

**Website URL-** [**https://www.tandfonline.com/journals/cses20**](https://www.tandfonline.com/journals/cses20)

**Manuscript 5 Information**

Journal ID: CSES

Journal Name: SPORT, EDUCATION AND SOCIETY

**Impact Factor:** 2.3

**Acceptance Rate:** 12%

**Access Type:** Hybrid (Subscription-based with optional Open Access)

**ISSN:** 1470-1243

**Predatory**- No

Publisher Name: Taylor & Francis Group

Article Type- Research Article

Editor Name- Dr. Fiona L. Reyes

Manuscript ID: 2500615

Submission Type – Initial

Editors Note: Please provide feedback on whether major revisions are needed or if the manuscript is fundamentally sound.

Special Issue: Social Media and Mental Health in Adolescents (In addition to standard criteria, assess the manuscript's relevance and value as part of this curated collection)

Timeline- Invitation – April 25, 2025

Deadline- May 10, 2025

Estimated Time – July 25, 2025

Authors- Sheyla Martínez-Riveraa\*

Editor - Dr. Fiona L. Reyes

Review Type- Single- blind peer review

**Title**

“They are not cars, they are humans”: Puerto rican PE teachers experiences teaching disabled students

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to understand the lived experiences of PE teachers in Puerto Rico teaching disabled students through a post-colonial lens. An interpretative phenomenological analysis was conducted with eight (*n* = 8) Puerto Rican physical education teachers (7 men; 1 woman; ages 23–56 years) acting as participants. Data collection methods included in-depth semi-structured online interviews and researchers’ reflective notes. A four-step approach recommended for IPA research was adopted to analyze data. Three interrelated themes were constructed: (a) “We come into this world to help”: Beliefs about disabled students; (b) “they are not cars, they are humans”: Disability, humanization, and empathy, and (c) “It’s like a prison court”: systemic hurdles in teaching disabled students. The findings in this study reflect that Puerto Rican PE teachers have a unique connection when teaching disabled students associated with the service-oriented nature of developing countries. However, the socio-political context of Puerto Rico, reflected in the educational system, depicts forms of oppression experienced by teachers jeopardizing their well-being and the quality of physical education received by disabled students.

KEYWORDS

Physical education, adapted physical education, disability, postcolonial perspective