was observing Harper with the goal of improving his own understanding of T-PETE. Juju shared field notes he had taken, describing Harper’s pedagogies and interactions with PTs during her courses. He also answered follow-up questions about these notes posed by the first author via email.

Data analysis

Data were analyzed inductively and deductively by the first author within an overarching framework based on the three analytic actions outlined by Miles and Huberman (1994). These were (a) data reduction, (b) drawing conclusions about the data’s meaning, and (c) data display. Throughout this process, she employed the QSR NVivo 11 software. Initially, data from all sources were coded as chunks that represented single actions, thoughts, ideas, beliefs, and topics. These chunks were then coded a second time as pertaining to one of the two research questions. Thus, two subsets of data were formed. Subsequently, during multiple readings of each sub-set, the first author linked the findings to feminist theoretical perspectives, data chunks were grouped to form categories, and categories were collapsed into larger themes. Finally, data snippets representing each theme were selected for inclusion in the findings section of this manuscript. Throughout the analysis, the second author took on the role of ‘critical friend’ (Costa & Kallick, 1993) by discussing and critiquing developing categories and themes with the first author.

Four strategies were employed to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the analysis (Patton, 2015). First, an audit trail was created, which involved noting the specific time data were
collected and the method employed to collect those data. This involved noting the time-specific data were collected and the method employed to collect those data. Second, by collecting data with six different methods, we were able to triangulate our findings and cross-check them for accuracy. Third, any negative and discrepant cases discovered resulted in categories and themes being modified. Fourth, frequent member checks were made throughout the data collection process during which FMs were asked to confirm whether or not previously gathered data were recorded accurately. A final member check involved the FMs reading an earlier version of this manuscript and providing feedback as to its accuracy.

**Findings and Discussion**

In the following sections, we begin by describing and illustrating the content, organization, and methods the FMs employed in an attempt to influence their PTs’ perspectives and practices within three themes. These were (a) T-PETE goals, (b) T-PETE content, and (c) T-PETE pedagogies. Next, we describe and illustrate the factors that served to facilitate or limit the FMs’ effectiveness when engaging in T-PETE within four themes. These were (a) personal experience, (b) the sisterhood, (c) women at work, and (d) political consciousness.

**FMs T-PETE**

**T-PETE goals**

The FMs teaching philosophy drove their T-PETE goal, and each FM identified a sociocultural goal for PE that did not focus predominantly on biomedical and psychomotor elements (Cliff, 2012; Cliff et al., 2009).

[Education] is to allow kids to understand themselves, to grow into individuals who are emotionally grounded, socially competent, appreciate diversity, understand what it means to work with others of all different backgrounds than theirs and to be able to take those
skills and apply them to their lives outside of schools. So I see the bigger picture . . . the more important skills are the social and emotional skills. (Eva, Interview)

I think that [PE] kind of allows us to make students become better consumers of knowledge and consumers of information so that they don’t latch on to the latest fad diet and only eat grapefruits for six days and hope to lose 20 pounds or whatever, and to understand that *some* movement and *some* activity is better than none. (Tara, Interview)

I want them to be able to feel comfortable within their own bodies, comfortable within a movement space, and hope for them, that they can gain confidence and have level of comfort in that environment that maybe they’ll be interested in being physically active and for me, I don’t care what physically active looks like and so I feel like PE is more about exposing them to physical activities. (Harper, Interview)

The FMs’ goals for PE drove their T-PETE content. Subsequently, this involved a critical examination of sociocultural issues by PTs as suggested by Cliff (2012), McCuaig and Enright (2017), Walton-Fisette et al. (2018), Philpot (2016), and Ruiz and Fernández-Balboa (2005).

*Political solidarity, fighting for all forms of oppression*

Unlike findings with FMs by Ruiz and Fernández-Balboa (2005) and Walton-Fisette et al. (2018) each FM in this study had a clear understanding of the definitions, purposes, and practices congruent with T-PETE. Key content used by the FMs are shown in Table 1. The table reveals that the FMs covered a variety of content including race, ethnicity, social class, religion, and inclusive practices. One of the only differences in the FMs’ delivery of the content included the fact that Eva taught a specific sociocultural course for PTs. She was able to intentionally and
explicitly base all of the content for the class on various forms of oppression. However, while still intentional and explicit in their planning, Harper and Tara were required to draw on teachable moments (Walton-Fisette et al., 2018) to examine sociocultural issues during coursework primarily aimed at other objectives. For example, Harper's syllabi outlined, ‘A sociocultural perspective will be infused throughout all instructional and pedagogical discussions and experiences’ (Harper, Document). Tara also provided a resource to her PTs stating: ‘Good teachers prevent inequalities, prevent student domination, [and] prevent the use of social stereotypes’ (Tara, Document).

Each FM identified that they needed to dedicate a large portion of class time to educating PTs on the content of sociocultural issues. In line with feminist theory, they were cautious not to dismiss any form of oppression and used content related to the intersectionality of race, gender, and social class (hooks, 2015b). Eva acknowledged,

We need to address those social-cultural issues to help tackle or promote social justice, but at the same time realizing, for me, for example, I am a lesbian, but that's not the only part, so there needs to be the intersection of these social-cultural issues so its not just realizing that it is a single issue. (Eva, Interview)

Becoming aware of social issues that affect the teaching and learning process, both directly or indirectly, provided PTs the opportunity to raise their critical consciousness, and potentially for transformative action (Fernández-Balboa, 1995).

*T-PETE pedagogies: The performative act*

Each of the FMs shared similar approaches toward the pedagogical act. The key methods, assessment, and organizational structures used by the FMs are shown in Table 1. The table reveals that the FMs covered a variety of methods that were deemed common approaches to T-
PETE such as storytelling, discussion and debate of critical cases, place-based pedagogies, peer teaching, inquiry-based learning, role-play, critically-focused clinical experiences, negotiation, project-based learning, reflective journaling, and autobiographies (Ovens, 2017; Ukpokodu, 2007; Walton-Fisette et al., 2018). Additionally, the FMs in this study employed digital media, freewriting, arts-based activities, gallery walks, guest lectures, and immersion experiences as T-PETE methods (see Table 1). Each of the FMs adopted similar T-PETE approaches with the exception of core assessment methods. Table 1 reveals the FMs’ assessments. Harper and Tara, who did not have their own sociocultural class, were forced to include slightly more traditional methods that were required for passing teacher education in the United States, such as the Educational Teacher Performance Assessment (edTPA), unit plans, and teaching portfolios.

Despite being held to teacher education requirements by law, the FMs infused non-traditional assessments within their classes such as sociocultural journals, reflection papers, and resource packets (see Table 1). As Eva said, ‘I never do exams. I just don’t like it’ (Eva, Interview). Each FM stressed the participatory aspect of assessment, and due dates were adjustable and flexible rather than rigid and fixed (hooks, 1994). Class negotiation is a key element of T-PETE, as Tara illuminated, ‘My due dates are always flexible’ (Tara, Interview).

Lastly, Table 1 reveals the FMs’ organizational structure of the class, which was largely discussion-focused and student-centered. The T-PETE methods were often dependent on the day, content, lesson, and mood of the teacher and were enhanced by the organizational structure of classes (often circle based), which allowed for a student-centered experience with a focus on dialogue. Juju noticed this in Harper’s lessons: ‘[Harper] definitely focuses on bringing the students into the subject matter directly, most often through discussion and/or group work’ (Juju, Field Notes). Tara also commented on how she encourages dialogue:
I would have to say that classes are more discussion based... I don't allow my students to sit in rows. I hate rows. I think they are very sterile and so we call it the circle of trust and I just have them form a circle with the desks, so we can all sit and see each other and talk. (Tara, Interview)

In line with feminist pedagogy, the classroom was a participatory space for all to contribute to, where the FMs did not have to be dictators (hooks, 1994). At times, PTs peer taught one another: ‘My students continue to identify social justice issues and are open to the conversations on how to respond and for some, to educate others. That inspires and excites me’ (Harper, Email).

Importantly, dialogue provided students an opportunity to raise their critical consciousness and supported the classroom atmosphere toward a community orientation (hooks, 1994).

In Eva’s teaching video, the first author noted, ‘Eva is walking around the room with a baby on her hip. After five minutes, she gives the baby to another student and continues to walk around the room listening to group discussions’ (Eva, Film Snippet 2, Field Notes). When speaking with Eva about the baby and whose it was, she commented that the [baby] belongs to one of my students. Due to the late afternoon/early evening timeframe for the class, there were a number of different times that [baby] came to class as her daycare closed before class was finished! The class was great with her, and a few of us would take it in turns to walk around with [baby] if she was a little fussy so her mum could focus on classwork! (Eva, Email)

Such a spirit of love, compassion, and understanding of other women’s education is essential to feminist leaders (hooks, 2015b). Consistent with hooks (1994), the FMs provided a classroom climate that was open and encouraged intellectual rigor for all students, despite situational circumstances. Consequently, the FMs’ pedagogies focused on creating a community through...
democratic settings and all students felt a responsibility to contribute; both are essential elements of TP (Ukpokodu, 2009).

**Factors that facilitated and limited the FMs’ effectiveness**

**Personal experience facilitated critical consciousness**

The main facilitator for conducting T-PETE for each FM was using their personal experience, which allowed them the opportunity to be vulnerable with their PTs in an attempt to raise their critical consciousness. Although TP does not necessarily lead to transformation (Ovens, 2017), the feminist educators in this study worked for critical consciousness (hooks, 2015a). Raising critical consciousness is an essential component of T-PETE because when an individual becomes critically aware of injustices, they can work toward addressing them (Cliff, 2012; Cliff et al., 2009; Philpot, 2016).

[I aim to] to bring them [students] to a level of awareness and understanding . . . with the hope that some will develop a critical consciousness and even become advocates of their own, but I hope that when they become teachers, at the very least, they do not perpetuate social inequalities. (Harper, E-journal)

FM were conscious of the pain, discomfort, and conflicting beliefs/values that the PTs could be experiencing, a common finding of conscious raising (hooks, 1994). Similarly to hooks (1994) and Flory and Walton-Fisette (2015), the FMs shared their ‘own stories,’ ‘personal experiences,’ and confessions to support students in uncovering their ‘biographies,’ ‘beliefs,’ ‘values,’ and ‘perspectives’ and related them to the ‘students’ lives/contexts.’ Specifically, Harper wrote a personal identity paper to show her students when they were completing their own:
Whenever I talk to people back home, they cannot believe a poor kid who had a difficult upbringing has attained such an educational status as I have. I was one of the very few who made it. I’m still the only person from my mom’s side of the family to graduate from college. And now, I consider myself to be monetarily privileged: Even though I had extensive student loans, I am a college professor and live comfortably, unlike many people in this world. I feel grateful for my economic privilege every single day. (Harper, Document)

Eva expressed vulnerability by emphasizing her passion and being emotional with her students:

I’m completely honest with my students. They know who I am. They know my identity. I bring it up as examples in class . . . first off when we were talking about disability and then when we were talking about LGBTQI issues . . . But, when we were talking about those issues at the end of class because there was some flippant comments that were coming out . . . I took about 20 minutes and got really emotional actually when we were talking about disability saying you know I understand that most of you have never experienced this and its hard sometimes if you haven’t experienced a disability to really understand how you are oppressed on a daily basis, and so I think putting myself into these sessions helped them to realize how passionate I felt about these issues and why I wanted them to understand these issues because my whole thing was, I want you to explore your identity and understand how these have impacted you. But more importantly, I want you to take this and understand this impacts your teaching because your self-identity impacts how you teach and so here you are flippantly talking about disability, and yet you will be teaching kids with disabilities day in, day out, whether it’s a hidden disability or whatever it might be, and I did the same when we were talking
about LGBT. I always come out in that class. I always try and save it for that class. (Eva, Interview)

Also, after sharing a significant personal scenario with her PTs and confessing her own identity, Tara reflected on the importance of being vulnerable with PTs and stressed that creating the right organizational environment allowed this to occur:

I am crying to my students about dating a woman and being a lesbian and my parents not totally knowing yet and all this scary stuff, and it was so unexpected, and I think that's when I realized when you are willing to be vulnerable and human with your students. I think you are able to get a lot more across to them. I know some professors do not like to share their personal lives with students whatsoever because they do not think it’s professional and it crosses a line or whatever, but I think just being real and intentionally vulnerable with your students can be very positive and just the whole ivory tower, let's not knock it down, I'm an educator, you're an educator, let's learn together. (Tara, Interview)

The Sisterhood

A secondary facilitator included forming a sisterhood with each other, which came to light through the FMs’ shared research interests, influential past mentors, and friendship. Most T-PETE FMs work alone within their respective institutions in their efforts for conscious raising (Fernández-Balboa, 2017; Flory & Walton-Fisette, 2015; Ovens, 2017) and that was the case in this study. By forming allies, the FMs came together in support of one another. They directed their research line to common goals: ‘Having just written a [journal] paper on [topic], Harper and I wrote the introduction together’ (Eva, Interview). The sisterhood meant that the FMs were provided with support from colleagues outside of their institutions: ‘My colleagues and I—when
I say my colleagues and I mean the research group that I work with [i.e., Eva and Tara]’ (Harper, Interview). Harper went on to illustrate how difficult it was finding like-minded individuals:

‘Really finding very few scholars in the field to really connect with has been helpful but challenging’ (Harper, Interview).

The focus group provided an opportunity for the FMs to consider future needs in T-PETE, and they reflected on the instrumental value of their doctoral mentors:

Harper: We really need to think about the next steps for the research that we are doing, and obviously you [the first author] are doing stuff that is similar but also different from what we are doing but . . .

Tara: We all had mentors, and they didn't pave the way, but they sort of swept some dirt off to help us blaze our trail.

Eva: Or pushed your thinking.

Tara: Yeah. So, you [Eva] had [name of professor], you [Harper] had [name of professor], I had [name of professor]. I think of each of us would potentially get here, but maybe, we needed a little extra nudge perhaps?

Harper: Yes, and my nudge was being in that minority mindset right? You had to fight and work, and that is why we came all together, and I knew ultimately I couldn't do it [form in solidarity] by myself and I wanted other people that were strong that could do this, but we need to continue this, and we can’t just stop the buck. (Focus Group)

The FMs strengthened and affirmed one another by coming together to form a bond and creating a sisterhood (hooks, 2015b). Harper illustrated, ‘Honestly, you hold on to really good people. You are my left-hand person [Eva]’ (Focus Group). Tara explained her thoughts in an email conversation after the focus group:
I was inspired to talk with two other colleagues that are like-minded and share some of our struggles and successes together . . . it will inspire me to reach out to Eva & Harper again in the future when I am struggling or having a tough time. (Tara, Email)

Women at work

Four key limitations that hindered the FMs’ ability to conduct T-PETE came to light during the study. These were sexism, homophobia, solitary work conditions, and the social justice illiteracy of colleagues. Sexism is still the norm in higher education (Cole & Hassel, 2017) and White middle-class women face stressful and unsatisfying work conditions (hooks, 2015b) while juggling family and personal commitments. After Harper’s 2-hour interview, she remarked,

I just got 22 emails in the time that we have been talking, and so I will quickly go through them in the next few minutes and get home quickly as possible as my daughter’s school is closed this week and my wife has been looking after her all day, so it's my turn! (Harper, Interview)

Juju identified how PTs inherit sexist thinking in Harper’s institution:

[Harper] has confided in me that she believes she’s known as ‘the bitch’ of the program. She believes the students have this perception for one main reason—because she is a woman. After talking with her about it, my eyes were opened when she said that if she had the same energy, passion, intensity, and challenged her students the same way, but was a man, the perception would be different. I have to agree with her. Being a male educator is an inherent advantage because of some of the perceptions and stereotypes people hold . . . There is a truth to what she perceives, and it really seems to stem from the fact that she is female. (Juju, Field Notes)
Similar to Cole and Hassel (2017) and Flory and Walton-Fisette (2015), the FMs in this study spoke at length as to how they worked in isolation and challenged homophobia and sexist thinking as part of the feminist movement (hooks, 2015a, b).

I also asked if anyone in the group was dating—not because any of my business, but because that type of information might be important to know for grouping students. I also had on my mind that two students from my very first cohort got married just after the first of the year, which I found just adorable! . . . Well, after asking this of the group, one of the male students pointed across the circle to two other male students and said “those two are!” and started laughing. I was frozen. This was a completely homophobic remark, and this group of students has no idea that I have a female partner, so I had to think quickly about how to address this . . . I also couldn’t just let his homophobic comment go unaddressed, because that is a really terrible message to send. Looking back, I’m actually sort of proud of myself for thinking on my feet like I did! [Tara provided an example of homophobic language in school she had observed.] What I did say was that as educators, we need to be very careful about the words that we use, because what we say or don’t say carries so much importance. (Tara, E-journal)

Additionally, Eva noted that her colleagues perpetuated sociocultural issues because of their focus on motor competence:

Eva: Now getting them on board with social justice is another matter. They think they are all on board with social justice, but their viewpoint or their lens is very different from like [sociocritical perspectives]. We have got a huge continuum, just talking about gender, “Well I talk about gender, so I am doing socially critically stuff [voicing a colleague].”

Erm, well no, not really.
First author: But really, they are really perpetuating gender inequality?

Eva: Yep . . . we come from all different backgrounds and all different philosophical positions. . . . I mean my focus is on the social-emotional, not getting them to be able to name off the ten critical elements of the forehand lob in badminton or whatever it might be. (Eva Interview)

Eva was also adamant that some of her colleagues were cognizant of social justice issues, but believed that they focused on motor competence during their classes. Thus, she was of the opinion that her colleagues avoided covering and discussing sociocultural issues with their students and so perpetuated hidden inequalities that plagued society. Harper also emphasized her solitary work and research at her institution

First author: Do you think your colleagues do perpetuate it because they are focused on [specific curriculum models]?

Harper: Oh yeah, yep, I mean a lot of them don't see their own privilege, a lot don't teach about those issues. Even our adapted PE specialist who's [ethnicity stated] is also a traditionalist so his research may focus on some social issues but it's not what he practices at all . . . I am with two behaviorists, right? I mean I can’t get away from [author/date] book. I’m like, let's move with the times people! . . . It’s hard; it’s hard. (Harper, Interview)

In the focus group, Eva and Tara highlighted the frustration of social justice illiterate colleagues toward sociocultural issues and their fat biases:

Tara: One of our colleagues tells me about our obese students at least twice a week and how we should be fitness testing them and maybe how he needs to have a conversation with him man to man with this one student. It is like, “Do you not think he looks in the
mirror every day and knows that he is overweight and do you want a lawsuit and do you want us to lose our program?” You can’t say that. It doesn’t mean that he is not gonna be able. I am like, “Would you pass these tests?” Just stop. He is like, “Back in the 70s in [college] we used to.” And I am like, “It is 2018, that was 40 years ago, almost 50. I don’t need to hear about that.”

Eva: I have had colleagues around a student who was overweight, probably obese. Great playing, really good playing sports, really good teacher, had urban experience and when it came to our interviews one of them goes, “is she [student] really a good role model for PE teachers?”

Tara: “Just stop, bitch please,” is what I have to say about that [said in jest, referring to colleague].

Eva: [response to colleague] “Yes, let’s stop this conversation right now, first of all she’s a great teacher, she has got a wealth of experience, and you are gonna stop her going into this profession because of her weight? What message is that sending to students?” I am like oh my god, ‘I am either gonna hit you or leave the room [said in jest].’ But the mindset was there. (Focus Group)

Those in higher education are expected to publish but not teach in unique and passionate ways (hooks, 1994). Consequently, conservative colleagues often feel threatened by liberal, left-leaning, non-traditional educators (hooks, 1994), but ultimately, being a solitary FM limits T-PETE and can infuriate FMs with sociocultural philosophies. A faculty-wide agenda is necessary to raise the critical consciousness of PTs (Ovens, 2017), as Eva suggested, I think the ideal PETE program would have a faculty who were all on the same page coming from the same philosophical position, buying into the same belief system. You
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531 can teach in different ways but having a consensus of people who feel the same way is
532 important because that way it’s a consistent message to students. (Eva, Interview)

533 Politically conscious

534 Three main limitations hindered the FMs’ ability to conduct T-PETE. These were the
535 political situation of the United States, the FMs’ political consciousness, and their PTs’ political
536 views. All three FMs believed that the political climate in the United States served to counter and
537 constrain their efforts to conduct T-PETE. Specifically, they were concerned about the ‘lurch to
538 the right’ the country had taken following the election of Donald Trump as President:

539 It’s just frightening to be honest, what is happening and how unsafe people are feeling
540 who are being discriminated against or oppressed and how emboldened to those who
541 have kept their views to themselves feel that they can come out and make these racist,
542 misogynist comments or action without any recourse. (Eva, Interview)

543 I have my definite views on politics, exceedingly so, it’s depressing, I am angry, I mean
544 we have a tyrant that is in office who is sexist, misogynistic, every phobic in the entire
545 universe who is overturning so much of what President Obama did . . . when it comes to
546 education it’s deplorable. (Harper, Interview)

548 I think we are on the cusp, I don’t wanna say dark times, but I have a feeling that it is
549 gonna get worse before it gets better…. just this veil of yuckiness because we have this
550 awful president and there is all of this injustice and…. he's just a bigot, and people don't
552 see the difference. (Tara, Interview)
Each FM highlighted their political consciousness through a sustained commitment to fighting all forms of oppression (hooks, 2015a, b). In addition, they recognized that education could not be politically neutral (hooks, 1994). As a consequence, their political consciousness influenced their T-PETE content, pedagogies, and organizational structures.

In contrast, the FMs noted that many of their PTs were in favor of the right-wing agenda being advocated by the President and his supporters and explained that this was a further constraint on their effectiveness in terms of delivering T-PETE: ‘It’s terrifying sometimes to think about the preconceived notions and biases that some of our students have!’ (Tara, E-journal). Eva agreed, ‘That’s how they’ve grown up and the values that they have had and what has been accepted in their group’ (Eva, Interview). Harper illustrated the importance of teaching her students about social inequalities, because otherwise ‘that is how we end up getting someone like Trump in office because they don’t know how to be able to see the [social] issues’ (Harper, Interview). Eva suggested educators must ‘challenge [PTs] in a constructive way’ (Eva, Interview). Ultimately, however, all three FMs conceded that many of their students resisted the content and ideas they were teaching because of their biographies and life histories.

**Conclusions and Implications**

The FMs in this study embodied and engaged in the feminist struggle as educators in higher education (hooks, 1994). The experiences they shared during this study highlighted the fact that academic institutions, and FMs within them, must be cognizant of the inequitable structures they have inherited (Cole & Hassel, 2017). Moreover, they emphasize the need for all FMs to challenge sexist and heteronormative thinking and that this crucial work not be left solely to feminist leaders. Further, our participants’ struggles indicate how important it is for those in higher education to investigate how sex, race, gender, class, and ability intersect and have a negative impact within the
academy, with the goal of creating and establishing inclusive structures and practices. Only then, will students in higher education be socialized into viewing different identities as equitable, and, unlike some of the PTs referred to by the participants in this study, not devalue a women’s pedagogy.

As it is part of the higher education structure, this study also has implications for PETE programs in the United States. Considering PETE should seek to address social justice issues and inequality (Ruiz & Fernández-Balboa, 2005), we agree with Ovens (2012): TP can only work when it is entrenched in every aspect of PTs’ lives. Not only must all faculty be on board, but it must be consistent across content, methods, and organizational structures in programs.

Furthermore, based on our study, we would tentatively suggest that many American PETE programs would need reform so they are aligned with a social justice agenda. Ukpokodu (2007) made several recommendations for teacher education courses with which we agree. These included changing the core perspectives of the program, reorienting FMs’ knowledge to the sociopolitical context of schools, creating and offering sequential courses on teaching for social justice in the program of study for PTs, and focusing efforts on diversifying faculty and student populations to create a balance that reflects student populations in public schools.

Finally, reforms are suggested based on the fact that, to our knowledge, there is not a comprehensive T-PETE program in the United States. Therefore, we suggest that sport pedagogists need to study American PETE programs that claim to be transformative or that are working toward more equitable goals. This would allow us to understand how a social justice agenda and T-PETE are enacted at present. In addition, researchers need to study the influence of these programs on PTs’ perspectives and practices. Furthermore, we have told the White, female, lesbian/gay, able-bodied story. Future research would be beneficial if it focused on other identifying transformative
pedagogues to see how they enacted T-PETE. It would also be helpful to study individual FMs who become T-PETE advocates. This would allow us to ‘learn what it actually takes to ‘transform’’ (Tinning, 2017, p. 290). Taking a critical ethnographic approach, in which feminist pedagogy and perspectives are featured, could be one lens through which such research is viewed.
References


