SHAPE America and Physical Literacy: An event horizon?

Abstract

In this paper, we reflect on SHAPE America's K-12 National Standards and its connection to physical literacy. We argue physical educators in the United States have primarily engaged with the *term* physical literacy without engaging with the theoretical and pedagogical depth of the *concept*. Despite this, SHAPE America does explicitly endorse an adapted version of Whitehead's definition of the physical literacy *concept*. In drawing on feminist intersectional thought, we make an argument that SHAPE America's adoption of physical literacy has produced an era of 'disorientation' in United States physical education. Within this disorientation, much of the advancements made in theory, pedagogy, sociocultural issues, as well as curriculum have been lost. We conclude by calling for a revamping of the standards that is not bound to a single concept, model, or theoretical paradigm.

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Introduction

Physical literacy has been conceptualized in different ways across a variety of contexts, theoretical paradigms, and perspectives (Edwards et al., 2017). This has led Bailey (Online First) to claim physical literacy is a 'promiscuous' concept. For Bailey, promiscuity is meant to suggest how physical literacy is taken up (and adapted) across multiple contexts and therefore takes on multiple meanings. This paper is concerned with the way physical literacy is taken up in the United States - and specifically within the SHAPE America (2014) K-12 National Standards and Outcomes. Within the standards, physical literacy has been operationally defined using an adapted version of Whitehead's concept:

> "...the ability to move with competence and confidence in a wide variety of physical activities in multiple environments that benefit the healthy development of the whole person (Mandigo, Francis, Lodewyk & Lopez, 2012; Whitehead, 2001)." (SHAPE America, 2014, p. 4)

Given the explicit alignment to Whitehead's concept, our purpose is to reflect on the use of physical literacy in the United States. In so doing, we argue the need to differentiate between the ways physical literacy is used as a *term* and *concept*. We are not seeking to add to the philosophical and agonistic debate about the veracity of physical literacy. Instead, we are keen to understand how physical literacy is used in the United States and how that employment orientates physical education curriculum and pedagogy in particular ways.

Curriculum, physical literacy, and the United States

A problematic view of curriculum in physical education is the simplistic assumption that curriculum consists of fixed content, knowledge, or skills to be taught to students (Kirk, 2014). It is not enough to develop curriculum in a sequential and technocratic fashion (Jewett & Bain, 1985) because focus should be placed on *understanding curriculum* (Pinar et al., 1995). Over 30 years ago, Dewar warned about this problem in the United States:

> The history of physical education in higher education in the United States is characterized by struggles for professional legitimation and authority…These debates focused primarily on method and content rather than purpose. Questions about *what* should be taught and *how* it should be taught were of concern to physical educators. Questions about *why* the content was being taught and *whose* interests it was serving did not appear to be an important part of the debate. (Dewar, 1990, pp. 70–71, original emphasis)

Dewar's point here is still relevant in United States physical education today. The contemporary field of education does not view curriculum and teaching as 'technical' problems (how and what) but rather as questions of 'why' (Pinar et al., 1995, p. 8). When the focus of education shifts from a technical perspective (how) to critical questions (why), curriculum shifts from a noun (or static thing) to a verb, *currere* (Pinar, 1994) or active process. Because curriculum is a dynamic process, it contains the norms, discourses, and values of the place it unfolds (Ennis & Chen, 1995). Thus, several researchers have examined physical education curriculum from multiple theoretical approaches to consider how it can include particular bodies (e.g., Fitzpatrick, 2013; Oliver & Kirk, 2015; Tinning, 2010).

In the United States, there is no 'national curriculum' that schools must follow. Rather, each state is responsible for developing its own policies and standards (e.g., Maryland) and individual school districts (towns, regions) develop a curriculum to meet those standards. There is a national professional organization called the Society of Health and Physical Educators of America (SHAPE America) that has considerable influence on curriculum and instruction. SHAPE America is the oldest and largest physical education organization in the United States. It was founded in 1885, has affiliate state organizations in every state, and currently serves over 200,000 members. Despite being founded 20 years after the liberation of Black people from enslavement, SHAPE America has engaged with, and/or were complicit in, racist practices until 1962 (Salyer, 2003; Wiggins & Wiggins, 2011).

There are still residues of these racist practices in the organization's membership, awards, and documents today (Blackshear, 2020; Blackshear & Culp, Online First).

SHAPE America provides a multitude of guiding documents, but when it comes to K-12 physical education – one has the most impact. The *National Standards for K-12 Physical Education* (SHAPE America, 2014) are not explicit policies – but as Walton-Fisette and Sutherland (2020) have illustrated, these standards heavily influence state-level physical education policy. Additionally, physical education teacher education programs (PETE) and accreditation mechanisms align to standards. Given this, it is reasonable to say the standards are profoundly important in the United States.

In the most recent iteration of the standards, the writers noted a major change and alignment to the concept of physical literacy, "The first change that most readers will notice is the incorporation of the term physical literacy in the goal of physical education" (SHAPE America, 2014, p. 4). Indeed, the *term* physical literacy is gaining traction across the world (Edwards et al., 2017)—hence why it was added to this document. We use 'term' here carefully as we aim to distinguish between physical literacy as a *term* and the multiple forms of physical literacy as a *concept*. The adoption of physical literacy was a marketing effort as the Executive Director of SHAPE America at that time claimed, "Physical literacy could potentially serve as a unifying term to describe the overall outcome of quality physical education, physical activity, sport, and recreation programs" (Roetert & Jefferies, 2014, p. 39). The definition the standards used, however, was an adaptation from Whitehead's lifelong work with physical literacy as a *concept* (Whitehead, 2001, 2007, 2010). We argue this discrepancy is important to consider as we continue.

A *concept* is a theoretical framing. From this perspective, concepts are pluralistic and take on different meanings across different settings (Young et al., 2019). Gleddie and Morgan (2020), for example, provide a concept of physical literacy praxis. In it, they discuss ideas,

context, main characteristics as well as why these considerations are important in physical education. One could argue concepts can be considered in the same range as pedagogical models because they work to inform pedagogical processes (Casey et al., 2020). Like models, concepts have the ability to package theory, curriculum, and pedagogy into digestible formats in order to influence practice. Models (and concepts) may have non-negotiables (principles) (Casey, 2017) but they materialize differently depending on context (Landi et al., 2016).

A *term*, on the other hand, is a description - or referent - that attempts to capture what something means. Descriptions can never fully represent what they aim to describe. Thus, while *terms* attempt to produce a stable (some say phantasmatic) description of physical literacy (Quennerstedt et al., Online First) - the term can never fully represent the multiple physical literacies that are embodied and expressed. Given this, we argue physical literacy as a *term* is an attempt to capture a constellation of utopian outcomes as a form of entrepreneurship. Thus, many physical educators use 'physical literacy' as a term to advocate for a set of outcomes they believe the field can achieve. We are interested in the juxtaposition of physical literacy as a *term* and *concept* because SHAPE America (2014) draws inspiration from Whitehead's *concept,* but actually operates as a *term*.

Whitehead's Physical literacy concept: Phenomenology, monism, and principles

There are multiple conceptual forms of physical literacy (e.g., Dudley, 2015; Gleddie & Morgan, 2020; Whitehead, 2001) used throughout the world. Here, we are primarily interested in Whitehead's (2001, 2007, 2010) physical literacy concept. This is because Whitehead's concept was cited in the SHAPE America (2014) standards and is the most widely used world-wide (Young et al., 2020). Physical literacy was an intentional concept aimed to disrupt binary notions of the body as separate from the mind. Whitehead (2010) argued previous theorizing of physical education often treated the body as a machine to be controlled by the superior mind. Given the centrality of the body in physical education, it is

awkward that the field reinscribes a mind-body dualism that often works to marginalize the subject. In order to disrupt the mind-body binary, Whitehead (2010) underpinned the physical literacy concept with monist approaches to phenomenology.

Phenomenology places a strong emphasis on lived experiences and embodiment in our world (Ahmed, 2006). Pioneers of phenomenology, mainly Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, used the subjective nature of the theory to expose the limitations of objectivism (commonly called positivism or post-positivism) which purports there is a single truth that can be quantified. The use of phenomenology in physical education is seen as complementary, as it emphasizes the conscious body's lived experiences in the world (embodiment). For example, Arnoldian concepts have a long history of integrating phenomenological embodiment (Standal, 2015). Recently, physical education scholars have drawn on phenomenological perspectives (e.g., Brown, 2013; Ovens & Powell, 2011; Stolz, 2013; Thorburn, 2008). For an erudite examination of phenomenology and physical education, we wish to refer readers to Standal (2015). We believe Whitehead's (2010) concept could be considered an attempt to operationalize phenomenological theory to influence physical education practice. As such, Whitehead's concept has a focus on intentionality, social interaction, and relationships (between self, others, and environment).

Whitehead's (2010) concept is underpinned by six principles: (a) motivation, (b) confidence and physical competence, (c) environmental interaction, (d) self-identity, (e) self-expression, and (f) knowledge/ understanding. Principles A-C act as the core of the concept with D-F as ways to advance. It is important to understand the emphasis on the holistic and interactive nature of these principles. The principles cannot be understood in isolation, but rather should be conceptualized as a complex and interconnected system. Such an approach is crucial to enact an embodied approach. Embodiment within physical literacy works to bridge psychological, biophysical, sociological, and spiritual paradigms. Whether or not the concept

subverts these barriers is a matter of debate (e.g., Larsson & Quennerstedt, 2012) and beyond the scope of this paper. For this paper, we start from the assumption that the embodiment project within physical literacy is an important goal and has promise for our field.

Physical literacy as a term: A constellation of (utopian) outcomes

As noted by Gleddie and Morgan (2020), the term 'physical literacy' can be traced back to the 1930s by British and United States scholars. According to Bailey (2020), physical literacy was employed in the United States to represent a set of outcomes - movement competencies - that should be familiar to teachers and students. We argue the *term* 'physical literacy' is often used to mean a constellation of utopian outcomes to be achieved without engaging with the theoretical and pedagogical depth of the *concept*. Thus, by referring to 'physical literacy' as a *term* (or constellation of outcomes) claims are made that physically literate people have a wide range of skills related to physical, cognitive, affective, and (to some extent) social domains. SHAPE America (2014) is very explicit that the main focus is physical development:

> SHAPE America considers the development of motor skill competence to be the highest priority in the grade-level outcomes. As research has shown, skill competency is essential for student engagement, intrinsic motivation, perceived competency, participation in physical activity and, subsequently, sufficient levels of health-related fitness. It is the key to attaining the goal of physical education: a physically literate individual. (p. 9)

Importantly, it is assumed someone who is 'physically literate' are competent in motor skills and this will indirectly translate to affective, physical, and cognitive outcomes. Through competence in skills, young people will lead a life of health and physical activity. Physical literacy (as a *term)* works to propose a grand (phantasmatic) narrative that 'quality' physical education will lead to a constellation of nebulous outcomes (Quennerstedt et al. 2020).

SHAPE America, like many United States scholars, tend to employ physical literacy as a *term*. The problem with constructing physical literacy as outcomes is that being

physically literate becomes a fixed and stable essentialized idea (product) (Shearer et al., 2018). In other words, one is physically literate when they achieve predetermined (nearly 500) outcomes that construct the body in a singular fashion. Such an approach runs counter to the democratic aims of physical education where, as Quennerstedt (2019) puts it, "the only really sustainable aim for physical education, where different ways of being in the world as some-body are both possible and encouraged" (p. 612). Democratic and educative approaches to physical education do not promote a singular ideal body (physical literacy), but rather should celebrate, explore, and produce diverse forms of human movement (*physical literacies*). In this way, one could argue that *concepts* can be seen as potentially open-ended and inclusive of multiple bodies, cultures, and spaces. Physical literacy as a *term*, on the other hand, tends to be prescriptive, singular, and shut-off from diversity and change.

SHAPE America (2014) has clearly adopted the 'term' physical literacy. Yet, the standards draw on - and aligns itself with - Whitehead's concept in making physical literacy the explicit *goal* of physical education. Not everyone was convinced of this newfound commitment to physical literacy. Lounsbery and McKenzie (2015) argued SHAPE America did not change the content, but merely replaced the old term *physically educated*. Lounsbery and McKenzie went on to claim 'physical literacy' (as a *term*) needs extensive research as a marketing tool. We believe there is a clear lack of understanding by SHAPE America, Lounsbery, and McKenzie that physical literacy is a researched and theoretically informed concept. The lack of care around the term led us to examine how others employed physical literacy in the United States.

Physical Literacy in the United States

The most influential physical literacy document in the United States was the *Physical Literacy in the United States* report (The Aspen Institute, 2015). The report, 'supported' and 'consulted' by SHAPE America, had the explicit goal of physical literacy to "create the

conditions for all youth in the United States to be physically literate… thus encouraging habits of health and fitness for life" (p. 11). This goal comes with the aim of "closing the gap between physical activity rates of vulnerable populations and other children" (p. 12). The document does not offer guidance on how to address social issues but nevertheless recognizes socioeconomic status, gender, and other factors as 'barriers' to achieving 'physical literacy'.

The report goes on to define physical literacy as "the ability, confidence, and desire to be physically active for life" (The Aspen Institute, 2015, p. 9). By ability, the report clarifies the competency in movement skills that align to SHAPE standards. Confidence is for youth to know they can play sports or other physical activities. Desire relates to intrinsic motivation to participate in physical activity. Notably, the report that SHAPE America endorsed stripped itself of the educational, sociological, and philosophical theories from the concept. Furthermore, it narrows multiple forms of physical literacies into a singular aim: health promoting physical activity. In other words, when physical literacy is employed as a *term* - it becomes highly abstracted from the intentions of the *concept* (Young et al., 2020).

Corbin (2016) further exemplified this disconnect between concept. In his commentary, Corbin argued there are major measurement and assessment issues with physical literacy. Corbin promoted assessments (e.g., Fitnessgram ®) that could align to the nearly 500 outcomes. Yet, one question in Corbin's discussion rings true today: "Will any of the new models of physical literacy result in the development of programs different from those already in existence" (Corbin, 2016, p. 20)? In other words, what will the employment of physical literacy in the United States do? To understand this, we examined pedagogical research undertaken in the name of physical literacy in the United States.

Pedagogy research in the United States

Hastie and Wallhead (2015) are one example of folding Whitehead's physical literacy *concept* into their work with the sport education model. They argued the goals of sport

education align to the embodied goals of physical literacy. They do so by illustrating the overlaps between physical literacy and sport education: skill competency, social interactions, sense of self, and understanding content. Hastie and Wallhead (2015) are pragmatic, however, claiming that research is needed to examine the intersection of embodiment and sport education. Perhaps an explicit future goal could be to hybridize (Casey & MacPhail, 2018) the two to be inclusive of the phenomenological aspects. Put differently, how could sport education include the physical literacy principles that are *not* inherent in the model?

Ennis (2015), on the other hand, used the *term* physical literacy to justify previously scripted knowledge-based curricula. Ennis argued that literacy requires the transmission, application, and innovation of specific knowledge (related to sport, health, and fitness). Physical literacy in this case (knowledge transmission) sat in constellation to a range of outcomes promised through a knowledge-based curriculum: lifelong health and wellness. Thus, 'physical literacy' as a *term* was used to justify Ennis' previous research findings. Likewise, Silverman and Mercier (2015) explored physical literacy as a *term* in PETE instructional design. Silverman and Mercier argued skill-appropriate individual practice is vital to learning motor skills. As such, they claim PETE students should learn to increase time and appropriate practice through organized tasks to meet youth at their current skill levels. Such an approach focuses on teaching students (and not classes) because individual skill practice is likely to lead to skill competency.

Castelli et al. (2014) used the *term* physical literacy to promote comprehensive school physical activity programs (CSPAP). They argue CSPAP aligns to physical literacy because the program serves as an intervention in physical education, after school, and other school-based settings. They claimed using a health belief model (positivist concept) motivates youth to be physically active, competent in skills, and make decisions to live active lives. Castelli et al. (2014) used physical literacy as a *term* to retro-fit their established research agenda into

current debates. Others have built on Castelli et al.'s call for physical literacy as a *term* to promote public health outcomes into physical education. Webster et al. (2016) claimed an 'Integrated Public Health-Aligned Physical Education' approach can yield physical literacy outcomes. They argue a whole school approach is necessary and needs to be addressed at all levels of physical education (K-12, undergraduate, and doctoral training). Webster et al. (2016) used the *term* physical literacy to justify and promote their Public Health narrative without connecting it to physical literacy literature.

Unlike other studies, Chen (2015) aligned his work with one specific component of the physical literacy *concept*. Chen's (2015) work embraced the embodied complexity of movement in relation to motivation. He disrupted the idea of motivation as an 'internal' *or* 'external' binary. Rather, he claimed skill development, cognitive development, motivation, and regulation are intrinsically developed in relation to the embodiment of extrinsic forces. Chen (2015) raised caution, however, against physical literacy in a pedagogical sense because of measurement issues. Yet, this is an inherent limitation of phenomenology because it aims to disrupt the objectivist position of knowing a single measurable truth. Despite this, Chen's (2015) work engaged insightfully with Whitehead's physical literacy concept.

Physical Literacy, SHAPE Standards, and Alignment

Thus far, we have argued there is a gap between physical literacy as a *term* and *concept*. Physical literacy as a concept is a theoretically and empirically informed framework that seeks to promote an embodied version of physical education. Physical literacy as a *term* is a nebulous set of utopian outcomes that changes based on who uses it. The SHAPE America (2014) standards pose an interesting case to examine the concept-term nexus because the document uses physical literacy as a *term*; yet it explicitly references Whitehead's *concept*. Given the considerable influence the standards wield (Walton-Fisette & Sutherland, 2020), we chose to reflect on the document and its alignment to Whitehead's

physical literacy concept. In the following sections, we consider the alignments, misalignments, and tensions between physical literacy and the standards. We pay close attention to the topics not addressed in the standards or concept. To conduct this reflection, we draw on Ahmed's (2006) concepts of orientations, brackets, and background. We conclude the paper by claiming the concept-term nexus could be an event horizon.

Orientations, brackets, and background

According to Ahmed (2006), orientation is about how bodies, spaces, and objects become aligned. Physical education, as an example, is an orientated curricular space where lessons are aligned to standards, students are aligned with equipment, and activities are aligned to models. When we think of something as orientated, we consider its alignment in a space. In this paper, we want to examine the orientation - or direction - the SHAPE America (2014) standards have taken through its relationship with physical literacy. Thus, we examine what goals (and outcomes) the document is orientated toward, how those goals align with physical literacy (as a concept), and what has happened as a result of this orientation.

In taking on a specific direction, however, some things must be 'put aside' in order to sustain that orientation. We collectively refer to this act of 'putting aside' as *bracketing*. As an example, for this special issue to be published - the editors had to *bracket* (put aside) other health and physical education manuscripts, authors, and their own family time in order to assemble this constellation of papers. In doing so, these bracketed things (manuscripts, families, colleagues) become part of the background of *Curriculum Studies in Health and Physical Education*. Interestingly, those items and people that comprise our background are also the objects that help us sustain our orientation. Without other manuscripts, the journal would cease to exist. Without our families, the editors would not have the support to do this important work. Without our colleagues, who would write for this journal? In other words, the objects, people, and things that we 'put aside' and comprise the background sustain our

orientation. For us, we want to know who/what has been bracketed in the Shape America (2014) standards (and to some extent physical literacy) and how that relegation to the background has helped sustain the current orientation of United States physical education.

SHAPE Standards and Physical Literacy

Standards, outcomes, and theories

SHAPE America's current national standards are constructed on a hierarchy. There are five standards that guide the document and underneath each standard are aligned 'outcomes' to be achieved. The five standards are as follows:

1. The physically literate individual demonstrates competency in a variety of motor skills and movement patterns.
2. The physically literate individual applies knowledge of concepts, principles, strategies and tactics related to movement and performance.
3. The physically literate individual demonstrates the knowledge and skills to achieve and maintain a health-enhancing level of physical activity and fitness.
4. The physically literate individual exhibits responsible personal and social behavior that respects self and others.
5. The physically literate individual recognizes the value of physical activity for health, enjoyment, challenge, self-expression, and/or social interaction.

(SHAPE America, 2014, p. 12).

Upon a first glance, it ostensibly seems the standards are clearly orientated toward the same goals, philosophies, and aims of Whitehead's (2010) physical literacy concept. Standard one is aligned to the 'physical competence' principle. Standard two focuses on knowledge, concepts, and strategies, and is in-line with knowledge and understanding. Indeed, the inclusion of respecting self/ others and self-expression in standards four and five are linked to expression and communication. The standards also make an explicit reference to 'social

interaction' which one could interpret as interaction with the environment. Lastly, it *could* be argued standard three's focus on maintaining physical activity and fitness may be linked to motivation. It is difficult to argue the standards directly address sense of self. It is worth noting the document states: "The standards are not prioritized in a particular order" (p. 14).

Upon deeper examination of the outcomes (that comprise each standard), we notice two things unfolding. To start, an overwhelming number of outcomes are aligned to one principle in particular: motor skill competency. So, while the standards are not in a privileged order – the number of outcomes in each standard gives us an idea of which standards are prioritized. Second, the holistic nature of the document comes into question because the outcomes are written in isolation – or with minimal interaction between principles. Furthermore, there is a strong emphasis on 'shaping' the body through outcomes, which renders it as external to the mind and environment. Below, we explore these points further.

In the SHAPE America standards, there are 240 total outcomes between kindergarten (year 1) and 5th grade (year 6). Of those 240 outcomes, 129 (53.75%) are aligned to standard one (motor skill proficiency). The majority of the 129 outcomes are isolated from game-play, the environment, or social interaction. Even though we argued standard three could be aligned to motivation, the way the outcomes are written links them to physical activity participation/ promotion. For example, some outcomes state: "Actively participates in PE class" (p. 34); or "Demonstrates warm-up and cool down relative to the cardiorespiratory fitness assessment" (p. 34). There are two points worth dwelling on. First, motivation is either left out – or is written as a separate entity (as disconnected from the body) in most outcomes - reinscribing a mind-body dualism. Second, 4th graders (9-10 years old) are already assessed on fitness that is isolated from their daily lives. Thus, we see disorientation between the SHAPE America standards and the embodiment of physical literacy (Whitehead, 2010).

Another disorientation identified was self-expression and enjoyment. Rather than experiencing enjoyment and expression as an embodied part of movement, SHAPE America (2014) prompts students to: "Rates the enjoyment of participating in challenging and mastered physical activities" (p. 37). In other words, enjoyment and pleasure are not innate in movement but are hierarchical and linked to skill mastery. Furthermore, many outcomes meant to align to social interaction and interpersonal communication are about following rules, routines, and equipment safety. One 4th grade outcome is simply: "Exhibits etiquette and adherence to rules in a variety of physical activities" (p. 36). As grade-level standards progress, the disconnect among outcomes and physical literacy (as a concept) are equally pronounced. This is because the outcomes are highly focused on individual behaviors rather than a holistic perspective.

The outcomes in grades 6-8 and 9-12 also prioritize movement competency. The skills do become more complex; for example, in 7th grade, students are expected to: "Throw while moving a leading pass to a moving receiver" (p. 43). Notably, these outcomes interconnect with some principles from the physical literacy concept (like environment), but because of the specificity of the outcome it is stripped of the expressive principles from Whitehead's concept like motivation, self-expression, and identity. In other words, the outcomes are highly fragmented and disembodied. Furthermore, participating in physical activity is highly regimented based on skill mastery or health promotion. One outcome reads: "Plans and implements a program of cross-training to include aerobic, strength and endurance and flexibility training" (p. 47) by 8th grade (aged 13-14). By 6th grade (aged 11-12) students are expected to "Design and implement a program of remediation for any areas of weakness based on the results of a health-related fitness assessment" (p. 48). As age increases, outcomes focus more specifically on complex motor skills, enhancing fitness, and content

knowledge for physical activity promotion. The above outcomes exemplify the behavioral nature and narrow perspectives placed on young people.

To make outcomes 'observable' and 'measurable,' many of Whitehead's original principles must be bracketed to the background of physical education. One such element bracketed was the holistic nature of physical literacy. To 'measure' competency in skills, young people must be stripped of cultural, self, and community meaning. Also bracketed are the students' subjectivities, feelings, and emotions toward movement. The document never prompts students to reflect on how movement made them feel. Rather, the outcomes directed – or orientated – students to enjoy physical activity for health benefits. Students were not allowed to express mixed, bad, or average experiences. Given this, skill development and physical activity becomes the main orientation and in so doing the entire phenomenological and embodied experience of movement was bracketed.

We argue the disorientation between the standards and physical literacy is due to the broader orientation of physical education in the United States. As argued by Tinning (2010), the United States is individualistic, behaviorist, and assessment driven. Because teacher success is linked to student performance, outcomes are written for accountability purposes. In so doing, the holistic promise of physical literacy is lost because the document embodies a behaviorist political orientation. In a system driven by accountability, young people's experiences matter less than measuring performances. Importantly, what gets measured is also what is valued (Lawson, 2018). In United States physical education, that is motor skills, fitness, and to some extent tactical awareness.

The dis-orientation between Whitehead's physical literacy concept and SHAPE America's standards is based on a mis-alignment of theories. Performance-based outcomes is underpinned by behaviorist theories popularized in physical education during the 1970s and 1980s. Whitehead's physical literacy concept, however, draws on phenomenological theories.

Despite physical education's theoretical and empirical advancements over the past two decades, SHAPE America can never align to physical literacy (or any modern approach) because of its behaviorist (and conservative) orientation. Thus, we argue SHAPE America uses physical literacy as a *term* and in so doing mis-characterizes the *concept*.

In the background: disembodiment

In this section, we consider what/who gets bracketed in the SHAPE America standards. Throughout the standards, not a single reference is made to race, ethnicity, or diverse cultural groups. Physical literacy (Whitehead, 2010) has also made little reference to the role of race/ethnicity in relation to the embodied nature of movement. With the exception of a chapter (Vickerman & Depaw, 2010), issues of race and ethnicity are rarely addressed and therefore bracketed in the physical literacy concept. In this way, SHAPE America and physical literacy could be seen as orientated.

The SHAPE America standards and physical literacy concept have been developed by and produced within an orientation of White and colonial privilege. Therefore, any practice that does not intentionally disrupt this orientation will inevitably reproduce these discourses. When racial and ethnic topics are completely bracketed, as in the case of the SHAPE America standards and physical literacy concept, White and colonial perspectives go unquestioned and work to reproduce a White orientation. When we consider that more than half of young people in United States public schools are Black and Brown, we must question how physical literacy (as a term or concept) is constructed and by whom. We must also consider what happens when we place diverse students in a system that privileges a White and colonial perspective of the body.

Race and ethnicity are not the only factors bracketed in the standards. Not a single reference to gender or sexuality was made throughout the entirety of the SHAPE America outcomes. Sociocultural factors are interconnected to - and affect the production of - human

movement. For students to orientate their bodies toward SHAPE America's notion of physical literacy, they must strip themselves of all the things that make them who they are. SHAPE America not only brackets the 'sense of self' component of Whitehead's concept, but the standards work to strip young people of their embodied identities. Bracketing sociocultural issues, however, produces other affects in both SHAPE America *and* physical literacy. When sociocultural factors are bracketed – this removes opportunities for students to learn about the lived experiences and struggles of others through race, ethnicity, sexualities, abilities, and genders (amongst other things). Such an orientation (that brackets diversity) is bound to reproduce 'othering' practices that marginalize diverse young people.

There is one last consideration that has been 'bracketed' that influences the orientation of the standards. All three standards authors have written textbooks that are directly aligned to the outcomes. Furthermore, SHAPE America owns the copyright for two of these textbooks. Each of these texts have detailed recipe-like unit and lesson plans that could be implemented directly into physical education. It is important to note these textbooks are advertised and recommended by SHAPE America which raises questions about the financial motives of the textbooks, standards, and the outcomes-based approach.

Orientations, values, and capital

Considering the standards, concepts, and terms discussed above, we remain concerned about the orientation of physical education in the United States, and how this may impact an increasingly diverse student population. It is problematic for a national organization to adopt any single model or concept (like physical literacy) without considering how it aligns to their values, goals, and mission. Given the influence SHAPE America has on our profession, we would expect for the organization to reflect on who is *not* considered when terms, concepts, or models are adopted. Indeed, it is fair to say that we learn a lot about an organization's values in who/what they do *not* include in their vision, documents, and policies. This was

evident by a failure to address any topic related to gender, sexuality, ethnicity, indigenous issues, spirituality, ableism, socioeconomic status, difference, environmental sustainability, or race in almost 500 outcomes.

We also contend SHAPE America is disorientated from the advancements made in theory, pedagogy, and curriculum in physical education. Cairney et al. (2019) have argued physical literacy advocates tend to be in two camps: idealistic and pragmatic. The idealistic camp is generally informed by educational and philosophical theories meant to translate into human movement pedagogy. The pragmatic camp, on the other hand, can be understood as an opportunistic approach to promoting previously held beliefs through the term (Quennerstedt et al., 2020). SHAPE America's national standards attempts to draw on the social and cultural capital of the idealistic approach (the concept) by aligning to Whitehead's concept. Yet, their employment of physical literacy is stripped of all theoretical and pedagogical advancements and represent a solipsistic arrangement of previously developed outcomes. What is worrisome about this disorientation is that these standards have considerable influence on policy and curriculum across the country (Walton-Fisette and Sutherland 2020). So, while the standards serve as a guide for 'best practices,' these outcomes are theoretically and pedagogically uninformed. As such, they ignore many of the curricular and pedagogical advancements made in the field (e.g., Dyson & Casey, 2012; Fitzpatrick, 2013; Flory, 2017; Ní Chróinín et al., 2018; Oliver & Kirk, 2015).

One could argue it is not a lack of understanding of physical education, but a political (and economic) investment in orientating the standards toward a conservative capitalist system. SHAPE America and the authors have financial interests in the standards being developed in a prescriptive fashion. This political investment is also evident in the financial/ business partnerships SHAPE America has with other behaviorist approaches to physical education like SPARK-PE, US Games (OPEN curriculum), and Wellness Training

Specialists (SHAPE America, 2020). All of these private companies have programs, curriculum, and/or products that align to behaviorist and outcomes-based approaches – and they provide capital and resources to the organization.

This brings us to a final point—values and economic capital play a vital role in the educational system. Not-for-profit professional organizations, like SHAPE America, are meant to temper those (often misguided) agendas. SHAPE America, however, wilfully reinforces them. These standards do not serve the interests of the increasingly diverse young population it is meant to serve. Social issues are important in health and physical activity. Yet, this document places the onus on individuals to be 'physically literate,' orientating young bodies toward a capitalist and individualistic system where subjective experiences are discounted and bracketed. In so doing, 'physical literacy' as a term is used as a slogan to produce a constellation of phantasmatic outcomes that change depending on who is using it. Indeed, 'physical literacy' may refer to physical competence for some, but for others it refers to social, political, and economic outcomes. Much like 'Make America Great Again,' physical literacy in the United States operates as a rally cry that makes grand narrative promises but in actuality works against the people it purports to serve.

Physical Literacy & SHAPE America: An event horizon?

In this paper, we raised several concerns about the nexus between the SHAPE America standards and physical literacy in the United States. We contend SHAPE America used the cultural capital of physical literacy to progress its own aims while neglecting the theoretical foundations of the concept. Such a disservice to the physical literacy concept has produced a situation where many physical educators, researchers, and teacher educators often use the *term* physical literacy – but have no idea it is a rigorously developed concept. By creating a difference between the two (term and concept), it allows for some in our field to use the term to justify their previously established beliefs about physical education.

We started this paper by reflecting on the shifts that have been made in curriculum. In so doing, we argued current scholarship has shifted from a technocratic perspective to a *currere* or active process (Pinar et al., 1995). SHAPE America standards, however, still follows a technocratic view of physical education. While one could argue an adoption of the *actual* physical literacy concept could help SHAPE America with a transition away from behaviorism, we remain unconvinced this would be fruitful. The United States is a large country with diverse regions, cultures, and people. It is the contention of these authors that any single approach cannot meet the needs of everyone. Furthermore, by adopting a single approach, it works to benefit some people (economically, culturally) over others.

One of the reasons why we remain concerned about an explicit adoption of these outcomes or the physical literacy concept is because what is bracketed in both. The authors of both were not explicitly thinking about social diversity during their development. In fact, Walton-Fisette and Sutherland (2020) said of the standards, "Without reform…we will continue to perpetuate curriculum and instruction that are devoid of social justice and equity" (p. 285). Such an orientation works to marginalize diverse young people and institutionalize certain values - in this case centered around Whiteness, colonialism, heteronormativity, ableism, amongst others. Thus, any adoption of a single model, concept, or prescribed outcomes works to orientate everyone toward a single direction (physical literacy) even though we all take and have access to very different movement paths (physical literacies).

This brings us to our final point: is the nexus between SHAPE America and physical literacy an event horizon? In astrophysics, an event horizon is an area theorized around a black hole from which nothing – including light – can escape. What are the things that become lost and cannot escape because of this alliance? To start, one element absent is movement connected to culture. Additionally, other curricular and pedagogical advancements in the field seem to disappear. Social issues and unique experiences produced by diverse

identities (e.g., gender, race) are shunned away and never to be expressed. Lastly, the entire philosophies and concepts that underpin the physical literacy concept never see the light of day. As such, physical literacy in the United States becomes mischaracterized and devoid of all theoretical, social, and embodied meaning.

Being orientated means *directing* towards specific people, places, goals, and values. We believe the current (dis-)orientation of the SHAPE-Physical Literacy nexus is directing us to an event horizon. We wonder, however, if this is all negative. As Ahmed (2006) said, "The point is what we do with such moments of disorientation, as well as what such moments can do — whether they can offer us the hope of new directions, and whether new directions are reason enough for hope" (Ahmed, 2006, p. 158). Perhaps in experiencing this jarring era of United States physical education, we can produce new paths forward aligned to more progressive and theoretically informed practices. In other words, how can we look 'beyond the horizon' and 'turn to the background' in order to be inclusive of all bodies.

Hopefully through this reflection, SHAPE America will re-orientate their own direction. Instead of making organizational decisions, partnerships, and documents that work to exclude, profit from, and limit our diverse young people; how can they use their influence to promote multiple and diverse forms of physical literacies where *all bodies matter*. Such an approach would challenge their current corporate business model/orientation. Rather it sees its role as educative, emancipatory, and democratic. Indeed, physical literacy (as a concept) could be a part of the new orientation – but should not be *the* orientation.

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