Invited Article: The A-Z of Social Justice Physical Education: Part 2

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Abstract: Education reproduces broader social structures and teachers' responsibilities are constantly increasing, but budgets, resources, and staff decreases. It is a time of uncertainty and challenge in education. Due to this precarity, physical educationalists must be socially conscious to provide equal and equitable environments within their teaching spaces for all students. This paper (the second installment of a two-part series) is an attempt to make an important step in social justice education, it highlights how teachers and teacher educators can prepare for, and hopefully teach about, precarity in relation to social justice physical education. By providing resources, readings, and examples from practice we have attempted to provide the discipline a framework for cultivating an ethic of value, care, and zeal for others so that all members of our society can partake in the social rights they deserve and be physically active for life.

Precarity in Physical Education

In his most recent book, physical education scholar David Kirk (2020) noted the rising issue of 'precarity' (inability to predict) in our society. As Kirk (2020) argued,

> Poverty, mental health, gender inequality and discrimination, disruptive pupil behaviour, knife crime: these are each referents of precarity. And they are empirical referents that *can* be counted. (p. 1)

The rise of precarity in the United States (USA) is evidenced in the concomitant rise of mass shootings (Berkowitz, Alcantara, & Lu, 2019; Federal Bureau of Investigations, 2013), increase in depressive symptoms and suicide completions amongst youth (Twenge, Joiner, Rogers, & Martin, 2018), and the increase in privatization (and profiteering) of government welfare programs and education (Abramovitz & Zelnick, 2015; Harvey, 2007). Another indicator of the precarity under which we operate is the economy. In a recent research review by Berkeley economist Gabriel Zucman, tax and survey data are demonstrating that wealth inequality (both globally and even more so domestically) is similar to the wide gap documented directly preceding the great depression (Zucman, 2019). As such, the data are indicating that we live in precarious times.

One may ask, "What is 'Precarity'?" Well, it is important to differentiate between 'precariousness' and 'precarity'. According to Judith Butler[1], 'precariousness' is a universal human condition that is based on the interdependence that humans have on each other - and all humans are therefore - vulnerable. Think of the precariousness we experience when we lose someone we love, or a loss of employment, or perhaps a child waiting on their parent for their next meal. The interdependence we all require produces a vulnerability that we experience at some point in our lives and is at the heart of meaningful human experience (Brown, 2015). 'Precarity', on the other hand, produce the same affects of precariousness (vulnerability) but in this case it is due to an unequal (and unfair) distribution across the population. Precarity, in other words, is experienced by marginalized, poor, and disenfranchised members of society because of their status as alienated (Butler, 2004). Think of the vulnerability poor youth face in schools that are under-resourced, constant migration of families due to community-based violence, or perhaps a transgender student being assaulted in physical education locker rooms. At the end of the day, precarity (and precariousness) are concepts that health and physical educators are already dealing with. As Kirk (2020) noted:

> …physical education teachers are likely to be teaching children who are suffering its ill effects. These range from anger, anxiety, alienation, and depression to disruptive and sometimes violent behaviour. There are questions about how well teachers are prepared for such work. (p. 2)

This article (the second installment of a two-part series) is an attempt to make an important step in social justice education, specifically how teachers and teacher educators can prepare for, and hopefully teach about, precarity in relation to physical education. We are not claiming the concepts outlined here will produce a better world. We do claim; however, these concepts have worked for us in engaging students and student teachers in critical issues around marginalization, precarity, and criticality in physical education. Our main concern in this paper is with 'precarity' and making physical education less precarious for all folx[2]—but especially those who are marginalized. Thus, contributing to the social justice agenda (Azzarito, Macdonald, Dagkas & Fisette, 2017). Below, we have outlined concepts N-Z that explores, problematizes, and works through issues of precarity in our teaching for a more socially just approach. Each letter provides avenues or resources that practitioners and teacher educators could

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[1] Judith Butler is the Hannah Arendth Chair and Professor of Philosophy at The European Graduate School and Maxine Elliot Professor in the Department of Comparative Literature at UC-Berkeley.
[2] Folx is an alternative to folks that includes individuals that identify as non-normative sexual orientations

employ if their context permits. As stated in paper one of this series, language is seen as relevant for the time but will evolve as language is not static.

The N-Z of Social Justice Physical Education

N – Narrative approaches

One way to connect students to the lived experiences of others is through narratives. According to Fitzpatrick (2013b), story-telling through narratives has multiple advantages. Narratives provide a more "readable" (Fitzpatrick, 2013b, p. 69) way for students to engage with academic material. Given this, narratives can act as a compelling and meaningful way for teachers to represent human experiences—especially in relation to precarity. Narratives are not new to physical education (Dowling, Fitzgerald, & Flintoff, 2012; Schaefer, 2013). There is, however, very little evidence to suggest narratives are used in USA-based physical education settings. Yet, such approaches are used worldwide (Carless, 2012; Chapman, Sykes, & Swedberg, 2003; Devís-Devís, Pereira-García, Fuentes-Miguel, López-Cañada, & Pérez-Samaniego, 2018).

To use narratives in physical education, we suggest educators could re-construct a story that highlights precarity in relation to health, physical activity, and/ or education. Such an example could include someone not being able to change for class because they cannot afford athletic clothes/ shoes. As a class, the students can engage with the story and debate on the ethical situation that the person(s) are facing in physical education. We argue that if the story can connect to the lived experiences of students—the more powerful the narrative. For example, in the state of Maryland the teacher may connect the story to gender issues in Lacrosse. Another example is if you work in a high Hispanic/ Latino/a population, framing the narrative around a popular sport from their culture (e.g. soccer, baseball, boxing). In so doing, narratives become one avenue to explore precarity that humans face in health and movement contexts.

O – *Obesity*?

In paper one of this series we covered 'Fat Phobia's' and the competing perspectives held within physical education and "obesity"[3] is a contender. "Obesity" has been identified as a public health issue in the USA (Puhl & Heuer, 2010). As a response, many physical education professionals aligned their overarching purpose to this issue

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[3] Similarly, to Wann (2009) we use the quotation marks as scare quotes to emphasis the words precarious status

in order to ease the precarity youth face with "obesity" (Almond, 1983; Corbin & Pangrazi, 1992; Sallis & McKenzie, 1991). Yet, such health-based approaches to physical education have been problematic for (at least) three reasons. To start, one reason researchers/ educators aligned their agendas to "obesity" was not for children, but rather as a response to gaining relevance (Tinning & Kirk, 1991) and receive grant funding. Second, biomedical evidence related to "obesity" constructs the issue as a highly complex and precarious matter with multiple factors (Lobstein, Baur, & Uauy, 2004). Given how frequent students take physical education, the impact our field can have on this multifaceted social issue has been largely questioned (Gard & Wright, 2001). Lastly, the way "obesity" is discussed in physical education is often filled with inaccuracies and moral judgements about how the body looks (Powell & Fitzpatrick, 2015). Such moral approaches are based on narrow views of health that neglects biomedical, sociological, psychological, and economic research. In so doing, students may leave the classroom space feeling stigmatized, embarrassed, self-loathing and worse than when they entered the space—steepening deeper in precarity.

One example of how "obesity" is taught with inaccuracies is the "energy in/ energy out" equation. Gard and Wright's (2005) excellent tracking of this research illustrated that such individual approaches are misleading and neglects wider social issues like social class, genetics, and privilege. Given this, we argue that teachers should teach "obesity" in a pragmatic approach that addresses all the issues that produce precarity. Such an approach disrupts social stereotypes around "obesity" that connect it to being lazy, immoral, or diseased. Instead, teachers should challenge incorrect assumptions such as "obesity" is an individual problem that is void of social factors. We argue if teachers cannot teach about "obesity" in the above format, they should just not teach about it at all. It is clear from the research that teaching "obesity" from strictly a public health promotion stance has detrimental consequences for youth (Burrows, Leahy, & Wright, 2019; Evans, Rich, Davies, & Allwood, 2008; Puhl & Heuer, 2010).

P – Policies

Policies in physical education are important. The authors of this paper argue that any state, local, or national policy that does not explicitly address sociocritical issues like social class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and power actively reproduce precarious settings and structures. Thus, we argue standards-based approaches (to be discussed later) that do not address sociocritical issues actually promote inequity through omission (Apple, 2006; Flinders, Noddings, & Thornton, 1986). Policies therefore need to be robust in promoting health and physical education *and* the multitude of factors that affect a child's access to health and physical activity. Every school

district has some form of policy. These policies, more or less, govern what is acceptable within schools. Given this, schools should have explicit policies that protect/ understand/ promote the rights of marginalized groups including, but not limited to persons with disabilities, different ethnic origins, diverse genders and sexualities, and from deprived social class backgrounds.

Sociocritical concepts should be included in curriculum policy. The study of sport, physical activity, or health should include different perspectives. For example, a teacher could highlight the recent discussion on Universities profiting from some college sports (e.g., basketball, football, etc.) based on skills, talents, and hard work of young athletes of color (Hawkins, 2010). Yet, most of the profits go to White coaches and University administrators. Such an approach aligns with Siedentop's (1996) call for the physically literate person to be critical consumers of sport/ physical activity. The Cultural Studies model is an effective way to teach students about policies, cultural norms, and the study of health, sport and physical activity during a unit of work. Information about this approach can be found by Mary O'Sullivan and Gary Kinchin:

https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/5992/1ed735f7efb2449b5a762337d00ca72213d0.pdf?_ga=2.238896451.278866530.1578313090-1717419432.1578313090. Importantly, policies and curricular documents should raise awareness to the precarity that is re-produced in health and physical activity and students should be informed of the history of physical culture more broadly.

Q – Questioning

Questioning is an important part of precarity and consequently social justice education. When one is not certain, they must use conversation in order to pry into perspectives, policies, and schooling methods. Moreover, in school with students and colleagues there needs to be a level of constructive confrontation (hooks, 1994) that encourages folx to see beyond their everyday assumptions and practices. Dialogue and questioning one another is a way forward in precarious times. For example, if a colleague constantly uses fitness testing as a method of assessment ask them (professionally) why they are using fitness testing. Critically orientated scholars across the world have been questioning fitness testing as an appropriate practice for several years now. Specifically stating that it does not provide an educative experience in physical education. For more information on this particular topic read: http://healthphysicaleducation.blogspot.com/2016/08/why-i-dont-like-fitness-testing-in.html. As another example, question your curriculum and its purpose, question your teacher educators' values and purposes then read and research prolifically to find answers and come up with your stance on controversial issues in education. Many of

which we have covered in the A-Z of social justice education. A questioning mind reminds us that we too are always learning in education, not just our students to become more socially conscious citizens. Questioning links to being reflexive.

R – Reflexivity

The concept of reflexivity is markedly different than being reflective (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000). Being reflective generally means looking back on our actions (or a situation) and critically questioning ourselves in order to become better (as teachers, as parents, as partners, etc.). Being reflexive, on the other hand, considers the way power influences the situation and involves us examining our beliefs/ values in relation to the environment. For example, a teacher being reflexive might consider, "How are my beliefs/ values influencing the curriculum and teaching in physical education?" In so doing, teachers may (or may not) make changes because they realize their teaching beliefs do not align to their students.

Another important part of reflexivity is considering which knowledge, persons, and cultures are (not) represented in physical education. Reflexive practices may ask questions:

- Who wrote/ chose this curriculum and what do they have to gain from physical education being taught in this way?
- Who was not considered in making this curriculum?
- Why would other teachers be against this lesson?
- How does this unit address social issues around health, physical activity, and precarity?
- How does this curriculum relate to the students' culture and values?

Reflexivity then, is situating the teacher, students, and content in relation to the historical and political nature of the teaching profession. By critically asking these questions about activities, lessons, units, and curriculum—the teacher recognizes that their own beliefs and historical practices heavily structure what happens in the name of physical education. By examining these practices, the teacher can bring awareness to social issues within their own field that actually address precarity in physical education.

S – Standards based practices

Standards based practices is almost seen as the 'only' way to teach physical education in the United States (SHAPE America, 2014). Importantly, however, the USA is unique in its commitment to standards and outcomes-based learning. Outcomes based approaches, where students are expected to enact 'correct performances' (skills,

fitness, health choices, etc.) is actually based on behaviorist curriculum theory from the 1940's (Tyler, 1949). In fact, outcomes based education was critiqued by physical education scholar Cathy Ennis as being a factory model that did not consider the individual differences of students (Ennis, 2003). We argue that when all students are treated the same (as raw materials to be molded), it creates precarious experiences for many students. Rather than seeing standards as an 'end point' (or an outcome to be achieved), we believe that standards should be more of a guideline that aids teachers to achieve greater meaning in physical education.

Dillon once had a conversation with Dr. Philpot of the University of Auckland (New Zealand) around standards. In the conversation, Dr. Philpot said standards are a form of standardization—or the act of standardizing. When we think about standardizing things, as Dr. Philpot offered, then we can think of standardized physical education in comparison to McDonalds®. If you go to a McDonalds® in Utah, Wyoming, California, Hawai'i, or New York—the big mac will be the same (two beef patties, special sauce, lettuce, cheese, pickles, onions, sesame seed bun). The same could be said of outcomes-based physical education —they will all have the same products. Instead of having a McDonalds® physical education program (where all students meet the same outcomes), we argue each program should strive to be the best restaurant that meets their population. Physical education in Hawai'i, as an example, *should* look different than physical education in Baltimore. This is because the students, cultures, and values are different in these places. Furthermore, this means we need to raise questions in relation to our standards, where are the sociocultural and sociocritical standards that place us as educators in a position to be able to legitimately rather than precariously discuss social justice issues in our teaching spaces with support from our national board?

T – Theoretically informed practice

As noted above, the SHAPE Standards (2014) are listed as a cluster of sequential outcomes. Given this, there is no educational theory that informed the entirety of the document. Rather, the document was developed as a constellation of knowledge that included motor development, personal beliefs, and skill/ sport-related outcomes. Outcomes-based approaches to physical education, however, (re-)produces precarity. There is growing literature illustrating that physical education has been precarious to certain students like girls and women (Fisette, 2011; Oliver & Kirk, 2015), diverse ethnicities (Dagkas, Benn, & Jawad, 2011; Fitzpatrick, 2013a), diverse genders and sexualities (Devís-Devís et al., 2018), and diverse disabilities (Fitzgerald, 2006; Haegele & Sutherland, 2015). By

listing outcomes that students must achieve—it reproduces the same environment that made this space precarious in the first place.

Educational (and critical) theories, on the other hand, have the ability to shift outcomes away from a conversation of *how* to achieve particular performances (reproduction). Instead, instruction becomes more critical and ask questions like: *why* are these outcomes important? Other countries have underpinned their curriculum by diverse learning, indigenous, and critical theories. In so doing, the theories produce different outcomes in human movement in order to broaden the aims of physical education. In New Zealand, for example, the curriculum is underpinned by four underlying concepts that combine to form a critical pedagogical base (Fitzpatrick, 2018a, 2018b; Ministry of Education, 2007). In Australia, the curriculum expects students to investigate their own identities in relation to human movement and culture. In so doing, they adopt a strengths-based approach to health and human movement (Macdonald, 2013). Others from Sweden and Australia have also drawn on salutogenesis as a theory to underpin instruction (McCuaig, Quennerstedt, & Macdonald, 2013). The point here is that educational and critical theories offer us a way to think about health and human movement from an advanced perspective and can potentially shift these precarious physical education settings to inclusive ones. To view the Australian curriculum in more detail follow this link: https://www.monash.edu/education/teachspace/articles/why-critical-inquiry-can-be-a-game-changer-for-health-and-physical-education-teachers.

U – Urban schooling

There are differences in cultures and schooling practices between urban, suburban, and rural schools (Tyack, 1974). Each of these spaces are precarious for differing reasons for students, teachers and teacher educators. Yet, teacher education programs provide very little (if any) experiences in multiple settings (Flory, 2016). Without appropriate experiences in varied settings, future teachers may not develop the skills necessary to build cultural bridges with diverse populations (Cothran & Ennis, 1999). As such, our students may not understand the precarity that different groups of people face. This is especially true for White teachers that teach in majority non-white schools (Flory, 2015). We argue the best way to address this gap is by providing teacher candidates with internship experiences in diverse settings. We also argue that teachers should draw on different pedagogical approaches that have worked with diverse students in the past like critical (Fitzpatrick, 2013b), culturally relevant (Flory & McCaughtry, 2011), sociocultural (Cliff, 2012; Cliff, Wright, & Clarke, 2009), and social justice (Walton-Fisette et

al., 2018) pedagogical approaches. In so doing, teachers will be ready to confront the precarity that multiple students face—rather than just the privileged few.

V- Values based instruction

According to Kirk (2010), the future of physical education should invest considerable effort in understanding, critiquing, and forming cultural values. Indeed, the notion that values are interconnected to physical education is not new. For example, Morgan (1973) argued:

> … in a modern context, although it is possible to distinguish the processes of physical education from the rest of a child's schooling… it is not possible to completely distinguish its values. (p. 86)

In summary, physical education cannot be extracted from the values of education (and the community) more broadly. This is especially true in physical education. For example, the values of the teacher affects curriculum development (Jewett & Bain, 1985), decision making (Ennis, Ross, & Chen, 1992), and how teachers teach (Green, 2000). Yet, many teachers are actively taught to teach in a 'value free' way because they may offend some folx. We argue this is folly.

Values are a natural part of education and so is critical inquiry. We believe that like other countries, values should be embedded in the curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007). We argue this because knowledge can never be considered value-free (Foucault, 2002). Given this, we argue that physical education should offer a space where students can reflect on and challenge their personal and community values in relation to health and physical activity. In so doing, they can critically question the role that precarity plays in access to health and human movement. By openly accepting that values influence knowledge, students can interrogate – and hopefully change – the precarious settings by which some people have access to health and physical activity whilst others do not.

W – Whiteness

Physical education is a predominantly white profession (McBean, 2019). In the USA, the field, however, is changing quickly and one reason is due to the changing demographics in teacher education programs (Harrison & Clark, 2016). Despite the changing dynamics of teacher education programs, the teachers that are bestowed with awards and teaching honors are consistently and overwhelmingly White (Blackshear, 2020). More worrying is that there is a dearth of literature on teaching multiculturalism and inclusivity in physical education (Pang & Soong, 2016). Having such little teachers and teacher educators of color as leaders and research on inclusivity may produce a precarious environment for people of color in physical education. As such, Hodge (2014) has argued we need a

philosophical repositioning from a model of integration in favor of a model of inclusion. Culp (2016) agreed and

progressed on Hodge's work by drawing on critical theoretical viewpoints and incorporating a call for social justice.

Such calls have been mirrored by others in the field as well (Hill et al., 2018; Walton-Fisette, Richards, Centeio,

Pennington, & Hopper, 2019; Walton-Fisette, Sutherland, & Hill, 2019).

There are some folks that believe race/ ethnicity have no place in physical education. We believe this to be

detrimental to society and a socially just education. Ways to address race/ ethnicity are multiple. For example, one

could integrate indigenous games into their models based practices (c.f Lynch & CurtnerSmith, 2019; Williams &

Pill, 2019). Other ways to address race/ ethnicity is to use a sociocultural perspective in games education (Cliff,

2012; Cliff et al., 2009). Lastly, a simple step that should be taken is to examine the curricular and policy documents

to see if they are aligned to Western perspectives of health, physical activity, and movement. If it is, you could draw

on non-Western perspectives of health and physical activity when teaching. Read this blog for accessible ideas:

https://theteacherist.com/2019/09/28/decolonise-the-curriculum-pe/.

X – Xenophobia

According to Merriam-Webster ("Xenophobia," 2019), xenophobia is defined as "fear and hatred of

strangers or foreigners or of anything that is strange or foreign" (online). The United States (and other Western

countries) are currently dealing with heightened xenophobic sentiments (especially around race and anti-

immigration) because of the increase globalization of the world (Hjerm, 2005; Yakushko, 2018). According to

Suleman, Garber, and Rutkow's (2018) review of health determinants, the increase in xenophobic sentiment

produces precarious settings, and poor health outcomes, for disadvantaged folx in our society. Indeed, many of the

student's physical education teachers are expected to teach are already experiencing xenophobic sentiments if they

do not 'look a particular way' or were born in the United States. Given this, it is important that physical educators

take the time to create an environment that is not only welcoming of all different cultures but promotes the

appreciation and learning of cultures different from our own. In so doing, students who may be immigrants (or have

immigrant parents) may be given the opportunity to share their culture within a space that is dominated heavily by

Western values.

Y – Yes to action using youth perspectives

As stated in paper 1, co-constructing your curriculum with a community of learners (your students) is

essential in moving away from a top-down pedagogical approach. Hierarchical approaches neglect the views of

youth and may produce a precarious space. In Dillon's doctoral thesis[4], one of the main results he found was that the youth of today are innovative, resilient, and capable of making health and physical education relevant. One way to get youth involved in making physical education personally relevant and meaningful is to encourage social justice activism and sharing their messages across the school, community, and in political spheres. Activist approaches to physical education are student-centered and promote positive student interdependence (Oliver & Kirk, 2015) and promotes embodied reflection and social responsibility (Fitzpatrick, 2013b, 2018b). In so doing, an activist approach is considered one way to promote student advocacy about current youth issues. As an example, climate change is at the forefront of many youth minds, students could come up with the idea of going into the community to litter pick. This is a great example of social action, whereby students are moving for social good. When students become agents and advocates for health, physical activity, and education in their own social space then physical education is developed for youth and by youth. As a consequence, a youth driven approach can help relieve the precarity that students face in their everyday lives. When teaching about social action, it would be helpful to consult the Teaching Tolerance website for guidance and ideas: https://www.tolerance.org/professional-development/social-justice-standards-unpacking-action.

Z – Zeal

To conclude this paper, we leave the reader with the word, Zeal. The word zeal is often used in relation to zealous, or a great passion/ energy for a particular cause. We believe that the only way for students' lived experiences in physical education to be less precarious is if teachers continue to have a zeal for youth and social progress. Being a physical educator is one of the most amazing and rewarding careers. In many ways, we affect the lives of youth, instill and promote values in our communities, and build strong lasting relationships with many stakeholders. Physical educators are often asked to do too much: teach about health, character, discipline, physical activity, be a mentor, coach, and do administrative tasks. Indeed, we are in precarious times – and we know it is precarious for physical educators as well. The salaries of teachers are not enough, the responsibilities consistently increase, and budgets are constantly slashed. Yet, we have zeal and hope that we are uniquely positioned to make social progress in our communities and improve things for the next generation of physical educators. As Siedentop (1996) said, our goal should be to cultivate students that value the physically active life. In so doing, health and

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[4] https://researchspace.auckland.ac.nz/handle/2292/47621

physical activity are not just individual endeavors, but are social rights that we all deserve. By exploring the above issues – we hope to cultivate an ethic of value, care, and zeal for others – so the next generation can be even more passionate about health, physical activity and all round socially conscious individuals.

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