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“You have to find your slant, your groove:” One Physical Education Teacher’s  
Efforts to Employ Transformative Pedagogy

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## 23 Abstract

24 *Background:* Teaching for social good and inequity has been presented as needed in sport  
25 pedagogy research. However, very little is known how transformative pedagogical practices that  
26 teach for social good are implemented and sustained at the elementary level.

27 *Purpose:* This digital ethnographic study sought to describe one elementary school physical  
28 education (PE) teacher's attempt to employ transformative pedagogy (TP).

29 *Method:* Cochran-Smith's (1998, 2004) pedagogical principles for social justice education (SJE)  
30 drove our data collection and analysis. Seven qualitative methods were employed to collect data  
31 about Harry's pedagogies, organizational structures, and the content he taught. These were  
32 formal and informal interviews, conversations, short films, document collection, social media  
33 accounts, and an electronic journal. Data were analyzed using both inductive and deductive  
34 methods (Patton 2015).

35 *Findings:* Harry's TP and the factors that facilitated and limited his practice were uncovered  
36 within five main themes: (a) creating communities of learners through restorative practice  
37 principles, (b) building on what students bring to school with them for a democratic curriculum,  
38 (c) teaching skills, bridging gaps, and the affective component, (d), working with communities  
39 in-between social justice illiteracy, and (e) utilizing diverse forms of assessment.

40 *Conclusion:* We confirmed that there is no best way to teach social justice through PE and that  
41 TP must be individual to the teacher. In addition, this study highlighted methods and pedagogies  
42 by which teachers could engage in TP. Finally, the study's findings implied how teacher  
43 educators might go about working with both preservice and inservice PE teachers with the goal  
44 that they focus on facilitating social justice through their pedagogical approach.

45 **Keywords:** transformative pedagogy; physical education; social justice education; sociocultural  
46 perspective

47 “You have to find your slant, your groove:”

48 One Physical Education Teacher’s Efforts to Employ Transformative Pedagogy

49 A number of critical sport pedagogists have suggested that in some circumstances  
50 physical education (PE) promotes inequality in Western cultures (Azzarito, Macdonald, Dagkas,  
51 and Fisette 2017; Kirk 1998, 2009). Scholars have suggested that PE content reflects the  
52 prevalence of consumerist and conservative capitalist governmental agendas to prepare working  
53 class students for military service or employment in jobs requiring hard physical labor (Kirk  
54 1998; Wright 2004). Other critics have argued that neoliberal ideologies have led to standardized  
55 curricula which privilege some students and discriminate against others (Azzarito et al. 2017;  
56 Macdonald 2011). Specifically, when sporting performance is the key goal, the suggestion is that  
57 both the formal and hidden curriculum are elitist, sexist, racist, classist, and ableist (Azzarito  
58 2017; Dowling and Garrett 2017; Fernandez-Balboa 1993; Kirk 1998; Wright 2004). Moreover,  
59 since most PE teachers are socialized into accepting and supporting the delivery of sport-based  
60 curricula and the use of direct, teacher-centered, technically-focused pedagogies, they are  
61 oblivious to their own contributions to the proliferation of inequality (Fernandez-Balboa 1993).

62 To rectify this state of affairs, a small group of sport pedagogists have argued that PE  
63 must change so that it becomes a medium through which inequality can be countered, in order to  
64 maintain its relevance for today’s children and youth (Butler 2016; Fernandez-Balboa 1995;  
65 Fitzpatrick and Russell 2015; McCaughtry and Centeio 2014; Penney 2017; Tinning and  
66 Fitzclarence 1992). One way that this can be achieved is for PE teachers to embrace a  
67 sociocultural perspective through which they become acutely aware of how their content,  
68 teaching styles, methods of evaluation, and interactions with children and youth can serve to  
69 promote equality and social justice or support cultural inequities (Azzarito 2017; Azzarito,



92           According to Bell (2007), social justice education (SJE) is an important pedagogical  
93 component for teachers intent on facilitating a more democratic society. Hackman (2005) noted  
94 that a key element of SJE was that teachers critically examined systems of power, privilege,  
95 oppression, and unequal distribution of resources with their students. In addition, Hackman  
96 (2005) stressed that teachers with a SJE focus should attempt to convince their students to  
97 become activists committed to social change. There are several strands of SJE. These have been  
98 described as philosophical/conceptual, practical, ethnographic/narrative, theoretically specific,  
99 and democratically grounded (Hyttén and Bettez 2011). The practical and ethnographic/narrative  
100 strands were most salient for our research.

101           Consequently, the theoretical framework that drove data collection and analysis was  
102 comprised of the six pedagogical principles for teaching SJE described by Cochran-Smith (1998,  
103 2004). These principles were that teachers (a) recognize that students form communities of  
104 learners and are thoughtful consumers of knowledge, (b) build on students' prior knowledge by  
105 using indirect student-centered teaching styles; (c) teach skills and bridge gaps to new  
106 knowledge by making links to students' prior knowledge; (d) strive to understand students'  
107 cultural, social, and historical heritage as a prerequisite for working with students, their families,  
108 and communities (e) employ a range of individualized assessment and evaluation techniques  
109 which go against standardized hierarchical assessment processes; and (f) making inequity,  
110 power, and activism explicit parts of the curriculum so that students are encouraged to question  
111 status quo norms of society after understanding sociocultural issues. These principles are  
112 described further in Figure 1. To ensure transformative educators are adhering to SJE aims and  
113 objectives, teachers should use them as a guide to reflect on their practice, but importantly be  
114 cognizant that there are no strict recipes, best practices, or models that simply transfer between

115 contexts (Cochran-Smith 2004). Consequently, due to the reflexive element of the pedagogical  
116 principles, they were helpful and led our methodology towards an ethnographic orientation and  
117 drove our analysis.

## 118 **Method**

### 119 **Design**

120 During this study, we took a digital ethnographic approach (Pink 2016; Pink et al. 2016). Thus,  
121 the methods by which we collected and analyzed data evolved, included employing the  
122 technologies used by participants, and were collaborative. Digital ethnography was helpful as it  
123 spoke to the social justice agenda (Azzarito et al. 2017), we intended to contribute to the  
124 knowledge in this field of study by providing something new, which allowed us to reimagine and  
125 pursue ethical orientations for emancipation. In congruence with the approach, we sought to both  
126 protect participants' anonymity and use their voices as much as possible in the findings section.

### 127 **Participants**

128 The primary participant in this study was Harry (self-selected pseudonym), a 36-year-old  
129 male PE teacher who worked at Everytown (a fictitious name) Elementary School in the  
130 Northeastern United States. Harry was selected because he was already known to the first author  
131 as a teacher dedicated to SJE and TP.

132 During his own schooling, Harry was a successful athlete taking part in basketball,  
133 wrestling, and soccer. He continued to be active during his university PE teacher education  
134 (PETE) and, at the time the study was conducted, was still playing recreational 'old man  
135 basketball.' Harry's PETE was technically orientated; did not include a critical element, promote  
136 a sociocultural perspective, or focus on TP; and, according to Harry, was 'useless.'

137 Harry identified as Caucasian, Jewish, middle-class, socially liberal, and voted for the  
138 Democratic candidate in the 2016 general election. He had been teaching for 13 years. For the  
139 first five years of his teaching career, Harry worked part-time at two state-funded elementary  
140 schools. In the first school, he was a regular PE teacher, and in the second, he was the adapted  
141 PE teacher, which he claimed to be ‘the greatest job in the world.’ Following state education  
142 budget cuts, Harry was forced to find work elsewhere and moved to a new position as the only  
143 full-time PE teacher at Everytown Elementary located in the same region. At the time the study  
144 commenced, he had worked at Everytown for eight years.

145 Secondary participants in the study included Everytown’s principal (Gregory, also the  
146 school district’s superintendent), assistant principal (Europa, also the school’s curriculum  
147 coordinator), a first-grade classroom teacher (Sarah), and social welfare officer (Rachel). These  
148 participants were assigned pseudonyms selected by Harry. Prior to the study commencing,  
149 ethical approval was given by our university’s institutional review board, and participants signed  
150 informed consent forms.

### 151 **Setting**

152 Everytown elementary school was situated in a small town of 15,000 with a mixture of  
153 suburban subdivisions and more isolated houses surrounded by farmland. Approximately 220  
154 students between the ages of 3 and 13 years attended Everytown. Eighty-five percent of the  
155 students were Caucasian, 6% African American, 6% Hispanic, 2% Hawaiian native, and 1%  
156 Asian. Seventeen percent of the students were classed as economically disadvantaged. In  
157 addition, Everytown’s enrollment included students whose parents worked at the local military  
158 base and students whose parents did seasonal work on the local farms.



159           Everytown's PE facilities were modest and included a small gymnasium which was the  
160 size of one regular basketball court and funded and built by the community. In addition, Harry  
161 taught lessons on an evenly grassed playing field and a small blacktop playground when the  
162 weather was suitable. Both of these facilities were adjacent to the school. PE equipment was  
163 plentiful and included an assortment of balls, bats, mats, and soccer and basketball goals.  
164 Students at Everytown were taught two 45-minute PE lessons per week in the first and third  
165 trimester and one 45-minute PE lesson and one 45-minute health lesson in the second trimester.  
166 Class sizes did not exceed 27 students.

### 167 **Data Collection**

168           Data were collected with seven qualitative methods over a period of 28 weeks. One *open-*  
169 *ended formal interview* was conducted with Harry by the first author, which focused on relevant  
170 aspects of Harry's background and career prior to the study, the goals and objectives of his PE  
171 program, the content he taught, and the practices and pedagogies he employed in the name of TP.  
172 In addition, Harry was asked to describe facilitators and barriers he encountered when attempting  
173 to implement TP. The formal interview was conducted via Zoom, was 113 minutes in duration,  
174 and recorded and transcribed verbatim. Additional formal interviews were conducted with each  
175 of the secondary participants. The purpose of these formal interviews was to gather information  
176 on colleagues' and supervisors' views of Harry's use of TP and gauge their thoughts on students'  
177 reactions to this kind of teaching. Formal interviews with the secondary participants were  
178 conducted via FaceTime, Google Hangout, Zoom, or telephone; ranged from 20 to 42 minutes in  
179 duration, and were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

180           The first author also recorded daily *conversations* with Harry via WhatsApp, Voxer, and  
181 email. During these audio and text conversations, Harry shared information on the content he had

182 taught and the pedagogies he had employed during the preceding day, and the degree to which he  
183 thought his teaching had been successful. These conversations were also audio-recorded and  
184 transcribed verbatim and comprised 6974 words. In addition, Harry supplied 15 *short films* of his  
185 teaching that illustrated the pedagogies he was employing and the students' reactions to these  
186 pedagogies. Films were uploaded to a shared Google Drive or shared on WhatsApp so that the  
187 first author could view and make detailed notes on them and ask Harry any follow-up questions  
188 she had during short, *informal interviews* conducted via Voxer and WhatsApp. These informal  
189 interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

190 Harry was also asked to upload relevant *documents* and materials to the shared Google  
191 drive. These documents and materials included Harry's curriculum vitae, a philosophical  
192 statement about his views on teaching PE, his yearly scope and sequence chart, 111 lesson plans,  
193 two student evaluations, six pieces of student work, six health-related rubrics, 19 lesson  
194 resources (e.g., student worksheets, case studies, wall posters, etc.), the SHAPE America (2013)  
195 National PE standards (what students should be able to achieve by the end of each school year),  
196 and digital materials Harry had developed for his classes. Text documents and digital materials  
197 were subjected to content analysis by the first author, which involved her making copious notes  
198 on their contents.

199 Harry also agreed to allow the first author to examine and extract relevant text and audio  
200 conversations from his *social media* accounts which included Twitter (3127 Tweets and Re-  
201 tweets), an online blog Harry had started on questions surrounding health and PE teaching (24  
202 entries), and a Voxer group Harry had initiated that discussed issues surrounding social justice in  
203 PE. Audio conversations from this source were transcribed verbatim. All social media account  
204 data were collected using NCapture (QSR NVivo 11 software). Finally, Harry shared reflections

205 about his teaching in an *electronic journal* (698 words) via the shared Google drive. Within this  
206 journal, Harry occasionally chose to write about barriers and facilitators that constrained or  
207 enabled him to employ TP.

### 208 **Data Analysis**

209 Data were analyzed through both inductive and deductive methods (Patton 2015). A five-  
210 stage inductive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006) involved the first author (a)  
211 familiarizing herself with and identifying data which pertained to the two research questions we  
212 attempted to answer, (b) assigning initial codes to data chunks, (c) searching for themes which  
213 were linked the theoretical framework, (d) reviewing and revising themes based on the constructs  
214 within the theoretical framework, and (e) defining and naming themes. Data were coded and  
215 sorted into themes by using the QSR NVivo 11 software. Throughout the data reduction process,  
216 the second author acted as a ‘peer debriefer’ (Lincoln and Guba 1985) which involved discussing  
217 and providing feedback on developing themes. During the final phase of the analysis, data  
218 snippets which illustrated key themes identified were selected for use in the manuscript.

219 Credibility and trustworthiness of the analysis were ensured by employing four strategies  
220 (Tracy 2010). First, an *audit trail* was created during data collection. This involved noting exactly  
221 which data were collected, the method used, and time of collection. Second, by collecting data  
222 with seven different methods, we were able to *triangulate* our findings and cross-check them for  
223 accuracy. Third, *member reflections* were conducted throughout the data collection process by  
224 asking Harry about the accuracy of data collected and allowing him to suggest revisions at each  
225 stage of the manuscript. Finally, any *negative* and *discrepant cases* discovered were used to  
226 modify developing codes and themes.

### 227 **Findings and Discussion**

228           In the following sections, we describe and illustrate Harry's TP and the facilitators and  
229 barriers that Harry encountered within five themes. Unless stated, the quotes throughout are drawn  
230 from Harry's formal interview.

### 231 **Communities of Learners through Restorative Practice Principles**

232           The main method adopted in Harry's class was restorative practice principles, where a  
233 community of learners was created before engaging in intellectual PE. Restorative practice is an  
234 alternative approach to the traditional educational experience, and its main aim is to restore  
235 relationships and build a community within schools. Hopkins (2004) highlighted that the approach  
236 consists of active, empathic, non-judgmental, non-directive listening through community  
237 conferences and problem-solving circles. Harry specifically called these 'share circles' or 'circle  
238 up time,' which helped create a culture of inclusion and belonging within the school because  
239 'students understand what the needs of everyone are' (Tweet 2190). Explaining how share circles  
240 led to discussions based around social injustices Harry proffered,

241           So, social justice in my teaching practice is everything, is based on the restorative justice  
242 circles. So, we come in, we do an instant activity, and then we do circle time. We circle  
243 up, and everyone gets one share, or I give them a prompt. You can share anything you  
244 want, or you can answer the prompt that I give out; e.g., what's the last thing you read,  
245 what's the last thing you watched on T.V, what's your favorite thing to eat, anything.  
246 This is just to get students talking. From there, that's where I am looking for the items  
247 that we can expand upon into the realm of social justice and equity . . . I am always  
248 looking for these opportunities where we can look up race, gender, religion, you know, in  
249 a way that is authentic. You know, it is not really me driving the conversation, but I do  
250 want to identify what we can do. Over time, it gets easier for me to steer the conversation

251 in a way where we can understand our differences and try and look at it as a positive  
252 instead of a deficit mindset. (Voxerchat 12.2.17)

253 At the end of the share circles, Harry gave students the choice of ‘a hug, a high five, a  
254 handshake, or nothing.’ Harry described the purpose of this as ‘still building the relationship and  
255 touch is so important. I want them to enjoy my class; I want them to feel like we have a  
256 relationship. I want them to feel like they are wanted in my class.’ Such inclusive approaches to  
257 teaching came with benefits like students feeling comfortable to open up and learn about each  
258 other: ‘One student told me his friend was killed in a quad accident the day before. No one else  
259 at school knew’ (Tweet 2723).

### 260 *Student Led Discipline*

261 Another part of restorative practice includes innovative approaches to misbehavior such as  
262 asking the student what harm happened and how they can put it right (Hopkins 2004). Although  
263 these disciplinary occurrences appeared to be rare in Harry’s class, he explained his steps to  
264 discipline: ‘Step 1. Recognize the harm, Step 2. Repair the harm, Step 3. Stop the harm from  
265 occurring again’ (Tweet 914). The assistant principal, Europa, observed this as one of Harry’s key  
266 strengths as an educator: ‘I have never heard him raise his voice. It’s not, “Oh, I blame you”  
267 situation.’ Harry gave an example of this method in action:

268 I’ll go over and have the talk. I mean my kids know if they are upset, they can just start  
269 walking in the yellow, which is outside the perimeter of the gym. Sometimes I’ll tell the kid  
270 just take a walk in the yellow and then we will have a conversation.

271 Harry was explicit that these occurrences are uncommon because ‘when you are constantly having  
272 input [i.e., from students] what is there to rebel against?’

### 273 **Build on What Students Bring to School with them for a Democratic Curriculum**

274 Ovens (2017) stipulated that educators should include negotiated learning as part of  
275 transformative pedagogical practice, whereby students are involved in the design process of  
276 lessons, and the organizational structure of classes. Democratic practices were an evident finding  
277 within this paper. Both Harry and the secondary participants articulated an explicit rejection of  
278 traditional direct styles of teaching. Identifying his students' prior knowledge and experiences  
279 Harry noted,

280 I don't believe in that tabular, empty vessel, I need to dump all my knowledge into these  
281 open mouths, and they have to take everything that I am telling them as gospel or that they  
282 have to learn from me.

283 Rather, 'everything is student-driven, he [Harry] puts a lot of ownership on the kids, and a lot of  
284 responsibility and they step up to the plate' (Rachel). Sarah agreed, 'He allows the students to  
285 really own the curriculum,' and 'if they develop and draw a plan for a game and bring it into his  
286 classroom, he will have them play it, and they will discuss it—what worked, what didn't work,  
287 what are the rules.'

288 Teaching films five and six revealed a student-invented game that five-second graders  
289 created called 'The Boycott Game.' In the film, the students articulated that they all 'took turns and  
290 took votes' on the rules of the game. They recalled what a boycott was and why they had invented  
291 the game based on the bus boycott by Rosa Parks that they had learned about the week before in  
292 class. The innovative tag-like game had a bus driver, police officers, and people trying to get on  
293 the bus that were stopped by police officers on scooters with noodles. In the film, Harry asked the  
294 students, 'Is it fair that people can't sit on the bus where they want?' The students concomitantly  
295 shouted 'no' in unison. Student-designed games are a favorable way for students to understand  
296 how democracy works (e.g., collaboration, negotiation, inclusiveness, fairness) (Butler 2016).

297 ***Student Voice***

298 Harry's yearly scope and sequence indicated a basic structure of locomotor movements for  
299 the younger grades. For grades four and above, Harry adopted partial elements of curriculum  
300 models such as cooperative games, teaching games for understanding, sport education, and  
301 individual pursuits to align with the purpose of the lesson. He noted that at times, 'I create some  
302 activities. The students make them better. They create some activities; I make them better. We can  
303 all be chefs' (Tweet 2452) in the complex pedagogical practice of educating. Harry also set up a  
304 program where older grades supported and peer-taught lower grades within his PE classes. This  
305 was done on the proviso that students must have completed all other classwork, and if so, they  
306 were able to co-teach the younger grades during certain class periods. Harry co-constructed the  
307 curriculum *with* his students as equals, rather than *for* his students, even if Harry initially drove the  
308 original content focus of the lesson.

309 Within the organizational structure of the class, Harry described key moments where he  
310 would survey his students for feedback. One example was at the end of each of trimester, 'to ask  
311 how the class is going for them.' Additionally, 'to find out what their perception of me is. One of  
312 the questions I ask them is "how much do you feel Harry likes you?"' (Blog 7). Harry used student  
313 feedback to change his practice: 'They have a voice . . . The key is to amplify it and use what they  
314 are saying to make real change' (Tweet 2649).

315 ***The Big Kid, Breaking Down the Hierarchy***

316 Similar to findings by Fitzpatrick and Russell (2015) and Oliver and Kirk (2016), student-  
317 centered pedagogies are ideal for democratic teaching spaces. Harry's playful personality and  
318 unique attire created an atmosphere in which students felt comfortable talking to him, especially  
319 when he decided to wear his SpongeBob SquarePants wooly hat for the day and a snowman

320 Christmas jumper. Harry's principal, Gregory perceived Harry to be 'kind of like a big kid. He's  
321 got a very good rapport with the kids. He doesn't take himself too seriously. He's super inclusive.'  
322 Sarah agreed, 'He is just very laid back and easy going with the kids. He jokes around with them,  
323 but it never goes beyond that, and the kids can joke around back.' Europa commented that her  
324 office was across the hall from the lunch hall, and when Harry enters, 'Oh my god! You just hear  
325 the kids, "Mr. H, Mr. H" shouting. They absolutely *love him* from the preschoolers to the sixth  
326 graders.' In explanation to a fellow educator, Harry noted, 'If you're not a jerk on power trips, kids  
327 don't usually hate you. I treat them how I would treat my kids. (Minus the butt pinch if they are  
328 rude.)' (Tweet 68). When asking Harry to reflect on this, he said,

329       My way for teaching isn't gonna work for most people. You gotta find your own stride,  
330       rhythm, your own way to build relationships with kids . . . I feel like it's very individual.  
331       You have to find your slant, your groove.

332       Harry's TP was more effective due of the close rapport he built with students and because  
333 he allowed the students to take risks. Teaching films one and two featured Harry supervising an  
334 afterschool club where 'students are skeleton racing in teams. They are padded up in protective  
335 equipment and using skateboards to race down the corridors on their stomachs.' In the film, Harry  
336 is laughing with the students. In a later conversation with the first author, he emphasized that  
337 school should be a place where students have fun and are encouraged to take risks. This finding  
338 illustrates the importance of transformative educators taking risks. Typically, skeleton racing in  
339 school hallways would be frowned upon. By working with and trusting the students, however, in  
340 this instance Harry was able to create a safe environment for this activity. This kind of teaching  
341 encouraged and amplified student curiosity and, in line with Cochran-Smiths' (2004) principles,  
342 meant that they felt included.



**343 Teach Skills, Bridge Gaps, and the Affective Component**

344 Harry's largest facilitator to TP was his flexibility as the only PE teacher in the school.  
345 Harry's gym was located away from the main school building, allowing Harry a sense of freedom  
346 within his teaching space: 'I have the freedom to do what I want or take something in the direction  
347 I want personally or professionally.' Freedom allowed Harry complete autonomy within the  
348 content for lessons, and almost all of Harry's lesson plans included a psychomotor component  
349 (e.g., striking, fielding, catching, kicking, throwing, rolling, balancing, fleeing, chasing, dribbling,  
350 attacking, and defending). However, his lesson plans, resources, curriculum materials, blogs, and  
351 colleague's comments suggested his focus was predominantly within the affective domain. The  
352 main recurring themes covered within these sources included trustworthiness, mindfulness,  
353 sportsmanship, communication, teamwork, cooperation, personal responsibility, relationships,  
354 student similarities, friendships, and having fun. Blog 13 testified to this: 'If we do not target the  
355 social and emotional parts of our students, we are missing the boat.'

356 Scaffolding new learning within the affective domain is an essential element of SJE  
357 (Cochran-Smith 2004) and subsequently, Harry did not privilege motor and sporting techniques as  
358 a curriculum (Kirk 1998, 2009). His curricular freedom allowed him to teach innovative sports  
359 without focusing solely on the 'physical component.' Rachel recognized Harry's focus: 'I haven't  
360 come across many teachers that were more involved in the whole child, not just their physical  
361 abilities. It's their whole well-being; it's not just kicking a ball.' Harry encouraged student  
362 participation and provided them with the opportunity to bring their culture into the gymnasium  
363 after exploring other cultures sports and activities. Material in Harry's yearly scope and sequence  
364 demonstrated that he covered a variety of 'non-traditional, non-Eurocentric activities, and games  
365 from across the world' such as Handball (Denmark), Quidditch (game invented by J.K Rowling),

366 La Gallinita Ciega (Mexico), Spikeball (United States), Peteca (Brazil), and Ki-o-Rahi (New  
367 Zealand).

368 ***Developmentally Appropriate Social Justice Content***

369 Cochran-Smith (2004) suggested SJE content has to be developmentally appropriate, and  
370 teachers should seek to scaffold information. Harry's explicit teaching of social injustices occurred  
371 in both PE share circles: 'Today in class we talked about whether boys can play with Barbies or  
372 not and do toys have gender roles' (Conversation 11.20.17) and within Harry's health lessons.  
373 Wright (2004) proffered that social justice perspectives align with appropriate behavior towards  
374 others and sensitivity toward difference/diversity which is primarily taught in health education.  
375 However, the material in lesson plans indicated that students in Harry's PE classes covered  
376 privilege, discrimination, bias, bullying, equity, gang violence, community conflict, harassment,  
377 ability, citizenship, sex, sexual orientation, class, race, and gender. It is noteworthy that such  
378 critically based topics were discussed all year round and not just on Martin Luther King Day. For  
379 example, 'I have been doing the work all year and to focus solely on social justice today and then  
380 forget about it until next year seems disingenuous' (Blog 11).

381 Harry's resources indicated that he encouraged critical thinking and self-reflection through  
382 Edu puzzles, case studies, discussion, role-play, and advocacy projects. Additionally, Harry noted  
383 that students are rarely given homework as part of his class, but if they are, 'I tell some of my little  
384 students of color, or in kindergarten, they have to go home and look in the mirror and tell  
385 themselves they are a handsome person.' Not only did Harry reveal a rejection of transmissive  
386 teaching, but also a commitment to critical content areas that challenged the status-quo. Thus,  
387 Harry developed uncensored democratic learning communities (Chomsky 2000) that privileged

388 discussion and dialogue related to sociocultural issues (Ukpokodu 2006), and in which his students  
389 felt they belonged, had considerable autonomy, became more competent, and were empowered.

### 390 *National Political Environment*

391 Teaching does not occur in isolation. Rather, it is a product of and influenced by school,  
392 community, and national cultures. For this reason, and as emphasized by Cochran-Smith (2004),  
393 teaching is a political act. During this study, Harry's teaching was influenced, to some extent, by  
394 the national policies and standards issued by SHAPE America (2013). In addition, his practice was  
395 also affected by the political environment in the country. Harry had 'definite views on politics,'  
396 and as 'socially liberal,' he was 'really scared for our children of color once Trump got in [elected  
397 as president].' Harry believed that 'all humans regardless of what they look like should have the  
398 same opportunity for success in our country [United States].' However, equal opportunity 'doesn't  
399 seem to be working very well in our country right now.'

400 Politics are entangled within national organizations and government agendas reflect  
401 consumerist and conservative plans; specifically, these are played out in neoliberal ideologies and  
402 standardized curricula (Azzarito et al. 2017; Macdonald 2011). Harry explained,

403 Our national organization is moving toward more standards, more testing, and a more  
404 nationalistic approach to teaching. It is our job to remind our state and national  
405 organizations that *you* work for us. We need more individual resources that will impact our  
406 lessons not more standardization of content. Create units for us that are outside of the  
407 traditional North American Eurocentric sports garbage we have been doing for years.  
408 Incorporate biking standards, skiing standards, and swimming standards. No one is under  
409 the illusion that our students will master all of the standards that are out there. Create a

410 boatload, so we can a la carte them and create a personalized, quality physical education  
411 program. (Blog 5)

412 Unlike Alfrey et al. (2017), Harry was adamant that the barriers he encountered would not  
413 discourage him from attempting to construct a SJE for his students. He saw his role as being  
414 revolutionary: ‘Learning should be fun, engaging, interesting, and new. Students deserve a system  
415 that says you are important, and I will tailor education around you. Up until now, that has not been  
416 the case. I will help to change that.’ Moreover, it appeared that Harry was able to circumvent or  
417 simply ignore many of the political barriers he faced.

#### 418 **Work with Communities in-between Social Justice Illiteracy**

419 One of the biggest barriers to SJE is social justice illiteracy; gaps in peoples’ understanding  
420 of what social justice is and what is required to achieve it (Sensoy and DiAngelo 2017). In  
421 congruence with the findings of Fitzpatrick and Russell (2015), Harry realized that SJE can be  
422 difficult to implement and potentially disruptive, particularly when it opposes the values of school  
423 and community cultures. The conservative culture of Everytown created by Harry’s colleagues and  
424 his students’ parents, and their resulting social justice illiteracy, were the most formidable barriers  
425 Harry faced. Europa, the only African American educator in the school, believed ‘staff lack  
426 cultural fluency and sensitivity,’ and ‘when disciplining students of color, they often blame the  
427 child’ saying ‘I don’t know what to do with *them*.’ One lunchtime attendant said, ‘It’s been a long  
428 time since I had to deal with one of *those*.’ Europa explained,

429 The teachers are not connected to what’s going on. They see it on the news, and it’s not  
430 part of their life, and it’s not part of their student’s life or their parent’s life, so it’s just out  
431 of sight, out of mind.

432 As Fernandez-Balboa (1993) articulated, teachers can be oblivious of their contributions to the  
433 proliferation of inequality, seeing their role as abstract to the social justice cause. Interestingly,  
434 Europa and Gregory observed that Harry had attempted to inform teachers of their contributions,  
435 and teach them of the importance of bringing students cultures into the classroom, and ensuring  
436 their curriculum is inclusive. However, ‘they kind of get mad at him, like stay out of our business’  
437 (Europa). Subsequently, ‘he pisses off his co-workers, and I have to deal with the accompanying  
438 drama,’ said Gregory.

439           Moreover, Harry’s ‘socially liberal’ political views often conflicted the parents’ views.  
440 Although Europa and Gregory supported Harry’s controversial topics within class, on occasions,  
441 parents/guardians were against it. Europa explained, ‘When you talk to younger kids about White  
442 privilege, and they go home and tell their parents, and we are in a Republican area. Urgh, that’s a  
443 tough situation.’ Another example was when Harry taught a second-grade gender roles and norms  
444 lesson. He received an email from a worried parent regarding her daughter that he shared with the  
445 first author:

446           I’m very confused. She told me that you were talking about how it’s ok for a boy to dress  
447 like girls and wear nail polish. It’s puzzling to me. I’m sure she got that all wrong . . . I am  
448 sure you would never take it upon yourself to instill your views on young and  
449 impressionable children. (Email 4.12.17)

450 Harry explained to the parent the national standards (SHAPE America 2013) he covered within the  
451 curriculum and outlined the lesson to the parent. The parent was ‘still a little confused’ but said,  
452 ‘You obviously have your way of teaching.’ After speaking to Harry about this incident he voiced

453           You have to blur the line, come as close to the line as possible but don't cross it; let kids  
454           know you are real; take calculated risks, so know where you are going, but don't be too  
455           crazy and radical, just attempt to shift a student's perspective. (Conversation 12.4.17)

456   On asking Harry whether he was worried about job security, being a 'radical' educator, he stated  
457   that his 'experience,' content 'knowledge,' and 'tenure status' meant 'it is next to impossible to  
458   fire me.' 'Tenure recognition' and 'administration' has allowed Harry 'greater freedom and  
459   flexibility, despite occasional push-back from questioning parents' and colleagues. To overcome  
460   social justice illiteracy, Harry advocated and shared his ideas and perspectives on education,  
461   especially the need to involve a wider community of professionals.

462   *Advocacy*

463           Working within a community of like-minded teachers is crucial if teachers with a SJE focus  
464   are to be successful (Cochran-Smith 2004). Harry supported others with this focus and gained  
465   much from them. For example, he espoused his sociocritical orientation by following critically-  
466   orientated scholars on social media to begin with. Subsequently, he became a prominent voice  
467   within that medium himself. He was specifically interested in how his self-identity influenced his  
468   practice. Furthermore, Harry felt a moral imperative to be active in the wider teaching community:  
469   'I have a responsibility to use my privilege [i.e., race, ability, and gender] in order to amplify the  
470   voices of others and get the message across of social justice.' Gregory noted this was one of the  
471   main facilitators of Harry's practice:

472           First author: Do you think there is anything that helps Harry teach?

473           Gregory: Yeah, his networking. You know his willingness to network . . . He is passionate  
474   about it . . . I would say if you had put his passion for education up against mine, he is more  
475   passionate about it than I am. He will go and spend four hours online, podcasting, writing

476 his blog, connecting on Voxer. He goes to Educamps or as many conferences as we'll pay  
477 for him to go to. That's a huge sacrifice. He is the type where when his kids go to bed, he's  
478 probably online researching, trying to learn more. When my kids go to bed, I am trying to  
479 just keep my eyes open for another half hour. So, I can never fault that guy for his  
480 commitment to education. It's really impressive.

481 Social media was instrumental in Harry's advocacy, and his networking appeared to be appreciated  
482 by many educators in the profession, including his superiors, which made him appear more  
483 credible. Social media became a platform where he was able to promote his transformative ideas  
484 but also learn from a variety of others from an array of perspectives: 'Everyone has a story, and I  
485 can learn from everyone' (Blog 2). For example, being active on social media meant that Harry  
486 was able to learn about innovative methods by which to assess students that were compatible with  
487 his pedagogical beliefs.

#### 488 **Diverse Forms of Assessment: Plagnets, Whiteboards, and Seesaw**

489 Harry was an advocate for blending assessment and instruction to suit students' needs as  
490 recommended by Cochran-Smith (2004). Harry believed that most grading systems are 'bullshit,'  
491 and as an alternative educator, he recognized 'what standardizing testing has done to education'  
492 and that assessment can be a form of social stratification (Sensoy and DiAngelo 2017). Harry  
493 assessed using Plagnets, individual student whiteboards, and Seesaw as tools for evidential  
494 learning. Considering Harry believed that 'grades don't mean anything to students,' he used  
495 assessment as a tool for dialogue with students and parents to show evidence of learning 'where  
496 assessments are authentic and engaging' (Philosophy Statement).

#### 497 ***Plagnets***

498            Similar to plickers, plagnets allowed Harry to give students an individualized magnet for  
499 formal assessment before, during, or after class. After posing a question such as ‘how equitable  
500 was this activity?’ (Lesson Plan 71), students had a variety of answers to choose from and would  
501 attach their plagnet to the door or to a large whiteboard. Harry was able to correlate each of the  
502 answers to identify the students and what they learned in the lesson.

### 503 *Whiteboards*

504            Individual student whiteboards allowed Harry’s students to ‘feel like a teacher’ and have  
505 allowed students to ‘be reflective in the affective domain.’ After asking students to write on the  
506 whiteboard, Harry would ‘take a picture of the whiteboard, upload it to Seesaw so that parents can  
507 see what we are doing as well, you know, hopefully, that is a conversation starter’ to engage them  
508 within the students learning.

### 509 *Seesaw*

510            Seesaw is a digital portfolio of student learning that can include films, pictures, and  
511 documents and it was Harry’s most commonly used assessment tool. Seesaw allowed reciprocal  
512 communication for all parties. For example, if students wanted to communicate with Harry  
513 regarding a game or activity they wanted to play, they could via Seesaw. Additionally, guardians  
514 could also communicate with Harry and vice versa. For instance, ‘if kids are not wearing sneakers,  
515 I’ll just send a message through Seesaw to an individual parent.’ Seesaw was a way for guardians  
516 to see their child’s learning in ‘real time.’ Rachel noted Harry’s use of Seesaw ‘by recording the  
517 child and then sending it home to the parents, that parent gets a window . . . kind of like being a fly  
518 on the wall, I love it.’ By adopting Seesaw, parents were able to engage in their child’s education  
519 and have constant dialogue with Harry, involving them in the PE community and curriculum that



520 Harry created: ‘There is nothing more powerful than enabling a family to have a window into my  
521 class that starts a conversation about learning and joy’ (Blog 1).

### 522 **Conclusions and Implications**

523 This study produced several notable findings and added to previous research (Alfrey et al.  
524 2017; Fitzpatrick and Russell 2015; Oliver and Kirk 2016). We believe that shedding light on  
525 practical approaches to TP has been helpful to pre-service teachers, physical educators, and teacher  
526 educators. Collectively, we can move towards a more conscious and ethical approach to social  
527 change when our communities and, subsequently, our schools are becoming more diverse than  
528 ever. We agree there are no best organizational structures, contents, or methods that work for every  
529 context (Cochran-Smith 2004; Fitzpatrick and Enright 2017; Ovens 2017; Tinning 2017) and  
530 teachers should find their own ‘groove’ and ‘slant’ for transformative practice.

531 To conclude, the findings of this study have implications for PE curricula and schools of  
532 education globally. PE curricula should focus on critical sociocultural perspectives (Cliff et al.  
533 2009), along with negotiated and student-centered pedagogies that allow the student to take  
534 ownership and responsibility of their learning within schooling environments (Ovens 2017).  
535 Consequently, teacher education programs should be a place of facilitation and opportunity for  
536 these concepts to be practiced. Schools of education and teacher preparation programs should  
537 highlight the formal and hidden curricula within PE with the goal of making pre-service teachers  
538 aware of their contributions to the proliferation of inequality (Fernandez-Balboa 1993). Lastly,  
539 national and state organizations should focus their efforts on providing professional development  
540 opportunities within SJE in PE. The SJE principles would be helpful in this task (Cochran-Smith  
541 2004). Future research should include other qualitative studies that focus on the transformative

- 542 practices used by minority teachers within the profession, and the reactions of all students to TP,
- 543 particularly different groups of students in politically diverse settings.

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