Whose Knowledge Matters? Physical Education Teacher Educator Views and Experiences

of Visual Impairment Simulations

Abstract

While research has explored pre-service teacher views and experiences with disability simulations, none thus far has centered those that decide how and why such simulations are used, namely, teacher educators. Our research explores physical education teacher educator views and experiences of visual impairment simulations, as well as their perspectives toward simulations after reading reflections of visually impaired people themselves about this pedagogical task. Vignettes describing teacher educators' use of simulations, together with the narratives of visually impaired people about simulations, were used during individual interviews with nine physical education teacher educators to support them to reflect on their own views and experiences of visual impairment simulations. All qualitative data that were generated from these interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed thematically. Nearly all participants, at first, discussed the value of visual impairment simulations, focusing specifically on how they could support pre-service teachers to 'know', 'understand' and 'feel' how physical education is experienced by visually impaired people. Once the narratives of visually impaired people were introduced and discussed during interview, they went some way to supporting some participants to critically reflect on the ethics, authenticity, and pedagogical potential of disability simulations for preparing pre-service teachers for teaching visually impaired students. Whether engagement with the narratives of visually impaired people about simulation, or indeed anything else relating to their embodied views and experiences of physical education, will influence the way that teacher educators think about disability, visual impairment, inclusion, physical education, or teacher education in the long-term is for future research to explore.

Keywords: Pedagogy, Physical Education, Embodied Pedagogy, Disability

Introduction

Disability simulations are pedagogical techniques that have gained attention, and received acceptance, across several disciplines as a mechanism for attempting to authentically replicate embodied experiences of disability for the purpose of raising awareness and developing professional competencies for working with disabled people (Flower et al., 2007; Leo & Goodwin, 2016; Maher et al., 2019). Experiential learning is integral to disability simulations, which involve nondisabled students being supported in situated experiences designed to help them to 'know' and 'understand' what it may be like to be disabled (Flower et al., 2007). In physical education teacher education (PETE) programs, disability simulations generally involve nondisabled pre-service teachers wearing ear defenders to simulate hearing impairment (Maher, 2021) or blindfolds to simulate visual impairment (Reina et al., 2011), donning body suits to simulate osteogenesis imperfecta (Sparkes et al., 2019), or using wheelchairs to simulate mobility impairments (Leo & Goodwin, 2016). Such activities have gained considerable popularity in PETE programs (McNamara et al., 2021), as it has been suggested that attempts to embody disability through simulations may be of pedagogical use to prepare pre-service teachers for teaching disabled students (Maher et al., 2020). Experiences like these are thought to help to reduce prejudice, and enhance attitudes and empathy, toward disabled people by allowing nondisabled people to experience some small degree of the barriers that disabled people experience on a day-to-day basis (Hollo et al., 2021).

Despite the clear interest in utilizing disability simulations in higher education contexts, including in PETE programs, criticisms and concerns about implementing disability simulations have emerged. For example, some have argued that the very premise of the disability simulation activity is to elicit feelings of fear and distress among nondisabled people, and thereby highlight

disability as undesirable and pitiable (Hollo et al., 2021; Silverman et al., 2015; Tichkosky et al., 2019). In this way, simulations play on existing fears of disability that circulate in society (Tichkosky et al., 2019) and perpetuate a 'disability as bad' medical model mindset (Haegele & Hodge, 2016). This concern is supported by empirical work where, for example, participants in a study by Silverman and colleagues (2015) were more likely to judge blind people as being less capable of work and independent living after the completion of a simulation experience. Despite purported goals of simulations to teach individuals 'what it's like' to have a disability (Flowers et al., 2007), others have criticized disability simulations because they reduce disability to impairments (e.g., lack of sight), and don't take into account what it is like to live with these characteristics within an ableist society (Liebow & Levit Ades, 2022; Tichkosky et al., 2019). This ideal is perpetuated by, as Tichkosky and colleagues (2019) note, a narrow conception of blind people, for example, as being sighted people without sight, without considering or embracing complexities of disability identities. Still others have criticized the pervasiveness of the adoption and implementation of disability simulations because of the lack of empirical data to support their effectiveness to meet their intended goals of enhancing attitudes and reducing biases towards disabled people (Flower et al., 2007; French, 1992; Hollo et al., 2021). Complicating matters, the evidence that does exist suggests that disability simulations may have an adverse effect, unintentionally contributing towards the construction of negative judgements toward disabled people (Maher et al., 2022; Sparkes et al., 2019). Supporting these assertions, Flower and colleagues (2007) noted that most practice-based scholarship that promotes the utilization of disability simulations does so without data to support the practice, and that "real experiences with people with disabilities seem more favorable than simulated experiences" (p. 77) for enhancing attitudes toward disabled people.

Within PETE contexts, a few studies have engaged disabled people in conversations about their experiences with or opinions about disability simulations (Leo & Goodwin, 2016; Maher et al., 2022; Maher & Haegele, 2022; Sparkes et al., 2019). Like the aforementioned work, disabled people in these studies have questioned the utility and ethics of disability simulations. For example, Leo and Goodwin (2016) endeavored to explore the meaning that wheelchair users ascribed to the utilization of disability simulations that center on the use of wheelchairs as a pedagogical tool. Among other findings, participants in this study problematized the absence of disabled people in the construction and delivery of the disability simulation exercises and discussed potential limitations of disability simulations when faculty focus on engaging students in 'fun' activities to encourage active engagement that could discourage deep and critical reflections (Leo & Goodwin, 2016). Similarly, blind and visually impaired adults in Maher and colleagues' (2022) study problematized the lack of disabled people involved in the construction and delivery of simulation activities, noting the particular need for blind or visually impaired people to help disrupt views of blindness-as-unable by engaging in discussions before, during, and after the experience. Participants in this study also discussed the need to disrupt common sense assumptions that equate visual impairment to complete blindness and cautioned the use of simulations that do not take into consideration the diversity of visual impairment (VI) that can and does exist.

Given explicated ethical and empirical concerns related to disability simulations expressed in prior scholarship and by disabled individuals, it is unsurprising that practitioners and teacher educators have been cautioned against the uncritical use of them as a pedagogical tool (Flower et al., 2007; Leo & Goodwin, 2016). However, according to McNamara and colleagues (2021), this does not appear to have reduced the use of disability simulations within PETE programs, or the promotion of the practice through practice-based journal articles (e.g., Douglas et al., 2019). This

disconnect is clearly concerning, and could, perhaps, contribute to forms of unintentional harm toward disabled people. That is, to return to a point, based on the extant literature, it appears possible that the implementation of disability simulations may contribute to the construction of disabled people as unable or incapable (Sparkes et al., 2019) or the ideal that disability is undesirable and pitiable (Hollo et al., 2021; Silverman et al., 2015), which may therefore have long and lasting impacts on how teachers treat disabled students in their classes.

It is reasonable to suggest that PETE faculty may be engaging in a hubris-centric exercise where they are claiming expertise about the utility of disability simulations while, perhaps, simultaneously ignoring ethical and empirical concerns about their use, as well as disabled persons' opinions about their implementation. However, this speculation has not been explored empirically. As such, in this study, we use the narratives of visually impaired people about VI simulations to explore PETE faculty perspectives on, and experiences of, such simulations.

Methods

Our study was conducted under an interpretivist research paradigm, with a focus on exploring participant views and interpretations of their social world. This paradigm is anchored to a relativist ontology, wherein multiple realities can exist and thus be explored, and a subjective epistemology, where meaning making occurs by the researchers as they draw upon their (perceived) knowledge, beliefs, and experiences as they interact and engage with the participants (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). Given the role that researchers' beliefs, values, and embodied experiences have in the interpretive process, it is key that we expose our personal and professional positionalities so that readers can consider how they may have influenced our methodological decisions and interpretations of our data. Our research team is composed of three members, including one White woman and two White men, all of whom have personal and professional

interests tied to a desire to understand the utilization of VI simulations when educating pre-service physical educators. Each of us has previously utilized visual impairment- and other disability-related simulations in our own teaching. Throughout the research process, we self-reflexively considered ways in which our professional and personal positionalities, as well as our associated beliefs about VI and pedagogical practices associated with teaching about VI, might have influenced our methodological decisions, our interactions with participants during our interviewing process, and the interpretation of our data as a hallmark of quality in qualitative research (Richardson & Adams St Pierre, 2017).

Participants

Participants were recruited via opportunistic sampling, where [author anonymized] emailed an invitation to participate to pre-tenure PETE faculty members in the US whom he had previous contact with. Pre-tenure faculty members were specifically recruited to explore views and experiences of disability simulations that reflected recent doctoral training. Moreover, it is this group of early career faculty who are most likely to teach pre-service teachers in the US for the foreseeable future and develop/update corresponding curriculum. The email described the nature and purpose of the study as well as what it required the participants to do should they agree to participate. Of those invited, eight agreed. Given the relatively low number of PETE faculty in the US, we have deliberately avoided sharing personal and professional descriptions of each participant to avoid compromising anonymity. Rather, we provide an aggregate description of the group, and have adopted gender neutral names when depicting our participants' perspectives. The institutional review board at [university anonymized] considered and approved the study protocols.

Our participant group included two faculty who identified as female and six as male, ranging in age from 33 to 45 years. All but one participant identified as White, instead identifying

as Asian. Participants worked at either teaching- ($n = 5$) or research-intensive ($n = 3$) universities, and each primarily taught physical education courses focused on teaching disabled students. The eight participants worked at seven universities, with two participants teaching at the same university. Graduate training experiences varied among participants, with four receiving doctoral training from the same doctoral program. Each of the other participants graduated from different universities. At the time of the interview, participants reported having between 3 and 18 years ($M = 7$) of experience teaching in PETE programs. All participants reported using disability simulations at least once a year throughout their career, with some using them 'in every class' or 'four or five times a semester'. Regarding VI simulations specifically, each participant reported using them at least once a year, and up to two or three times per term.

Data Collection

After agreeing to participate in this study, [author anonymized] sent each participant two vignettes published elsewhere (anonymized citation 1) that encapsulated the thoughts and experiences of two higher education faculty endeavoring to deliver learning activities to pre-service physical education teachers using VI simulations. These vignettes also included the pre-service teachers' stories about their simulated experiences. Participants were asked to read the vignettes and reflect on them prior to engaging in semi-structured interviews conducted by [author anonymized]. A one-to-one semi-structured interview was conducted with each participant via Zoom web conferencing technology. Participants were first asked to, generally, share their views about using VI simulations with [author anonymized], and then to discuss what they had read in the vignettes about the utilization of simulations as pedagogical tools for pre-service physical education teachers. Questions were both general and more focused on specific incidents described in the vignettes: *What are your thoughts about the story you read*? *What are your thoughts about*

pre-service teachers removing blindfolds when they felt 'scared' and/or 'uncertain'? Questions further prompted participants to reflect on and connect the vignettes to their own teaching experiences: *To what extent do the stories you've read reflect what you might do in your own pre-service teacher training courses?*

After discussing their views on the vignettes, [author anonymized] moved the interviews conceptually toward discussing the perspectives of visually impaired individuals about the use of VI simulations to educate pre-service teachers. To do so, we harvested direct quotes from a prior work exploring the views of visually impaired adults toward using simulations [anonymized citation] and inserted 15 quotes directly into a Powerpoint presentation. [Author anonymized] visually displayed the presentation via screenshare, and read each of the quotes aloud to the participants before asking them to reflect and comment on what they were hearing, and how it connects to their own teaching experience. Interviews concluded with probes asking participants to reflect, once more, about the general role that simulations should and could play in educating pre-service PE teachers, and what role the opinions of visually impaired adults had on these opinions. Interviews ranged from 39 to 73 minutes in duration, and all interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim to ensure a complete record of data.

Data Analysis

[Author 1] led data analysis, which was inspired by the reflexive thematic analysis approach advocated by Braun and Clarke (2022). First, [author 1] familiarized himself with the data by reading and re-reading interview transcripts. This allowed [author 1] to develop an intimate familiarity with the participants' views and experiences of VI simulations as well as their reflections about the views of visually impaired individuals. Following, he engaged in a coding process where he went through each of the transcripts and tagged pieces of text that had relevance

to the research questions informing the study with semantic, conceptual, and/or analytical labels. Third, [author 1] clustered together labels to construct initial themes that reflected sameness and similarity (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Once composed, initial themes were emailed to [author 2] and discussed via WhatsApp phone conversations as part of the peer reviewing process that involved [author 2] checking, supporting, and challenging [author 1]'s constructed themes in relation to the dataset and study purpose. After themes were firmly established, [author 1] returned to the original dataset and harvested chunks of text that fit into established themes but may have been missed during the initial analysis. Considerations were taken here to ensure that each participant's voice was represented in the presentation of constructed themes, and that minority views were not silenced in our depictions of themes. Constructed themes and supporting data were then sent to [author 3] in the role of critical friend as described by Sparkes and Smith (2014). She engaged with the data as a theoretical sounding board by reflecting on the interpretation of data and challenging the interpretations by [author 1] with alternative explanations. After considering [author 3]'s feedback, [author 1] finalized themes for presentation as findings.

Several strategies for supporting the quality of the findings were implemented throughout data collection and analysis. For example, we recognize that our professional and personal lived experiences and knowledge influence our methodological decisions and interpretations of data (Smith & McGannon, 2018). To align with authenticity criterion articulated by Guba et al. (2017) that require participant views and voices to be apparent in text, we were mindful to present an abundant number of verbatim extracts from participant data. This also allows for readers to review data and interpretations considering our biases and critically reflect on our interpretations. This data transparency supports the 'thick description' requirement presented by Tracy (2010) to enhance our findings' credibility. Further supporting the rigor of our analysis were the entering

and exiting of [author 2] and [author 3] as a peer reviewer and a critical friend, respectively. Finally, we are thorough and open about our methodology, providing critical detail about our participant recruitment, data collection and analysis procedures, to support the transparency of our research process and product.

Findings

Based on the participants' narratives, three cascading themes, that conceptually flowed one into the next, were constructed: (1) Yes, I use them, and here's why…, (2) …but, wait…what?..., and (3)…maybe this needs to change…maybe. The themes are constructed to follow the timeline of the interview, to show how thoughts and opinions developed throughout the course of the conversations about the vignette, responses to quotes of visually impaired people, and general reflections about simulation use as a pedagogical tool. The constructed themes are presented below and discussed thereafter.

Yes, I use them, and here's why…

When engaging with the vignettes, each participant suggested that the story that they read about VI simulation was familiar, recognizable, and believable. When describing what value that VI simulations had, and why participants implemented them in their classes, opinions varied, but most began with suggesting that simulations are an opportunity to share with pre-service physical educators what it is like to be visually impaired. For example, Dr. Ellis noted that their views were "similar to what I read [in the vignette], to try to provide some kind of feel for what it may be like to have a specific impairment," while Dr. Campbell noted:

> I use it [simulations] as a way for my students to understand things from a slightly different perspective. To show how their [visually impaired students] participation in physical education can be affected by having a visual impairment.

Other participants suggested a two-fold rationale for using VI simulations that focused on first providing pre-service teachers with an opportunity to learn what it is like to have a VI, and then considering accommodations for visually impaired students in their classes, as illustrated below:

> For my classes, I would put a blindfold on the students so they can feel how the student with disabilities feel. I think that's a more deep imprint on the students' mind if someday they have a chance to teach a student with visual impairments, then they know how they feel and are capable to accommodate with their teaching. (Dr. Sampson)

> It's a dual purpose in that students get to understand what it's like to move and to be physically active with a disabling health condition, and then in addition, learn how to accommodate and modify their own physical activities when teaching or implementing physical activities for people with disabilities. (Dr. Williams)

For Dr. Sampson and Dr. Williams, it was clear that they believed that their students could understand *what it was like* to have a VI, and that this experience could influence their future teaching. Similarly, Dr. Fisher identified that their students could also benefit from this two-fold rationale but focused more so on their students understanding limitations specifically associated with impairment:

> My objectives, I guess, for simulations is for my students to get a feel of the limitations visually impaired people experience in physical education settings, and that we need to think about those limitations and how to address those when teaching. By experiencing what it's like to not be able to see while you're playing in PE, hopefully it allows the [pre-service] teachers to think about the way they give instructions or the activities that they use, or the modifications that they employ to teach their students.

Dr. Fisher's perspective was well aligned with Dr. Wallace's, who noted the need for pre-service teachers to gain an understanding of the struggles that visually impaired students experience in physical education:

> Generally, we phrase it around having a better understanding of what it's like to have a disability. So, before we go into the activity, we go over what the literature says, what struggles individuals with visual impairments have, and then I ask the students, 'while you have this blindfold over your eyes, think about those. Think about your own struggles.'

When discussing why they used VI simulations, Dr. Jones insisted that it was to help generate feelings of empathy for visually impaired students, by pre-service teachers 'being in their shoes'. This idea was problematized by Dr. Murdoch, who noted that they had recently decided to stop using simulations in their classes and is now adopting a different model:

> I stopped doing that in my class, I had an ethical issue about being 'in someone's shoes,' when we can turn it on and turn it off. Instead, we went in a different direction, where we bring in athletes and they talk about their experiences, and then we play different disability sports. So, kind of going away from this deficit model that was mentioned in the vignette.

Dr. Murdoch further noted several ethical issues with VI simulations, suggesting that perhaps these types of activities do more harm than good by perpetuating deficit thinking about disability:

> The biggest key is that it has to be done right from the teacher [educator] or this is just gonna be a giggle mess. And that's a big problem that I have with these "in my shoes" type of labs, that if the teacher doesn't set it up to be a very serious activity, to ethically explain the situation, to really police and make sure the students are doing what they're suppose to do, it can really become problematic.

…but, wait…what?...

When engaging with the quotes of the visually impaired people, several participants demonstrated immediate value for the critical comments that were presented and read. For example, Dr. Murdoch, who had already discontinued using simulations in their classes, agreed with the critical statements presented from visually impaired people because they appeared to align well with their own ideas about simulations:

Yes, that [quote] was very similar to what we had talked about regarding the deficit model. And by doing simulations, it's like 'can't do this, can't do that' and look what they can't do. And wow, these are tough statements, and I see their point that, my goodness, it's incredibly negative.

Like Dr. Murdoch, others began to question the utility and potential for unintentional harm inherent to VI simulations when engaging with the example quotes from visually impaired people. For example, Dr. Jones stated:

When we do the blindfold thing, they [faculty] would often say, 'how hard was that? And then we pretend that they just experienced the visual impairment. I think it's a false sense of awareness there, that they might think that they have a better understanding of visual impairment from going through a 10-minute activity. So, they might think they have a false sense of understanding it. We can get very negative images like that, and negative in a way of that charity mindset of just "poor people" who have to go through this every day.

Dr. Campbell echoed concerns about VI simulations, stating:

We want our pre-service teachers to be engaged, but I'm like "well, what's the real utility out of this, if they're having fun and engaged, but is this doing more harm than good?" I think that's something that I had to think about, and I actually dropped simulations for a while, just because I couldn't rectify that my own teaching was gonna be strong enough to

maybe dispel or demystify any of those notions that my students may have gained from the experience.

While some participants quickly aligned their views with the visually impaired persons' quotes, others experienced tension in their opinions while listening and reading along. Dr. Wallace, for example, agreed with one of the visually impaired individuals when they discussed the ignorance that simulations might promote, but still found value in the simulation activities:

I agree with what [she] is saying. It [simulations] promotes ignorance, because again I only simulate it for three class periods, and then they're assuming based on that. And now I'm reading these quotes, and I'm like "Oh my God, what am I doing?", but I feel like I still can try and allow students to get a sense of what it's like to have that disability.

After reading participant quotes Dr. Fisher also identified that simulations have some shortcomings, while reflecting on their position as a sighted faculty member and the need for visually impaired people to speak with their students:

I think it would make it better [to have visually impaired people involved] because I'm basing it off of my experience, which is not as a person with a visual impairment. And, if it's coming from me, this is what I think, because that's what I've been taught. That might not be anywhere near a real-life experience of somebody with a visual impairment.

Despite these realizations, Dr. Fisher challenged the quotes from visually impaired adults that criticized simulation activities for promoting ignorance, stating:

My focus is on what you can do rather than focus on the disabilities. 'Alright, these are the issues that they're facing. Right? You can't see. So, how do we get around that?' And then, I'm hopefully arming my [pre-service] teachers with the tools that they need to get their [students'] abilities to shine through. So, kind of the opposite of what she says in her quote.

Unlike other participants, who at least recognized simulations to have some potential negative effects, two participants were steadfast in their assertions about the importance of simulations and their positive outcomes. For instance, while noting that some of the quotes from the visually impaired individuals were 'sad', Dr. Sampson generally thought that the outcomes of VI simulations were positive for their students because they developed sympathy toward visually impaired people:

> To let students have this kind of sympathy, it can help create best practices in PE lessons. It can help them know how to accommodate teaching for the student with visual impairment. That's the whole purpose of these simulations.

Dr. Williams appeared to acknowledge visually impaired individuals may view negative perceptions of simulations, but they themself largely disagreed with those criticisms. For example, when responding to a series of quotes discussing concerns about pre-service teachers experiencing instances of fear during simulations, they said:

> Okay, totally valid point. But I also think that when the students are vulnerable, and when they're just thrown into that situation, I think they potentially could respond differently with those "oh my God, I can't do this" or "I'm so scared" moments. I think that brings in a side of empathy and connection. At the same time, I could see how someone who is blind or visually impaired might take that negatively, and that's definitely something to consider. But, I think that vulnerability of just throwing them into the situation is beneficial.

Continuing the conversation, Dr. Williams admitted to experiencing frustration when thinking about the potential negative outcomes of simulations and possibility that simulations teach sighted teachers to hate the idea of being blind:

Interviewer: You know, you had a gasp at the end, kind of like an exhausted exhale. What was that?

Dr. Williams: Yeah, because it's one of the saddest things I ever heard that for someone to say they hate how they live their life, and I think that's, I guess, sad for me to hear. And that makes you think, "shit, am I not supposed to be doing this? Should I not have these simulations? Should I restrict how I'm teaching?" but again, what is this, one person's quotes?

Interviewer: It's about nine or 10.

Dr. Williams: Oh, alright. I think I also like talking with [name anonymized] and a few of my former students who are blind, and they enjoy having their peers experience what they experience every day. I don't know what I would say, but I think it's educational.

…maybe this needs to change…maybe.

When asked to reflect upon their thoughts about quotes of visually impaired people toward simulations, including notes about the importance of including visually impaired people in the planning and delivery of simulations, a range of opinions were presented from participants. For some, there was a realization of the limitations of simulations and the importance of the involvement of visually impaired individuals in this process. For example, Dr. Fisher noted that:

> I don't think it's [simulations] ever gonna give them [pre-service teachers] a really good and accurate depiction of what it's like to be blind. I think there's some benefit to it. It allows them [pre-service teachers] to think about how they could make some modifications and what changes could be made, but it'll never be a true representation. I think their [visually impaired people] perspective matters a lot more than mine because they experience it. They know what it's like, so they can share their truth.

Dr. Wallace also seemed to realize the value of asking visually impaired people to engage with their students:

> Yeah, I think its powerful. I mean, it's so interesting to hear someone with a visual impairment tell you that what you're doing is actually offending them, and that you're developing a fear of blind, or visually impaired [people]. Instead of promoting the disability you could be hurting how the world, or that class, views   people   with   a   visual impairment. I'm thinking now about my own teaching. I've gotta get more people in the classroom   that experience these issues, and they've gotta talk in front of my students and tell them, what it's actually like. I can read a textbook on visually impaired [people], but that doesn't mean I understand anything about what the real life is.

Dr. Ellis was another participant that thought that simulations were a good starting point, but wondered about the role that the voices of visually impaired people could have in these exercises:

> With the added quotes and voices it might, and I don't know if it would,… [maybe] enhance is a better word. It's never gonna be realistic, but understand that... Or to have our students [pre-service teachers] understand what we do in class can be really impactful for those students [with VI], and again, until we get those students in class, we're not really gonna know, but at least they can come into a situation a little bit with a better awareness of what is needed, instead of just saying, "I'm the teacher, I need to make these adaptations", without ever taking into account what is gonna be best for the student in these situations too.

Like the other participants, Dr. Williams agreed that including visually impaired people in the construction and delivery of VI simulations activities could help to enhance pre-service teachers'

experience. However, they were still resistant to changing their pedagogical decisions after engaging with the quotes because of the benefits that they believed the activities produced:

> Dr. Williams: I think everyone's entitled to their own opinion, and that is fair. This helps me to understand that it's not all rainbows and butterflies, and that some people take offense to simulations. And in my personal belief, I still think they are necessary. Maybe not necessary, but a good practice, because I think students can learn a lot from it, but we still have to be mindful of talking through scenarios and understanding what we can learn from it and why are we participating in them.

> Interviewer: A few times it seemed like you got a little frustrated with some of the quotes. Is that true?

> Dr. Williams: I don't know if I would say frustrated, it just kinda made me sad or made me think, I guess, like 'Oh, it's not, some people in the blind community don't agree with it and don't appreciate it', and that makes me a little uncomfortable because I am doing these. But, to me, I think the positive outweighs the negative.

Like Dr. Williams, Dr. Sampson also recognized that there were negative aspects, but was resistant to changing their pedagogical practices based on these realizations:

> I think it's a lot of benefits, learning the sympathy part. The students get to know the feelings and get to know their needs. I learned a lot from their viewpoints, and that some people really don't like the simulations. But, it's my job as the instructor to use these simulations to teach our students.

Unlike the other participants, Dr. Murdoch and Dr. Campbell held views more aligned with discontinuing the use of simulations and finding other means of educating pre-service teachers.

For Dr. Murdoch, there were assertions that better avenues to elicit similar benefits exist that do not offend visually impaired or disabled people.

> I do not think you should really do these. I don't like them. I don't think they're great. I do think there's a lot of better ways to go. The quotes were great in driving home the points with regards to our field that need to be reiterated.

Like Dr. Murdoch, Dr. Campbell also leaned toward discontinuing simulation activities, noting that they were unsure now about the utility of the exercise, stating:

> It may or may not be useful. I honestly don't know. If blindfolding my pre-service teachers is actually helpful or it could be more helpful to just have people there that actually experience that and say "Hey, this is what it's like". I don't know. I guess I'm now sort of on edge of just doing away with having my pre-service teachers wear those things because, I'm not sure.

Discussion

All participants had experienced using VI simulations when teaching sighted pre-service teachers. While there was nuance vis-a-vis the rationale for using such activities, all participants talked about simulations as a tool that enabled pre-service teachers to develop knowledge and understanding of how VI shapes the way physical education is experienced, with some saying that it also enables pre-service teachers to 'feel' how visually impaired students feel in physical education. While not explicitly stated by participants, this approach is tied to ideas relating to embodied pedagogy (Dixon & Senior, 2011), learning and knowledge development whereby our participants had themselves utilized blindfolds and simulation goggles so that sighted pre-service teachers could endeavor to embody the visually impaired other. The specific teaching intention assumed that this would enable sighted-pre-service teachers to bridge an epistemic gap by

cognitively transporting them (Coplan, 2011) 'into the shoes', or, more appropriately, the living embodiment, of visually impaired students so that they could develop their pedagogical knowledge and practice. In this regard, Maher and Haegele (2022) drew upon the concepts of cognitive (knowing and understanding) and affective (feeling) empathy, together with the notion of alterity, to critique claims that sighted people can cognitively and affectively transport themselves into the situations and propositional states of visually impaired people, and thus bridge the epistemic chasm between their own lived and living embodiment of sightedness, and that of visual impairment, through such simulations. This critique is well-aligned with recent criticisms of simulation activities by Liebow and Livit Ades (2022), who have used the phrase *synecdoche epistemic arrogance* to describe instances where (sighted) people who experience privilege wrongly assume, based on limited experience (simulation activities), that they can know what it's like to experience a particular form of oppression (disability). More specifically, they critique disability simulations as leading to "synecdoche epistemic arrogance by encouraging participants to feel as though they have experienced what it is like to have a disability, therefore supporting the idea that they know what it is like to be a disabled person living in an ableist society" (p. 544) which perpetuates what Tichkosky and colleagues (2019) contend is an understanding of blind people as simply sighted people without sight. In this regard, we build on the work of Smith (2008) by saying that the lived and living sighted mind-body of pre-service teachers, which is biological, material and social in nature, restricts the ways and extent to which our sighted teacher educator participants, and their sighted pre-service teachers, could ever know or feel what visually impaired students think or feel in any given situation in society, schools, and specifically, physical education. In support, Smith (2008) offers 'the body is bio-social, and this body one has, is and experiences places constraints on our capacities to imagine ourselves otherwise or to imagine ourselves being another person' (p.

146). Nonetheless, whether you the reader, or our participants, agree with this assertion or not, what is perhaps more important is that many of our participants believed that simulations can support their sighted pre-service teachers to embody visual impairment, and that belief is influencing the teaching preparation of the later by the former.

Interestingly, one of our participants, Dr. Murdoch, mentioned that they no longer use disability simulations, and another, Dr. Campbell mentioned temporarily stopping use of them, because of ethical concerns. Such concerns were mostly tied to the absence of the visually impaired other during teacher attempts to facilitate the embodiment of VI among sighted pre-service teachers. Such a concern has been highlighted by Maher et al. (2022), who asked visually impaired adults about sighted teachers using VI simulations for pedagogical purposes. According to Maher et al. (2022), it is crucial that the embodied views and experiences of disabled people shape the development of simulations, if they are to be used at all, and that where feasible and possible visually impaired people should have an embodied presence during the use of simulations to support sighted people in making sense of and constructing meaning about their experiences in a way that will be ethically appropriate, but also meaningful and of value to the visually impaired students that they are learning to teach.

While the interview did not drill into the detail of what Dr. Murdoch's alternative experiential activities that included visually impaired athletes entails, it was encouraging to hear because there is some research suggesting that nondisabled pre-service teachers are more likely to develop the knowledge, skills, and confidence required to teaching disabled students if they gain experience interacting with them (McKay et al., 2015). Moreover, the meaningful involvement of disabled people in the construction and delivery of simulations ties into the 'nothing about us without us' (Charlton, 2000) mantra of the disabled people's movement and may go some way to

preventing sighted pre-service teachers from, knowingly or not, engaging in what Bourdieu (1991) terms 'symbolic violence' by claiming the last, conclusive word about the embodied physical education experiences of visually impaired students (e.g. 'I've experienced blindness, so I know how students with VI feel and what they experience/need'). Saying that, we offer words of caution; the onus is not on visually impaired people to educate sighted people about VI, and visually impaired people are not a tool to be rolled out for the benefit of sighted people. Instead, visually impaired people must benefit from their involvement in the learning experiences of sighted people, and only visually impaired people can say what that means to them.

After reading the verbatim quotes of visually impaired people about the use of disability simulations, a few of our participants discussed the value of such quotes – that is, the depicted views and experiences of visually impaired people – for supporting their reflections. Recent scholarship has spotlighted the importance of self-reflection in and about pedagogical practices in the fields of PETE and adapted physical activity (Goodwin & Connolly, 2022; Silva & Howe, 2012; Standal, 2022), and our findings support this importance. Here, the quotes served as a powerfully evocative pedagogical tool for facilitating critical pedagogical and ethical reflections among teacher educators. The emotional and expressive responses of participants signaled the raw and reflective nature of interview discussions. There were acknowledged tensions between what educators practice and their views on simulations in (mis)alignment with the narratives of visually impaired people. These tensions or discomforts, as described by Standal (2022), are critical to self-reflection within the educational process as they help to highlight both that simulations are problematic and how they are problematic. Whether such critical reflection will influence how, if at all, our participants use simulations in the future is difficult to say from the data we gathered. That is perhaps a question for future research. It did seem, however, that the participants that were

most receptive to the views and experiences of visually impaired people were those who had already begun to problematize the ethics and authenticity of disability simulations (Maher et al., 2022). Perhaps this finding reflects potential shifts in the field, as participants represented assistant professors positioned for long-term engagement with this topic, curriculum development, and reflection in action.

On the other hand, those participants who were strong proponents of such simulations often expressed frustration with and resistance to what they were reading because it did not align with their own ideological beliefs and frames of reference. This is a prime example of how ideologies can become so firmly embedded in the habitus (Elias, 1978) – often known as the personality structure – of individuals and groups of people that they are difficult to disrupt and dislodge (Standal, 2022). To be more critical, and even cynical, we could consider such resistance as a form of academic hubris (Bergman, 1986). Academic hubris, also thought of as arrogance resulting from excessive pride (Bittl, 2005), is a concept that has been described as rampant in academia (Bergman, 1986) and may have application to PETE, as well as adapted physical activity (Goodwin & Connolly, 2022). According to Bergman (1986), academic hubris is often manifested by individuals in the power structure, such as academic PETE faculty, who view themselves as possessing some form of moral or intellectual superiority over those who 'toil in the kitchen' (p. 252), or those outside of the ivory tower. Bergman (1986) continued to assert that this brand of academic hubris has created a needless gulf between academics and practitioners and service recipients, 'resulting in the training of finely honed dinosaurs, ill-suited either to meet pressing health needs of the public or to survive themselves in a changing environment' (p. 252). For Wharton (2000), academic hubris can lead to academics ignoring considerable data to proffer speculation or suggest practical recommendations. This certainly seems to be the case in our

research wherein some of our participants were presented this powerful and evocative embodied accounts from visually impaired people about the concerns that they had about simulating visual impaired, which were mostly ignored or critiqued or dismissed. Perhaps this is not surprising, though, given that professionals within PETE and adapted physical activity appear to center professionals (e.g., PETE faculty) as experts in the area of disability who believe they are acting in the best interest of disabled people, while simultaneously ignoring, in instances, the voices or opinions of disabled people (Goodwin & Rossow-Kimball, 2012). In this instance, though, our participants were not solely ignoring the views of visually impaired people whose quotes we shared with them during the interview, but also prior criticisms of simulations from scholars within PETE (Leo & Goodwin, 2016; Maher & Haegele, 2022) and in other educational fields (e.g., French, 1992; Tichkosky et al., 2019) that took the opinions of disabled people into consideration.

To reconcile the ideological incompatibility between their own beliefs and the concerns that visually impaired people expressed about simulations, some participants turned attention to how and why they used simulations, focusing again on their so-called pedagogical value. While not wanting to dispute the complexity and nuance of the aim, purpose, or value of disability simulations, particularly in relation to their role in developing the pedagogical knowledge of pre-service teachers, because there is some research supporting this endeavor (e.g., Maher et al., 2020; Sparkes et al., 2019), it should be noted that this is another clear example of the embodied views, experiences and feelings of disabled people being subordinated for the so-called benefit of nondisabled people. In other words, regardless of what visually impaired people think about simulations, what was deemed more important to some of our participants was that VI simulations are useful to the development of sighted pre-service teachers. If we were to ask 'whose knowledge counts?' here, it seems clear from the data gathered that a hierarchal ideological and knowledge

relationship exists between sighted teacher educators and visually impaired people wherein the latter's knowledge and experience is subordinated by the former. The continued use of disability simulations here may represent an example of enlightened ableism, where participants within this study explicated anti- or non-ableist beliefs but contradicted those beliefs by condoning and enacting potentially ableist practices and ignoring the opinions of visually impaired people (Peers et al., 2022). This purview also assumes, of course, that disability simulations are the only and/or best way of preparing nondisabled pre-service teachers for teaching disabled students.

Developing theoretical knowledge about the intersections of disability, inclusion, and education, together with experience talking to and teaching disabled students and, ideally, nondisabled students together in the same physical and social space, have been found to be valuable for developing the knowledge, skills, experience, and confidence required for teaching disabled students. So, too, may experiencing anti-disablism education (Beckett & Buchner, 2012), learning the inclusion and disability policy landscapes of education and gaining experience working with key support staff, such as learning support assistants (Morley et al., 2021), to name but a few more. Whether disability simulations should be used as part of a much wider repertoire of activities that aim to better prepare pre-service physical education teachers for teaching disabled students is, accordingly to what we found from interviewing PETE faculty, still very much being discussed and debated.

Concluding Thoughts

In this article, we drew upon teacher educator vignettes depicting VI simulations and the embodied views and experiences of visually impaired people about such simulations to explore PETE faculty perspectives on disability simulations. Nearly all participants, at first, extolled the seemingly inherent value of using disability simulations, with focus cast specifically on how

pedagogical knowledge could be develop by pre-service physical education teachers. When the quotes of visually impaired people were introduced to the discussions, these served by degrees to support some participants to critically reflect on the ethics, authenticity, and pedagogical potential of disability simulations for preparing pre-service teachers for teaching visually impaired students. However, much of this reflection seemed tied to the established ideological beliefs of participants. It was those participants that were already beginning to question the appropriateness of disability simulations that seemed to engage most with the embodied views and experiences of visually impaired people. Whether engagement with the embodied accounts of visually impaired people about simulation, or indeed anything else relating to their embodied views and experiences of (physical) education, will influence the way that teacher educators think about disability, visual impairment, inclusion, or physical education is for future research to explore. What we can say is that some PETE faculty seem ideologically committed to using disability simulations and thus it will be difficult to disrupt or even dislodge this commitment should that become the goal of researchers and practitioners.

There is no clear and easy answer regarding the position that disability simulations should or could play within education. There is extensive evidence now suggesting that pre-service physical education teachers enter the profession lacking the knowledge, skills, experience, and confidence to teach disabled and visually impaired children (e.g., Morley et al., 2022). Hence, there is a need for teacher educators to provide a wide repertoire of knowledge and experiences that will be of value towards building competencies for working with diverse student populations, and simulations may (or not) be part of that. However, there are also an abundance of criticisms voiced by disabled people (Leo & Goodwin, 2016; Maher et al., 2022; Maher & Haegele, 2022) and scholars (Liebow & Levit Ades, 2022; Tichkosky et al., 2019) that question the purpose, value

and ethics of disability simulation activities. What we are saying is that teacher educators, but also pre-service teachers, need to reflect critically on their own beliefs about and practices relating to simulations and, if they are used, make sure that disability simulations are appropriate, tied to clear learning objectives, and accurately represent how they think about disability and disabled people. If teacher educators elect to continue to implement these activities, we strongly encourage them to work with disabled and visually impaired adults and young people to develop some 'best practice' guiding principles to support the construction and use of disability simulations.

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