Physical education (PE) and physical education teacher education (PETE) advocate for students to develop a critical consciousness, appreciate multiple perspectives, and engage in actions to enhance social justice. However, there remains diversity on how social justice itself is conceptualised and enacted in PETE which might contribute to confusion and lead to uncertainty over what and how to teach for social justice.

This project maps variations in definitions of social justice and sociocultural issues among 72 physical education teacher educators and physical education and sport pedagogy faculty in the United States, Europe, New Zealand and Australia, as part of a wider project on social justice and sociocultural perspectives and practices in PETE.

The data demonstrate that there are a range of understandings about sociocultural issues and social justice. Most commonly, participants encouraged their pre-service teachers to have awareness of equality of opportunity in relation to gender, sexuality and/or racism. Analysis mapped how the data reflected a development of concepts from expressing neoliberalist individual responsibility, to humanist awareness of diversity, to examining and challenging injustice, to taking action for justice. Less prevalent were reinforcing critical notions of democracy, power or self-reflection. The range of non-critical concepts found raises concern that pre-service teachers are not getting the tools to enact social justice or tackle sociocultural issues. This risks the hidden curriculum not being addressed in PE and PETE.