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# Early career physical educators' perspectives on learning to teach in urban schools

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**EARLY CAREER PHYSICAL EDUCATORS' PERSPECTIVES ON  
LEARNING TO TEACH IN URBAN SCHOOLS**

by

**SARA BARNARD FLORY**

**DISSERTATION**

Submitted to the Graduate School

of Wayne State University,

Detroit, Michigan

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

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MAJOR: KINESIOLOGY

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Advisor

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## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of the study was to examine early career physical educators' perspectives on learning to teach in urban schools. There were four main issues that served as rationale and support for this study related to urban youth health and school physical education (PE). These included: (1) the state of urban youth health; (2) the discrepancy between the backgrounds of most teachers and students in urban schools; (3) the unique challenges of urban schools that also affect school PE; and (4) the issue of teacher attrition. Although research exists on new urban teachers (Aaronson, 1999; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Worthy, 2005), teacher induction (Gold, 1999; Tatto, 1998) and PE teachers (Hutchinson, 1993; Lawson, 1983a, 1983b), no empirical research has specifically examined how new urban physical education teachers learn to teach.

### **The State of Urban Youth Health**

Rising rates of obesity and a decrease in physical activity levels affect youth across the nation. It is estimated that the rate of obesity has tripled since 1980 among youth aged 6-11, and has more than doubled for youth aged 12-19 (Zapata, Bryant, McDermott & Hefelfinger, 2008). However, these rates are especially disproportionate in urban areas. The incidence of obesity among inner city youth has been reported as high as 50% (Grey et al., 2004; Nihiser et al., 2007; Zapata et al., 2008). Minorities and children in families from low socioeconomic status homes have higher odds of being overweight than children in middle-class families (Jihong, Bennet, Harun, & Probst, 2008).

In a study of physical activity levels of children in various geographical areas, Joens-Matre et al. (2008) found that children living in urban areas were the least active in comparison to children living in rural areas or small cities. Youth in urban areas are also at a higher risk of developing chronic diseases, such as cardiovascular disease and other physical and mental health



complications, such as decreased self-esteem and increased depression, than children living in suburban or rural areas (Grey et al., 2004; Mitchell, Adams, & Murdock, 2005). For example, minority youth living in impoverished neighborhoods experience up to ten times the rate of hospitalization or death related to asthma, compared to youth living outside of these areas (Liao, Morphew, Amara, & Galant, 2006). Additionally, African American and Hispanic youth have a greater risk for developing type 2 diabetes (Grey et al., 2004). Rising rates of obesity and decreasing rates of physical activity have dangerous long term effects since 40% to 70% of obese children grow up to become obese adults (Jain, 2004).

The status of urban youth health was important to this study because school PE is viewed as a mechanism to control obesity among youth. PE teachers are expected to play a role in decreasing obesity by providing opportunities for children to be physically active and improve students' physical fitness. This expectation brings about added pressure for new PE teachers who may already be contending with other tasks, such as implementing the district curriculum, learning about new students and working with new colleagues. Students in urban schools have more health concerns and higher rates of obesity than students in suburban schools. Fighting obesity for urban PE teachers may be an overwhelming challenge. Examining how newer PE teachers learn to teach in urban schools from the perspective of urban youth health may reveal new challenges that physical educators encounter during their early careers in urban schools.

### **Disparities in Urban Teacher and Student Backgrounds**

Significant discrepancies exist between the backgrounds of many teachers and students in urban schools, resulting in a cultural clash. School populations across the United States (U.S.) continue to diversify; yet, researchers document that most teacher candidates are White, middle-class females who view the world from Eurocentric vantage points (Bondy, Ross, Galligane, &

Hambacher, 2007; Freeman, Brookhart & Loadman, 1999; Ware, 2006). Most urban teachers teach students of different ethnic, cultural, economic, and geographic backgrounds, since almost 80% of urban students are African American, Hispanic, or Asian American (Freeman, Brookhart, & Loadman, 1999; Snipes, Horowitz, Soga, & Casserly, 2008; Ware, 2006). Teachers in urban schools are likely to encounter students with limited English proficiency, high rates of poverty, absenteeism, and transience (Henninger, 2007). Overall, teachers in urban schools will likely face students that are drastically different than those in suburban and rural schools, who will learn in different ways, and who have different attitudes and values regarding schooling.

In many urban districts, these differences in cultural backgrounds result in a cultural clash between students and teachers which can undermine the educational process (Chen, 1999; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2000). Differences in teacher and student values may cause feelings of mistrust among students (Irving & Hudley, 2008). Many urban PE teachers shared that students are often disinterested, resistant, and disruptive (Chen, 1998; Cothran & Ennis, 1997; Ennis, 1995, 1996, 1998; Ennis & McCauley, 2002). If teacher values or content selection does not align with students' cultural viewpoints, students are likely to disengage altogether (Ennis, 1995, 2000). McCaughtry, Barnard, Martin, Shen and Kulinna (2006a) discovered that urban PE teachers struggle with providing culturally relevant PE activities; therefore, urban PE teachers may inadvertently create environments where urban youth are disinterested in PE and miss important opportunities for physical activity from a misunderstanding of one another's values.

Understanding the clash between teacher and student backgrounds was important to this study because this clash is even more exaggerated as new teachers enter the field. New teacher "survival" involves learning about the school environment, understanding students, understanding themselves as a teacher, and learning how to be effective in a particular school

setting. Since the typical teacher candidate is vastly different than the students they will encounter in urban schools, elements of a teacher's personal history may clash with the realities of induction into an urban school setting. There are elements of cultural knowledge that newer urban teachers may lack from personal biographies and from teacher education backgrounds.

The question then becomes, what do new teachers in urban schools learn about the community in which they teach? How does this new cultural knowledge clash with past socialization experiences and cultural templates? In what ways do teachers' personal biographies prior to formal teacher education influence early career experiences? And what do newer urban teachers do with the new cultural knowledge they obtain to become more effective in urban schools? Studying newer PE teachers' perspectives on learning to teach in urban schools may highlight ways that teachers overcome the cultural distance between personal biographies and the lived experiences of students in urban schools, as well as what this means for pedagogical practices.

### **The Challenges of Teaching in Urban Schools**

Another key issue that lends significance to the study of early career physical educators involves the challenges associated with urban school districts and the additional challenges in urban PE classes. Many urban schools face a variety of unique circumstances that suburban and rural schools rarely encounter. A lack of educational resources, poverty, crime, drug use, under-qualified teachers, overcrowded classrooms, low teacher expectations, low student achievement, lack of parental involvement, and a lack of community resources all contribute to the adverse conditions that daily meet urban students and teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Duvall, 2001; Ennis et al., 1997; Freeman et al., 1999; Gardner III & Miranda, 2001; Jackson, 1999; Pryor, Sarri, Bombyk, & Nikolovska, 1999; Richardson & Scott, 2002). Most schools in urban districts

are quite old and cannot accommodate large populations of students. Such schools have rooms with poor ventilation, improper temperatures, malfunctioning restrooms, mold, decay, lead in the paint, or leaking ceilings (Kozol, 1991). Many urban schools struggle to offer the type of curriculum needed to meet new standards in current job markets, including up-to-date courses and materials, and do without equipment that is typical in affluent suburban and rural districts (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Because of tight or unbalanced budgets, forecasting teacher need is difficult in urban districts; therefore, students are sometimes taught by substitute teachers or teachers not highly qualified in a particular subject area (Darling-Hammond, 2000).

Specific to PE classes, there are additional challenges in urban schools. Many urban PE teachers struggle with insufficient teaching space, insufficient equipment, inadequate instructional time, and irrelevant professional development (Ennis & Chen, 1995; McCaughtry, Martin, Kulinna, & Cothran, 2006b). Some urban PE teachers teach in small multipurpose rooms or other less-than-ideal spaces, such as classrooms or hallways. Budgets for equipment and other instructional resources are scarce, so equipment closets in many urban schools are quite bare (McCaughtry et al., 2006a). While PE organizations lobby for mandated instructional time in PE (National Association for Sport & Physical Education [NASPE], 2009), in some urban areas, many students attend PE classes only once per week and some do not attend at all until a certain grade level (Kulinna, McCaughtry, Cothran, & Martin, 2006).

Another struggle that many urban PE teachers face is teaching in a culture of basketball (McCaughtry et al., 2006a). In this “culture,” students request basketball almost daily and are often resistant to other activities. Many teachers struggle to engage students when the content is not basketball and use basketball as an incentive or reward for students to participate in other activities. To complicate matters, even when districts cannot afford to purchase new PE

equipment, there are usually plenty of basketballs in teachers' equipment closets, making it one of the only activities PE teachers can include. Basketball is highly accessible in urban environments – basketballs are inexpensive, and hoops are abundant in parks, neighborhoods, and recreation centers. Many students receive more attention for accomplishments on the basketball court than the classroom (McNutt, 2002). All of these factors contribute to the overwhelming culture of basketball that PE teachers in urban schools must navigate.

### **Urban Teacher Attrition**

A final factor which influenced this study was teacher attrition, since recruiting and keeping good teachers is difficult, especially in urban districts. Teaching is a high-turnover profession, evidenced by nearly 50% attrition of new teachers within five years of beginning teaching (Andrews, Gilbert, & Martin, 2007; National Commission on Teaching & America's Future, 2003). Halford (1998) wrote, "Given comparisons to fields such as medicine and law, which recognize the needs of new professionals more fully, some observers have dubbed education 'the profession that eats its young'" (p. 33). New teachers can become overwhelmed by many things, such as excessive paperwork, poor administrative support, organizational structure of the school, job dissatisfaction, inadequate preparation, challenging class assignments, and poor relationships with students (Andrews et al., 2007; Boe, Cook, & Sunderland, 2008; Darling-Hammond, 2000, 2003; Ingersoll, 2003; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Schlicte, Yssel, & Merbler, 2005). Other factors attributed to teacher attrition include the underestimation of teaching difficulties, insufficient materials, issues with classroom management, and discipline (Andrews et al., 2007). One of the most prevalent factors contributing to teacher exit is feeling a lack of support (Certo & Fox, 2002; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003).

Teacher attrition is high across the profession, yet attrition is highest in urban schools. Many teachers who stay claim they were ill-prepared during teacher education programs to face the challenges and complexities of urban schools (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Teacher turnover in low-income, racial-minority schools is higher than in suburban schools (Ingersoll, 2003; Ng & Thomas, 2007); urban teachers stay, on average, between 3 and 5 years. Olsen and Anderson (2007) found that teacher burnout is higher in urban schools because of the tremendous commitment necessary to successfully teach. Teachers in urban schools often face students with a variety of emotional, physiological, and educational needs. Students in urban schools may struggle with issues such as poverty, hunger, homelessness, community violence, drugs, and gang culture (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Ennis & McCauley, 2002; McNutt, 2002). To complicate these matters, teachers in many urban districts face pressure regarding standardized testing more than teachers in suburban districts. Many urban districts in high poverty areas are forced to fill teaching vacancies with under-qualified teachers who are less prepared to teach in these conditions; therefore, teachers leave the profession or migrate to other districts at higher rates than certified teachers (Olsen & Anderson, 2007). The impersonal environments and large bureaucracies found in many large urban districts only encourage newer teachers to leave (Matus, 1999). In such conditions, students in urban schools may be taught by a “revolving door” of teachers, paraprofessionals, and substitutes who cannot possibly maintain a consistent curriculum across the school year. Although this may be a challenge for many urban districts, ultimately, students in urban schools who are subjected to this learning environment are the most affected.

Teacher attrition was important to this study because although new teachers struggle with a variety of challenges in all school settings, the challenges in urban schools are even greater.

There is a breadth of research regarding the preparation of teachers for urban classrooms, however, we know very little about how physical educators are prepared to teach in urban schools. This is a gap in the knowledge given what is known about the unique challenges that urban PE teachers face (Henninger, 2007; McCaughtry et al., 2006a). Specifically, understanding how formal PE teacher education (PETE) influences teachers' early career experiences in urban schools may provide new outlooks on how to improve the induction process for teachers in urban and suburban environments.

### **Overview of the Study**

In Chapter 2, I outline the three theoretical frameworks that guided the study. These frameworks include occupational socialization and cultural relevance (Flory & McCaughtry, 2011). In Chapter 3, I outline the methodology of the study, beginning with the assumptions of the interpretive paradigm, including ontology, epistemology, and methodology. Next, I describe the study methods, including the participants, research settings, data collection, and data analysis techniques. Researcher perspectives, trustworthiness strategies used in the study, and the ethical considerations necessary for the study are also discussed in Chapter 3. Finally, the dimensions of researcher subjectivity that may have had an impact on the study are illustrated. Each of the findings chapters (Chapters 4, 5, and 6) illustrate how each phase of occupational socialization played a role in the early career development of these urban physical education teachers. Chapter 7 is a discussion of common themes developed through a cross-case analysis of the results. In this chapter, I will connect the findings to the theoretical frameworks, previous research, and make recommendations for future studies, as well as implications for physical education teacher education (PETE) programs in preparing teachers to teach PE in urban schools.

## **Purpose of the Study and Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to examine early career physical educators' perspectives on learning to teach in urban schools. The research questions guiding this study were:

1. In what ways do teachers' personal biographies prior to their formal teacher education influence their early career experiences in urban schools?
2. In what ways do formal PE teacher education (PETE) influence teachers' early career experiences in urban schools?
3. What challenges and dilemmas do physical educators encounter during their early careers in urban schools?
4. How do early career physical educators understand the differences between their cultural backgrounds and the cultural dynamics of urban students, and how does that understanding affect their pedagogical practices?



## CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

The purpose of this study was to examine early career physical educators' perspectives on learning to teach in urban schools. The five research questions which guided the study were: (1) In what ways do teachers' personal biographies prior to their formal teacher education influence their early careers in urban schools? (2) In what ways does formal PE teacher education (PETE) influence teachers' early career experiences in urban schools? (3) What challenges and dilemmas do physical educators encounter during their early careers in urban schools? (4) How do early career physical educators understand the differences between their cultural backgrounds and the cultural dynamics of urban students, and how does that understanding affect their pedagogical practices?

The broad scope of the research questions guiding the study meant that one theoretical framework would not be sufficient to help answer these research questions. Therefore, I used a three-part theoretical framework to investigate early career physical educators' perspectives on learning to teach in urban schools. This approach to answering the research questions was most advantageous because of the three specific types of questions asked in the study. The first two research questions directing the study related to the ways that physical education teachers' personal biographies prior to formal teacher education, as well as their experiences during formal PETE programs, influenced their early career experiences in urban schools. Therefore, I chose occupational socialization (Fuller, 1969; Lacey, 1977; Lortie, 1975) to explore these particular research questions, since this framework describes how individuals learn about and become an insider within the "culture" of an occupation. Understanding occupational socialization theory and research, then, can shed important light on how physical education teachers learn to teach in urban schools.

The third and fourth research questions related to the challenges, dilemmas, and differences encountered by teachers in urban schools. I used a cultural relevance framework (Flory & McCaughtry, 2011) to investigate these research questions. Cultural relevance in physical education is the best framework for answering these two research questions because it specifically describes how cultural distances between different entities (i.e., teachers and students, school administration and families, or schools and communities) can be bridged or expanded, based on an individual's knowledge of community dynamics, an individual's understanding of how cultural dynamics influence education, and the actions an individual takes based on this understanding. These research questions align best with the cultural relevance framework, so using this framework for the study will produce the most thorough explanations of early career physical educators' perspectives on learning to teach in urban schools.

The remainder of this chapter is organized into two sections outlining the theoretical frameworks used to study early career physical educators' perspectives on learning to teach in urban schools. In the first section, I focus on occupational socialization and the valuable insights this theory provides for the study. I will first discuss the major tenets of the theory and then review the relevant research that has been conducted using occupational socialization. Finally, I will make the case that occupational socialization was the most appropriate theoretical framework to answer two of the research questions guiding the study. In the second section, I outline cultural relevance in physical education and the principles which comprise this theory. After examining the research in culturally relevant physical education, I will contend that this theory will help shed light on this study and will help answer two more of the research questions.

### **Occupational Socialization**

Occupational socialization, the study of how individuals learn about and become an insider within the “culture” of an occupation, has great potential to answer two of the research questions guiding this study. These research questions relate to the experiences of the study participants prior to and during their college preparation courses for teaching physical education, and how these experiences influenced their early careers in urban schools.

Multiple definitions and perspectives exist within the educational literature regarding occupational socialization. Lortie (1975) described socialization as, “...something that happens to people as they move through a series of structured experiences and internalize the subculture of the group” (p. 61). Alternatively, Van Maanen and Schein (1979) defined socialization as the process where the individual, “...is taught and learns what behaviors and perspectives are customary and desirable within a professional role” (p. 212). Corbett (1980) defined occupational socialization as, “the process by which a new member to an occupation becomes acquainted with the culture of the occupational group, including the norms adhering to the role which the new member is to perform” (p. 11).

Early teacher socialization research attempted to replicate work done in the medical field about doctors’ socialization into the field. Multiple frameworks with various phases, stages and steps (Fuller, 1969; Fuller & Brown, 1975; Lortie, 1975) resulted from research specific to the process of moving from a teacher education program to induction into a school setting. Lawson (1986) defined occupational socialization for PE teachers as, “all the kinds of socialization that initially influence persons to enter the field of physical education and that later are responsible for their perceptions and actions as teacher educators and teachers” (p. 107). For the purposes of this study, however, occupational socialization is viewed as having three steps: pre-professional socialization, professional socialization, and induction.

*Pre-Professional Socialization.* Pre-professional socialization in this study refers to all of the events, influences, and milestones that occur in an individual's life prior to entry into a formal PETE program. These include experiences with and resulting from sport, school PE, interactions with PE teachers, interactions with coaches, and influences from family members and friends related to sport, physical education, and physical activity. Included in pre-professional socialization are the notions of subjective warrant and the apprenticeship of observation.

The subjective warrant (Lortie, 1975) is described as the process of testing and re-testing one's particular set of skills to determine if an individual is suited for a particular profession. Therefore, when an individual has an interest in a field, they have compared "...themselves in terms of a personal conception of what their goal will demand" (Lortie, 1975, p. 39). Lawson (1983a) identified the subjective warrant as "each person's perceptions of the requirements for teacher education and for actual teaching in schools" (p. 6). The subjective warrant is formed according to the individual's experiences and interests. According to Lawson (1983a),

...it is against the subjective warrant that each person tests aspirations, presumed competencies, and characteristics. Constructed on the basis of personal biography, the effects of significant others, societal influences, and direct experiences in schools, it is as important to the understanding of identity-formation as it is to a career choice. (p. 7)

Therefore, the values, beliefs, and assumptions that make up the subjective warrant help an individual determine if they are fit to become a teacher. Lawson (1983a) wrote, "...each student spends thousands of hours in school gymnasiums and playing fields, and this extensive contact with physical education's subject matter and teacher provides opportunities for a subjective warrant to be formed" (p. 6).

Research regarding the subjective warrant of PE teachers has revealed important findings about this principle of pre-professional socialization. Lawson (1983a, 1983b) found that

undergrad PE majors have various sport, physical activity, and PE experiences from which to draw, and Templin, Woodford, and Mullins (1982) claimed that 90% of PE majors enjoyed their elementary and secondary PE and sport experiences. Additionally, many prospective PE teachers cite interactions with coaches and other adults involved with physical activity and sport as major influences in their decision to pursue PE (Mawer, 1996). Dewar and Lawson (1984) found that PE teacher recruits enter the field as a “way of continuing an association with something that is both very enjoyable and rewarding, and their subjective warrants appear to be greatly influenced by experiences in both physical education and sport” (p. 20). Many researchers refer to a love of sport as the reason that individuals pursue the field of PE (Evans & Williams, 1989; Green, 1998; Macdonald, Kirk & Braiuka, 1999), while Dewar and Lawson (1984) found that “...recruits in physical education programs have extensive primary and secondary involvements in sport. They participate in interscholastic and agency sponsored sports, assume teaching and coaching roles, maintain spectator interest and read the sport related literature, all of which serve to foster an interest in both coaching and teaching as career options” (p. 20).

The subjective warrant of prospective PE teachers is important because of its strength in influencing teaching beliefs and practices. Lawson (1983a, 1983b) found that PE majors usually enter PETE programs with one of two subjective warrants. PE majors with a *coaching orientation* enter the field as a “career contingency” – that is, these majors have a strong interest in coaching school sports teams, but must also teach the general student population in order to do so. Conversely, majors with a *teaching orientation* are more committed to teaching school physical education. Lawson’s hypothesis regarding these subjective warrants had to do with the previous experiences with PE and sport, as well as the quality of the PE program that the prospective PE teachers encountered in their elementary and secondary schools. In later research,

Lawson (1988) wrote “...subjective warrant for physical education takes place prior to teacher education and not only influences who enters physical education but also the characteristics, competencies, and experiences presumed to be necessary for a career in physical education” (p. 112). Furthermore, the subjective warrant of PE teacher recruits can influence how they implement activities and curricular content, as their values and experiences will drive how they deliver lessons to students (Stran & Curtner-Smith, 2009).

The subjective warrant of PE majors is also vital to later stages of the occupational socialization process. Specifically, the subjective warrant of prospective PE teachers has great impact on professional socialization. Lawson (1983b) found that PE majors’ subjective warrants stay intact, often causing them to reject the messages and information conveyed in PETE programs. Schempp and Graber (1992) wrote, “subjective warrants are inextricable perspectives that are not easily overturned during the process of formal teacher education” (p. 336). Similarly, Placek, et al. (1995) found that prospective teacher backgrounds were important because they are “difficult to change and because they influence students’ receptivity to messages received in teacher education” (p. 246). The values and beliefs about PE, sport, and physical activity that PE teacher recruits develop during childhood and adolescence are so powerful that PETE has little influence on prospective PE teachers; these values are not easily changed (Curtner-Smith, 1998, 2001; Green, 1998; Evans, 1992; Evans, Davies, & Penney, 1996; Placek et al., 1995; Stran & Curtner-Smith, 2009).

Another influential component of a prospective teachers’ pre-professional socialization are the years spent as a student and their experiences in school. This is often referred to as the “apprenticeship of observation” (Lortie, 1975), which becomes a filter for all future experiences related to becoming a teacher. Prospective teachers learn significant amounts about their

occupation as students. According to Lortie (1975), a student spends “13,000 hours in direct contact with classroom teachers by the time he graduates from high school” (p. 61). Therefore, potential teachers have a wealth of experiences to draw from when they are finally in front of their own students. Su (1992) claimed,

Teacher candidates, upon entering training programs, already hold certain educational values and beliefs because of their unique prior socialization experiences. Teacher candidates, unlike trainees in other professions, have had the exceptional opportunity to observe for 12 to 16 continuous years members of the teaching profession at work. (p. 243)

Schempp and Graber (1992) cited that the apprenticeship of observation is a time where “...prospective teachers interact with the social structure of the school and begin to determine how they wish to act as future teachers” (p. 333). Although the apprenticeship of observation period is not an official “stage” in occupational socialization, the impact of these years as a student allow individuals to “construct some of the more visible professional values” of a teacher (Schempp & Graber, 1992, p. 333). Schempp and Graber (1992) wrote, “...the influence of these early socializing experiences carry far into teachers’ careers and provide a continuing influence over the pedagogical perspectives, beliefs, and behaviors of physical education teachers” (p. 334).

The apprenticeship of observation is a time in which prospective teachers form their notions regarding good pedagogical practice (Curtner-Smith, Hastie & Kinchin, 2008). It is a time when future PE teachers may develop beliefs about teaching which contradict the goals of professional and organizational socialization (Graber, 2001). Hutchinson (1993) found that high school students expressing an interest in becoming PE teachers believed that school PE was meant for fun, was accommodating for athletes, and was a place where all students could succeed if they just tried hard enough. Placek et al. (1995) found that the beliefs of PE teacher

recruits regarding the purposes of school PE were important to consider because these beliefs will influence curricular decisions, and in turn, school PE programs.

The apprenticeship of observation is also a vital period in pre-professional socialization because research suggests that during this period of time, prospective PE teachers develop the particular orientation they will have toward PE – either a teaching orientation or a coaching orientation. Lawson (1983a, 1983b) wrote that prospective teachers who saw school sports as more valuable than school PE were likely to develop a coaching orientation, and less likely to adopt the values expressed in their PETE programs. Conversely, individuals identified as having a teaching orientation were more likely to have had higher quality school PE programs, participated in more non-sport physical activities outside of school, and were likely to adopt the values of their PETE program. This is not always a fail-safe hypothesis, however, as Curtner-Smith et al. (2008) found that teachers using the “full version” of the Sport Education model did not follow traditional paths or apprenticeships of observation that led to their teaching orientations. In the same study, however, teachers who used the Sport Education model in a “watered down” or “cafeteria style” approach did have higher involvement with sport and lower quality PE programs during their apprenticeships of observation. In a later study, Stran and Curtner-Smith (2009) found that pre-service teachers who were involved with high-level sport prior to entering PETE programs were likely to be influenced by “coaches and teachers who prioritize extracurricular sport over fairly weak physical education programs” (p. 40), and see teaching PE as a way to accomplish their coaching goals.

Research has also demonstrated that the apprenticeship of observation is a very powerful influence in prospective PE teachers’ development. Lawson (1983b) said that many new PE teachers felt that employment in a school was familiar and comfortable because of the extensive



time spent in the setting during the apprenticeship of observation. Similarly, Graber (2001) said, “In physical education, the years spent in the student role (K-12) have been referred to as a time in which future teachers become acquainted with the task of teaching” (p. 493). Schempp (1989) discussed the lasting effects of the apprenticeship of observation, stating that it “represents collected and recollected experiences from days as a student. And those experiences provide a continuing influence over the pedagogical practices and orientations of physical education teachers” (p. 35). Prospective PE teachers start detecting the roles and responsibilities of teachers as soon as they enter the public school system, and this has the largest impact on what individuals learn about teaching and teachers. According to Schempp and Graber (1992), “students enter teacher education programs believing that they already know what occurs in schools and have little more to learn” (p. 334). These viewpoints that prospective teachers accumulate during their K-12 years influence not only beliefs about PE, but beliefs about teaching PE, and the pedagogies prospective teachers will employ.

Although some researchers prefer the term subjective warrant, apprenticeship of observation, or pre-professional socialization, all of these terms refer to the events that occur prior to entering a formal PETE program. For the purposes of this study, this phase of the socialization of PE teachers was referred to as the *personal biography*. This term is used to help capture the totality of each teacher’s experiences prior to entering a PETE program.

Understanding the personal biography and the period of pre-professional socialization of each teacher is important to this study because, as the theory and research has demonstrated, the impact of the subjective warrant and the apprenticeship of observation create deep impressions regarding who and what a PE teacher becomes upon entrance into the field. Understanding a teacher’s personal biography regarding their experiences with school PE, physical activity and

sport, important life events, and their family values and upbringing can help tell the story of how, what and why the teachers in this study teach. Specific to this study, understanding the types of communities where the individuals grew up can help explain teachers' shock, acceptance, understanding and/or rejection of urban school culture, and the ease or difficulty they encountered in their early careers. Teachers' previous experiences related to sport, PE and physical activity can help explain the focus of their PE programs, what they value as teachers, what they feel is most important to teach to students in urban schools, and whether they believe this is accepted by the students they teach. Understanding teachers' relationships with previous PE teachers and coaches, as well as determining other significant role models within the personal biography can help explain each individual's orientation to PE (i.e., a teaching or coaching orientation), and help understand the significant individuals that may have helped influence their philosophy. Identifying these significant individuals, whether a sibling, parent, friend, or mentor, can help re-trace the journey each teacher took to become a PE teacher. Finally, understanding significant life events in each teacher's personal biography can help explain their attitudes and beliefs regarding urban communities, urban schools, and urban students, as well as their specific philosophies for teaching in urban schools. Understanding all of these issues and details surrounding the pre-professional socialization of early career physical education teachers will help to illuminate the contextual factors that have either helped or hindered each teacher in the urban schools where they teach.

*Professional Socialization.* The second step in occupational socialization is professional socialization, where an individual develops the values, skills, and knowledge through structured professional education programs that is necessary for success in the field. Lortie (1975) labeled

these skills a “shared technical culture.” During this time of formal training, teacher candidates begin to form an identity as a teacher. Lawson (1983a) wrote that the three main purposes of teacher education programs were to disseminate technical culture and professional ideology, provide recruits with a new self-image, and to attract suitable candidates. However, Lawson (1983a) also said, “...recruits are not blank slates, nor are they passive, willing recipients in the face of professional socialization. They are active agents whose custodial, innovative, or fence-sitting orientations result in actions that directly influence the effectiveness of teacher education programs” (p. 10).

Professional socialization of PE teachers begins upon admission into a formal teacher education program. However, teacher education programs must contend with the influence of prospective teachers’ apprenticeship of observation and subjective warrant, which are powerful factors to overcome (Schempp & Graber, 1992). Schempp and Graber wrote, “Subjective warrants are inextricable perspectives that are not easily overturned during the process of formal teacher education” (p. 336). Teacher education students are often resistant to new knowledge and techniques, may outright reject new knowledge, and feel they have little left to learn in formal teacher education programs (Lawson, 1983a; Placek et al, 1995; Schempp & Graber, 1992). PE teacher recruits experience several types of socialization before their professional socialization (Lawson, 1986). This includes societal socialization, which involves learning how to “be” in society. Another form of socialization that many prospective PE teachers will experience is sport socialization, including socialization into sport by becoming involved in a particular sport, and socialization via sport, in which the individual may become interested in a sport-related career, and find ways to incorporate sport into his or her lifestyle. PE teacher recruits also participate in professional socialization, acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills to participate in the

“shared technical culture” (Lortie, 1975). Education and sport both carry out dominant norms that PE teacher recruits may conform to and carry out (Lawson, 1988). In fact, many PE teachers claim that their biography and teaching experiences are more influential than the formal coursework they took during PETE programs (Lawson, 1988).

Schempp and Graber (1992) identified the dialectic nature of teacher socialization. This dialectic occurs when differing propositions are confronted and the result is a synthesis of perspectives and actions. A dialectic process can result in common understanding, domination of one group over another, or permanent separation of two parties (Schempp & Graber, 1992). They wrote that preservice teachers,

...negotiate beliefs and knowledge with teacher educators and with others responsible for their professional education. The degree of negotiation is, of course, dependent upon the congruency of the aspiring teacher’s a priori beliefs and knowledge and those promoted by the education program. (p. 331)

Therefore, during professional socialization, prospective teachers do not simply accept the practices and orientations presented by teacher educators; rather, they are negotiated through a dialectic process (Schempp & Graber, 1992).

Early research regarding teacher education programs by Lawson (1983a) identified that “many teacher education programs may reinforce, not alter, recruits’ subjective warrants; may not even identify, let alone disseminate effectively, a shared technical culture and a professional ideology” (p. 12). Similarly, Lortie (1975) found that formal teacher education lacked potency, and that recruits’ biography and pre-socialization experiences were more powerful influences than teacher education programs.

Rovegno (1991, 1992a, 1992b, 1993a, 1993b) provided many insights to professional socialization through her extensive research of a cohort of undergraduate physical education majors. Rovegno wrote that teacher education aims to foster changes in perspectives among

prospective teachers, but also where prospective teachers learn content (“that”) and teaching methods (“how”) (Rovegno, 1992a). However, the knowledge learned in PETE programs does not easily transfer to the cultures of schools, classrooms, and gymnasias. Prospective teachers in Rovegno’s research also learned to critically examine their own K-12 PE experiences, and understand the political aspects of the field (i.e., negative stereotypes, marginalization of the subject, isolation) (Rovegno, 1993b). The abundance of knowledge and information received by prospective PE teachers is affected by the types of messages given by faculty in courses, students’ prior knowledge of PE, students’ goals for teaching, and the complexity of students’ field experiences (Rovegno, 1993b). She found that PE majors initially thought that PE instruction meant teaching appropriate form for sports skills and playing games (Rovegno, 1993b). However, these views changed over time with additional courses and field experiences.

Within coursework, prospective teachers may learn new curricular approaches, but more importantly, “...what PETE majors learned in coursework helped them know what to look for in field experiences and the meaning of what they were seeing in terms of larger educational goals and issues” (Rovegno, 1993b, p. 638). Rovegno (1993b) also found that coursework served as a mechanism to understand the power of learning through doing. Although coursework is important for a prospective PE teacher, Rovegno found that “showing and telling preservice teachers how to teach content will not be sufficient to insure transfer to field settings” (Rovegno, 1992a, p. 80). Field experiences allowed preservice teachers to develop their teaching skills as well as develop pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) (Rovegno, 1992a).

The development of PCK takes considerable time to develop, yet doing so allowed prospective teachers to provide more detailed instruction; differentiate more between the task, environment, and the individual; provide children more logical task progressions; give more

appropriate feedback; and observe children's movements in more detail (Rovegno, 1992a, 1992b, 1993a). In early field experiences, the PE majors that Rovegno studied taught in ways that reflected their own PE experiences, and in ways that were inconsistent with their goals for PE, their knowledge about learning and teaching game skills, and information presented by their professors and cooperating teachers (Rovegno, 1993a). However, as PE majors' teaching capability developed, content knowledge became tailored to the children they were teaching and how these children learned (Rovegno, 1992a). She wrote,

...the development of pedagogical content knowledge was more than learning how to cognitively transform content for teaching, but included specification in terms of individual capabilities to perceive and teach within the field environment. The individual, environment, and the act of teaching were fundamentally part of coming to know. (p. 79)

Other research has found that many prospective PE teachers engage in a practice called "studentship" rather than developing their teaching identities during professional socialization. Studentship, as Graber (1996) defined, is "the ability to progress through a program with the greatest ease and most success" (p. 461). During professional socialization, some students may say or do whatever it takes to successfully complete their PETE programs, however, these students do not actually agree with or buy into the values and expectations of the PETE program. PE teacher recruits have much to lose by not demonstrating "studentship," as their university supervisors and instructors have control over the prospective teacher's grades, evaluations, and recommendations (Schempp & Graber, 1992).

Understanding the process of professional socialization is important to this study because universities and field experiences are often considered two different worlds (Ferman-Nemser & Buchanan, 1985; Rovegno, 1992a). Therefore, understanding the professional socialization experiences of teachers may help explain some teachers' actions and behaviors once they are employed in schools. For example, understanding each teacher's professional socialization can

help explain why teachers' select the content they teach in PE. Professional socialization may also help explain why teachers use particular management techniques and discipline strategies, which may have been learned in PETE coursework or in field experiences. Understanding the professional socialization experiences of teachers may provide insights regarding teachers' current practices, as they may be a direct reflection of what was learned in PETE. However, more may be learned about professional socialization if teachers' practices are greatly adapted from or somehow oppose what was learned in PETE coursework and field experiences. If teachers do not utilize the knowledge and skills learned in PETE coursework and field experiences, determining the reasons for teachers' omission of these practices can reveal information regarding the effectiveness of PETE programs and teachers alike. This information may be especially helpful when considering how PETE programs prepared these teachers to teach in urban schools, since the context of urban schools is very different than the contexts of rural and suburban schools.

*Induction.* According to Lawson (1991), induction refers to a "profession's formal admission and initiation process" (p. 20). Induction has also been described as a "transitional period in teacher education between teacher preparation and continuing professional development" (Hulin-Austin, Odell, Ishler, Kay & Edeflelt, 1989, p. 3). Teachers can experience induction in a variety of ways, but according to Lawson (1991) induction ends, "when this person is employed and accepted as a full-fledged member of the profession" (p. 20). Katz (1972) developed a four-stage model of the stages teachers experienced from approximately year one to year five of teaching. Katz's (1972) first two stages of his Model of Teacher Development correspond with the induction period in a teacher's career. During the first stage, survival, teachers focus on coping with the day-to-day tasks of teaching. Teachers in this stage, usually in

their first year of teaching, need vast amounts of encouragement and support as they question their abilities to teach and their desire to continue teaching. In the second stage, consolidation, teachers are able to shift their focus to the needs of individual children. However, teachers in the consolidation stage may still need the assistance of experienced colleagues and other professionals throughout their second or third year of teaching.

During the induction phase, a teacher may juggle a variety of feelings and experiences as they adjust to a school setting, the students they teach, and the community-at-large. Schempp and Graber (1992) claimed that beginning teachers must assimilate to the established school culture, which is influenced by policy, power, community norms, standards, and expectation, and levels of parental involvement. They wrote, “Young teachers learn to survive the complexities of classroom operation and professional obligations while discovering themselves as teachers and colleagues” (Schempp & Graber, 1992, p. 341). Lawson (1983b) wrote,

...the new teacher is literally bombarded with organizational messages acquired through a diverse range of socialization tactics. This person has not only failed to receive adequate preparation for the experience in teacher education, but also, must frequently face organizational socialization alone. (p. 7)

VanMaanen & Schein (1979) identified three orientations that new teachers adopt when they begin teaching. The first is a *custodial orientation*, in which the teacher keeps the existing system in place and maintains status quo. A teacher with a *content innovation orientation* promotes new innovations in what and how teachers implement their content. Finally, new teachers may adopt a *role innovation orientation* in which they redefine the teacher’s role in schools and communities. These orientations are influenced by the context and politics at play in particular settings. As Stroot & Whipple (2003) wrote,

Socialization into a new school setting has huge implications for beginning teachers. In one sense the existing system will shape the outcome for the beginning teacher by the socialization tactics in that particular context. The alternative view is that the beginning



teacher can become empowered to change the system by choosing socialization strategies that would make these changes possible. The context in which the beginning teacher is working, particularly the workplace conditions that enhance or inhibit the teacher's ability to be effective, strongly influence her or his ability to make these choices. (p. 314)

Despite the type of orientation that a teacher develops either during professional socialization or during induction, two factors are especially important in determining what type of orientation newer teachers remain. These factors are reality shock and the washout effect.

Reality shock is defined as the incongruence between the teacher training phase and what is encountered in schools. Veenman (1984) claimed that reality shock was “the collapse of the missionary ideals formed during teacher training by the harsh and rude reality of classroom life” (p. 143). This phase of assimilation is a process that all teachers must master, usually in the beginning of their careers. Reality shock can make teachers question their career objectives and second guess their ability to teach. It occurs because new teachers are undertrained and are given general training rather than being taught to deal with specific issues (Stevens-Smith, 2000; Stroot & Whipple, 2003; Veenman, 1984). Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002) identified “praxis shock” as, “the teachers’ confrontation with the realities and responsibilities of being a classroom teacher that puts their beliefs and ideas about teaching to the test, challenges some of them, and confirms others” (p. 105). Reality shock can result in teachers changing their teaching styles. Veenman (1984) claimed when major discrepancies existed between teacher training ideals and their school reality, young teachers shifted their practices to more conservative attitudes and authoritarian viewpoints.

Another factor that influences new teachers is the “washout effect” described by many researchers (Stroot & Whipple, 2003; Veenman, 1984; Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1981). Veenman (1984) claimed that issues within schools (such as school bureaucracy, evaluation, cooperating teachers, principals, students, and parents) can cause the principles learned in teacher education

programs to be “washed out.” Likewise, Zeichner and Tabachnick (1981) described washout as the diminishing impact of the teacher education program over time. Furthermore, Stroot and Whipple (2003) claimed, “Sometimes the reality of the school context does not support the goals and philosophies adopted by beginning teachers during the teacher preparation program” (p. 316-7). Therefore, newer teachers may revert to what they believe is appropriate practice, despite what they learned in teacher education programs. Stroot and Whipple (2003) identified that the washout effect was especially troublesome in urban schools because teacher education programs and teachers’ apprenticeship of observation are drastically different than the teaching situations encountered in urban schools.

Beginning PE teachers also encounter similar concerns as general education teachers during induction. O’Sullivan (1989) found that beginning PE teachers had concerns regarding management and balancing the additional duties outside of teaching. Teachers in this study were successful in managing and organizing their first school year, setting learning expectations and getting the support of their principals. However, these teachers had concerns about earning the respect for their profession and their subject from students, parents, and other teachers, managing their non-teaching duties, and individualizing the curriculum for their students. Stroot, Collier, O’Sullivan and England (1994) found that a PE teacher’s workload often included supervising lunch, teaching other subjects, and coaching. All of these duties left PE teachers with little energy to be effective throughout the day.

Similar to their general education colleagues, beginning PE teachers are also faced with reality shock. Sparkes, Templin, and Schempp (1993) found that novice PE teachers are surprised to discover that their colleagues have low expectations for PE teaching, and that PE as a subject has such marginal status in the curricula. Stroot, Faucette, and Schwager (1993) found

that three recently certified PE teachers experienced intense reality shock when their philosophies and the conditions in their teaching environment were drastically different. Stroot and Ko (2006), in their review of induction of PE teachers into schools, found that “when teachers have had preservice experiences in school settings similar to those found in their school site, they are more likely to be ready for the issues they face during their first year” (p. 433).

Williams and Williamson (1998) found that washout effect occurs when teachers’ apprenticeship of observation takes over and teachers employ methods that were used on them as students. They found that washout effect also occurs when there is disparity among organizational socialization. For example, when beginning teachers have reservations about a particular teaching method, yet they comply to avoid “rocking the boat,” this is referred to as *strategic compliance* (Williams & Williamson, 1998). When a beginning teacher is socialized to believe that an authority figure’s (i.e., department head) view is the best, despite what they may have learned during PETE, this is called *internalized adjustment*. However, when a beginning teacher is able to create changes in viewpoints among authority figures, this is referred to as *strategic redefinition*. In a study of eight beginning PE teachers, Williams and Williamson (1998) found that teachers selected differing social strategies for their teaching when the reality of the school and their professional beliefs conflicted. Most of the teachers chose the “path of least resistance” because of a novice’s position within the school and PE department. This allowed the teachers to navigate difficult situations they encountered during their first year of teaching. Williams and Williamson (1998) found that these experiences contribute to the washout effect if “going against the grain” continues to be a problem for newer teachers. Similarly, Stroot et al. (1993) found that three novice teachers wished to make a difference in their schools by teaching physical education. They found, however, that “these ideals were not

reinforced by their environments, and in fact, were openly discouraged” (Stroot et al., 1993, p. 381).

Yet another factor influencing the induction of PE teachers is isolation. Many beginning PE teachers are isolated from their colleagues because of where they teach within the school. Many newer PE teachers will interact more with students than fellow teachers in their buildings (Stroot et al., 1993). This is especially the case for PE teachers in elementary schools, who are usually the only PE teachers in the building (Stroot, 2001). PE teachers also look different than other teachers in the school building due to different standards of professional dress (Lawson, 1983b).

Understanding the induction process of teachers is important to this study because using this framework can help explain the challenges that early career physical educators face as they navigate their particular school settings, and how these challenges affect teachers’ pedagogies. A new teacher in an urban school is faced with many tasks simultaneously. For example, a new teacher may spend much of their first few years in school learning about themselves as a teacher with regard to their teaching philosophy, classroom management style, and beliefs about assessment, discipline, and content. A new teacher may also be learning about the policies and procedures at a particular school, such as whether or not their administrator simply wants the PE teacher to keep students “busy, happy, and good” (Placek, 1983), or if the administrator wants highly detailed lesson plans submitted each week. At the same time, a new urban PE teacher is trying to get to know their teaching colleagues and get a feel for their understanding of PE as a subject. Novice teachers are also learning about their students, and worrying about whether students will accept or reject the content they present. A new teacher may also be learning about parents, families, and the community where they teach, and what value these stakeholders place

on PE and physical activity. Finally, a new PE teacher must contend with what curriculum to enact, and how this curriculum will meet the needs of students, yet meet state and/or national standards. Any “hiccups” within one of these categories may impact a new teacher’s ability to be effective, and may cause a newer teacher to question their legitimacy as a professional. Understanding the process of induction is especially important because this stage of occupational socialization occurs at the same time when many teachers choose to leave the field (within the first three to five years of entering the profession) (Ingersoll, 2003; Ng & Thomas, 2007).

Understanding the principles and research behind occupational socialization can help shed important light on two of the research questions guiding this study, since these questions seek to determine the impact that each teacher’s personal biography, professional socialization experiences, and induction have on teaching PE in urban schools. Recognizing factors that have helped teachers experience success in urban schools, as well as identifying factors of occupational socialization that conflict with the culture of urban schools can offer tremendous information about how to improve PETE programs and field experiences.

### **Culturally Relevant Physical Education**

Culturally relevant physical education (CRPE, Flory & McCaughtry, 2011) is a useful framework for answering two additional research questions guiding the study. These research questions focus on the challenges and dilemmas which physical education teachers encounter during their early careers in urban schools, and how teachers understand the differences between the cultural backgrounds and the cultural dynamics of their urban students, and how this affects their teaching practices.

Flory and McCaughtry’s (2011) framework for CRPE includes a three-step process for providing culturally relevant instruction: (1) knowing the public, (2) identifying areas of cultural

distance, and (3) enacting strategies to bridge cultural distance. In this section, I outline the three-step process of Culturally Relevant Physical Education (CRPE; Flory & McCaughtry, 2011). It was illustrated that CRPE is not something that teachers “do” – that is, being a culturally relevant PE teacher is a dynamic, continuous process that may change with the population being served in individual schools. Before defining CRPE, however, it is important to discuss the term culture and the literature regarding cultural relevance in general education.

*Defining Culture.* Anthropologists, sociologists and other researchers study culture using multiple theories and viewpoints. In many cases, studying culture translates into studying “others” or “otherness” – those who are not White and middle-class, or who do not conform to White, middle-class values and traditions (Dilworth & Brown, 2001; Eisenhart, 2001; Estrada, 1999). Anthropologists tend to study the distinct features of a particular culture, while many in educational research studied culture in terms of differences (Eisenhart, 2001). Eisenhart (2001) claimed,

When members of groups with legacies of adaptation to different external conditions come into contact with each other, their cultural differences are likely to be a cause of miscommunication and misunderstanding, unless sensitive cultural brokers are available to anticipate, explain, and overcome the effects of difference. (p. 210)

This view of culture explains to teachers and researchers the differences between cultures of school and home, and produced studies of “otherness” in educational literature (e.g., Heath, 1983; Jacob & Jordan, 1993). Using this definition of culture provided a solid argument for studying non-White students. Eisenhart (2001) continued,

Without special efforts to teach “culturally different” students the unfamiliar school culture, these students will, from the first day and through no fault of their own, have difficulty understanding what is expected of them in school. Study after study have demonstrated that, although children approach school culture as a kind of “second culture” (after the home and neighborhood), White, class-privileged children and their parents find school culture considerably more familiar than do others. (p. 210-11)

However, other views which oppose the cultural difference viewpoint suggest that not all non-White students struggle in schools (Ogbu, 1978). Ogbu (1995a, 1995b) argued for a “cultural frame of reference” that better explains minority students’ performances in schools. This view of culture emphasizes the constructed view of culture in specific contexts.

Regardless of the specific view, the culture that an individual identifies with and the culture in which an individual participates have profound effects on the individual’s experiences. Eisehnart (2001) wrote,

The patterns and meanings that people take up and manipulate in particular places and with particular other people are consequential for them. They affect the way people interpret (or “filter”) their experiences, the concerns people feel, the preferences they have, the choices they make, and the identities they seek....Individuals are not free to choose for themselves any view of the world, any way of acting in class, any definition of success, or any identity. In practice, such choices are constrained by intersubjective understandings of what is possible, appropriate, legitimate, properly radical, and so forth. That is, they are constrained by culture and the enduring social structures that culture mediates. (p. 215)

Individuals interpret their world through a cultural lens (Geertz, 1973; Giroux, 1992), and the beliefs, values, and attitudes that individuals carry influence how they construe environments and institutions. Although race is a significant influence in one’s cultural viewpoint, culture encompasses much more than just race. In this research, culture is defined as local to the social situation, including socioeconomic status, language, family structure, violence and crime, personal and public safety, immigration issues, race, ethnicity, and religion (Barrett & Noguera, 2008; Foster, 1995; Graybill, 1997; Irvine, 2003; Lenski, Crawford, Crumpler & Stallworth, 2005; Monroe, 2005a, 2005b).

*Knowing the Public Served.* Many frameworks explain how culture plays a role in education, including cultural discontinuity and synchronization (Irvine, 2003), cultural congruence (Lee, 2003), cultural competence and cultural proficiency (Cross, Bazron, Dennis &

Isaacs, 1989), multiculturalism (Banks, 1993), cultural responsiveness (Gay, 2000), and cultural relevance (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Each framework possesses unique characteristics; however, none of the frameworks can operate without sophisticated knowledge of the public served. For teachers to connect with students and provide culturally relevant schooling, this first step translates into deeply knowing students' lives. Teachers' knowledge of students could include: with whom students live; ethnic, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds; learning styles and challenges; and personal information allowing teachers to better understand them.

Page (2004) related knowing students to the ways that close friends and family know one another, "People who know us well understand our complexity, our individualism, and our group alliances and heritage. Likewise, teachers should know their students...The best teachers I know file away in their head thousands of bits of information about their students" (p. 10). Monroe (2005a) called for, "...knowing pupils' personalities, interests, values and inclinations; and acknowledging the multiple roles that youths play beyond their lives as students. Such layered interactions contribute to sound student-teacher relationships" (p. 157). Other researchers suggest knowing students as the first step in successful teaching. Barnes (2006) wrote, "Teachers need to know more about the world of children with whom they work in order to better offer opportunities for learning success" (p. 86). Villegas and Lucas (2002) claimed, "If teaching involves assisting students to build bridges between their preexisting knowledge and new material, then teachers must know not only the subject matter they teach but also their students" (p. 26).

This step of CRPE is important to this study because newer physical educators may not have the advantage of knowing students (the public they serve) deeply when they begin teaching. Therefore, recently certified PE teachers may not know the structures of families in the school



where they teach, the socioeconomic status of students and families in the community, the languages that students, parents and extended families speak, or the religions practiced within or the influence of religion on students and other community members. Newly certified PE teachers may not have enough information to deeply connect with their students when they begin teaching. Using this framework can provide details about how teachers gained deep knowledge of the public they serve, or conversely, it can document how teachers did not gather insights about the students they taught and their parents and other community members invested in the school. Did teachers stay after school to participate in extracurricular activities? Did teachers take up coaching duties? Did teachers take opportunities during class to get to know students? Even further, identifying how teachers in this study came to understand the students they taught (or how they did not come to understand their students) may lead to realizations about how this affected teaching practices, such as how this knowledge affects student-teacher relationships, teacher discipline, student participation, student behavior, and management strategies within PE.

*Identifying Cultural Distance.* The second step in providing culturally relevant instruction involves teachers identifying instances of cultural distance between their personal biographies and the realities of the students they teach. Cultural distance is the discrepancy between worldviews, values and backgrounds that shape individuals' and groups' explanations for how the world operates. Vast cultural distance often exists between schools, teachers' biographies, students and families in urban communities. According to the literature, teachers are predominantly White, middle-class females not from inner cities, who view teaching from Eurocentric vantage points. Conversely, urban citizens are largely minority, low to lower-middle-class, and live within a complex urban matrix (Freeman, Brookhart & Loadman, 1999; Stoddart, 1993; Ware, 2006). Therefore, teachers in urban schools stand in front of students

whose ethnic and economic backgrounds differ from their own, since nearly 80% of students in urban schools are African American, Hispanic, or Asian American (Freeman et al., 1999; Snipes, Horowitz, Soga, & Casserly, 2008).

Discrepancies between teachers' and students' cultural lenses can lead to misunderstandings and misinterpretations as school norms created and reinforced by teachers are interpreted by students and families. Monroe (2005a) said, "Cultural misunderstandings in the classroom provide fertile ground for school failure" (p. 158). Urban students face distinctly different cultures than those in their homes. For example, Pransky and Bailey (2002) wrote, "Because all communities do not think, believe, or learn in identical ways, there may still be much...that is confusing to or misunderstood by children with language, culture and socioeconomic differences" (p. 371). Finally, Graybill (1997) noted, "...when teachers face conflict in cultural values, they often react by rigidly adhering to their own set of values: thus, inadvertently, their behavior can interfere with the learning of their students" (p. 312).

This step of CRPE is important because this study will specifically examine newer urban teachers' personal biographies, and aspects of these biographies and urban culture which drastically differed from the students they teach. Therefore, teachers may reveal new ways in which their personal biographies differ from the students they teach, and features of urban culture that could have been discussed or included in their PETE programs. In addition, examining how teachers understand the cultural distance between themselves and students can lend valuable insights about how this affects teaching practices, such as how urban students respond to teachers' presentation of particular content, how urban students respond to teachers' management techniques (such as rules, routines, consequences, etc.), and how urban students respond to teachers' use of language, slang, and instructions. Teachers' interpretations of their

students responses may differ based on the degree to which cultural distance exists between students and teachers. Finally, understanding this portion of CRPE can provide awareness of the cultural distance that newer urban teachers encounter in urban schools, how PETE programs may or may not have prepared teachers to recognize these cultural distances, and what could have been included in PETE programs to better prepare newer teachers for the cultural distances they encounter in urban schools.

*Enacting Strategies to Bridge Cultural Distance.* The third step in CRPE involves overcoming cultural distance by devising strategies that bridge distances between urban teachers and students (Bondy, Ross, Galligane, & Hambacher, 2007; D. Brown, 2004; Cochran-Smith, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Several studies identify successful teachers involved in the communities where they teach, who understand historical, political and economical factors affecting the community, and view students as family (Gay, 2000; Ware, 2006). Foster (1995) and Irvine (2003) identified teachers who aligned their practice with students' home settings to bridge the cultural divide between school and home life. Many scholars advocate for instruction that builds on students' lives, rather than expecting them to learn in unfamiliar ways. Cochran-Smith (1995) suggested that teachers "explore and reconsider their own assumptions, understand the values and practices of families and cultures that are different from their own, and construct pedagogy that takes these into account in locally appropriate and culturally sensitive ways" (p. 495). Ladson-Billings (1995) and Gay (2000) claimed culturally relevant teaching allowed students to achieve *through* their culture, instead of forcing students to fit rigid demands of a prescribed curriculum. For example, rather than using outdated poetry lessons, Ladson-Billings (1995) described a teacher who used rap lyrics to teach the same concepts. Villegas and Lucas (2002) claimed that teachers who bridged cultural distance use "knowledge about students' lives

to design instruction that builds on what they already know while stretching them beyond the familiar” (p. 21). Finally, Monroe (2005a) claimed,

...creating a culturally responsive classroom requires expanding instructional materials to connect with students through written, oral, aural, and artistic forms...developing academic assignments and routines that employ student strengths as starting points for learning and continued growth; and working within a divergent framework that allows for alternative interpretations, answers, and modes of learning. (p. 154)

Understanding this step of the cultural relevance process is important to this study because it can identify the specific actions taken by urban PE teachers to connect with students. Teachers may distinguish the types of content they chose to include, their teaching philosophies, their expectations for students, the rules, routines and management strategies that they use, and the classroom environment they establish to bridge cultural distance between themselves and the urban students they teach. Conversely, teachers may reveal ways that they were unable or unwilling to bridge cultural distances between their personal biographies and the urban students they taught. Although strategies that participating teachers use will not be universally effective across all teaching circumstances (whether urban, suburban, or rural), the strategies that teachers identify may illustrate the process necessary to effectively connect with students whose backgrounds are drastically different, and may offer additional “best practices” within the field of PE, but specifically for teachers in urban schools.

Cultural relevance is not something that can be “done,” and much literature identifies the short-comings of one-shot workshops, curricular interventions, and other surface-level modifications (Cochran-Smith, 1995; Monroe, 2005b). Teaching in a culturally relevant manner is a process that is dynamic and on-going, and involves knowing the public served, determining if cultural distance exists, and enacting strategies to bridge this distance. Villegas and Lucas (2002) stated,

Given the diversity in students' backgrounds and the complex nature of the knowledge construction process, teachers need to continuously adjust their plans of action to meet students' needs while simultaneously building on their strengths. Clearly, teaching cannot be reduced to a rigid prescription that, if faithfully followed, automatically results in student learning. (p. 25)

## Summary

Two theoretical frameworks were selected because they can best answer the four research questions that guided this study. First, occupational socialization (Lawson, 1983a, 1983b, Lortie, 1975) outlines the process of becoming an "insider" within the culture of an occupation. Occupational socialization was selected as a theoretical framework for this study because it can provide a strong background for investigating the personal biographies prior to formal teacher education and the influence of PETE programs on prospective PE teachers. Second, culturally relevant physical education (CRPE, Flory & McCaughtry, 2011) defines the process of knowing the public you serve, identifying instances of cultural distance, and then devising strategies to bridge cultural distance. This framework was selected for the study because it offers a solid foundation for examining the challenges and dilemmas that early career PE teachers encounter in urban schools, as well as understanding the differences between the cultural backgrounds and cultural dynamics of urban students, and how these affect teachers' pedagogies. In the following chapters, I will present the findings of this study based on these theoretical frameworks, then discuss what these findings mean in light of the previous literature.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### Introduction

This study was an examination of early-career physical educators' perspectives on learning to teach in urban schools. This chapter is an outline of the interpretive research methodology and includes a summary of (1) the theoretical justifications and assumptions of the interpretive paradigm, (2) the research participants and settings, (3) the data collection methods used for the study, (4) the data analysis techniques used for the study, (5) a discussion of the ethical principles considered for the study, and (6) aspects of researcher bias that affected the study. Following is a section about the theoretical foundation and assumptions affecting the study design.

*Theoretical Justification and Assumptions of the Interpretive Paradigm.* The justification for and outline of the theoretical assumptions of the interpretive paradigm used to frame the study follow. The focus of this study was early career physical educators' perspectives of learning to teach in urban schools, influenced by the interpretivist paradigm. Teachers' unique experiences within PETE preparation programs, their gymnasias, school and district environments, and with individual students all shape teaching practices. The interpretive, phenomenological, or constructivist paradigm of this study was based on a cognitive view of reality. Individuals develop meaning from experiences, and this becomes reality for them. This reality is socially constructed, and based on individual circumstances and experiences over time (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). Those who subscribe to the interpretive paradigm place great value on the cognitive and affective contributions to an individual's reality. In the interpretive paradigm, "culture is created in a process....of socially based interpretations of what they do and what occurs in local situations" (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999, p. 49). Each individual's beliefs,

thoughts, and behaviors are affected by differences in ethnicity, age, gender, religious beliefs, social, and political viewpoints.

Researchers using the interpretive paradigm intend to participate in the lives of participants since “meaning is only created through interaction” (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999, p. 49). The researcher seeks to reveal meaning that gives relevance to the participant’s life, and to achieve understanding of individual behavior through social interaction and communication. The interpretivist should engage in multiple interactions with the participant; therefore, the research questions are often re-framed throughout the research process to gain the best understanding possible (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999).

All research is framed by particular beliefs and values. These paradigms shape how events are viewed and how researchers determine what is important in a research setting (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). Differences in research paradigms are often based on the assumptions made about ontology, epistemology, and methodology (Patton, 2002). Interpretivist research is constructed knowledge that emerges from the sustained interactions between participants and researchers “because meaning can be created only through interaction” (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999, p. 49). Therefore, the data and findings of research influenced by the interpretive paradigm are shaped and re-shaped as the research continues since new findings, and subsequently new meanings and realities, emerge as the researcher spends more time with participants (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). The following sections of this chapter are an outline of the theoretical assumptions regarding the nature of reality, knowledge, and the design for inquiry in social contexts.

*Interpretive Theoretical Assumptions Regarding Ontology.* According to the interpretive paradigm, ontology, or the nature of reality, is not singular, but based on a social construction of reality; that is, what individuals believe to be reality is constructed as they interact in social settings over time (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). Individuals organize and interpret a world view based on thoughts and reactions to the experiences they have in social situations (Geertz, 1973). Therefore, the nature of reality is highly subjective and was interpreted differently based on an individual's experiences. Factors such as race, gender, religion, sexuality, socioeconomic status, political viewpoints, and familial structure influence individuals' experiences and self-identity (Howe, 2001). It is likely, then, that two individuals who participate in similar social experiences will interpret them differently based on prior experiences and the factors influencing them in each specific situation. Lincoln and Guba (1985) claim that these social constructions "are not more or less 'true' in an absolute sense, but simply more or less informed and/or sophisticated" (p. 111). Over time, these social constructions of reality can be altered or can develop into new understandings of reality. Howe (2001) wrote,

...how human beings know and are known, as well as what knowledge consists in, is inextricably bound up with the kinds of things human beings are....Because human beings actively construct their social reality, the kinds of things human beings *are* is not necessarily the same kinds of things they *must* or *ought* to be (p. 203).

Further, Howe (2001) claimed that humans are self-creating in that they "actively shape and reshape" social experiences, cultural norms, and limits of these behaviors (p. 203). A researcher's role is not to make claims about the correctness of an individual's cognitive constructions, but to reveal the meaning that the individual makes concerning these constructions. The interpretivist researcher studies participants in specific social contexts, and considers the meaning of behaviors through social interaction (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999).



*Interpretive Theoretical Assumptions Regarding Epistemology.* Epistemology, or the nature of knowledge, stems from shared understanding, negotiation, and the historical and social context of an individual's experiences (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). Understanding, especially between an interpretivist researcher and participant, develops through discussion and interaction. Therefore, knowledge is not based solely on the participants' experiences or the researchers' interpretations, but is based instead on a negotiated understanding between researchers and participants. Guba and Lincoln (1998) claim that knowledge accumulates through dialectical exchanges, so understanding is jointly constructed between individuals. Interpretive understanding is bound by contextual influences such as the details of interactions, situations, and the social and historical contexts specific to an experience (Erickson, 1986); therefore, the negotiated understanding between researcher and participant is not absolute. Knowledge represents the merging of two individually constructed understandings (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). Howe (2001) claimed, "knowledge, particularly in social research, must be seen as actively constructed – as culturally and historically grounded, as laden with moral and political values, and as serving certain interests and purposes" (p. 202). Similarly, Angen (2000) claimed "There can be no understanding without interpretation. We are always embedded in the life world of language and socio-historical understanding without recourse to some outside point of view" (p. 385). These assumptions regarding knowledge mean that any negotiated understanding based on interpretive inquiry cannot be identified as truth, but rather is the meaning constructed between individuals.

*Interpretive Theoretical Assumptions Regarding Methodology.* Researchers using an interpretive research approach examine individual meaning deriving from participant social and circumstantial experiences. This research is conducted using emergent design and naturalistic

methods. The methodological assumptions emphasize dialectical interactions, the importance of cultural context, and utilizing the researcher as the primary research tool (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). Participants in interpretive research define and describe experiences, while the researcher classifies and codifies, enumerates, correlates and associates, and finally, interprets and communicates these experiences (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). Interpretive ethnographers engage with participants over time; therefore, dialogue and interactions may result in new understanding and ways of interpreting the world. Research questions are re-framed throughout the inquiry to construct deeper understanding of participants' experiences. Most research occurs by means of interviews, correspondence, and member checks to maximize description and interpretation (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999).

The researcher must observe the cultural context and discuss meaning in the participant's ordinary environment; therefore, meaning is found through participation in the social context. Social issues such as race, class, gender and sexuality can impact the social environment quite differently. In summary, the cultural context elicits meaning for observing behavior, not for assuming what the social context means to the participants. The context of the participant's culture does not define the experience; it only enhances the understanding and interpretation of the experience. The emphasis of interpretivist research regards the social construction of reality; therefore, the researcher acts as the principal research tool (LeCompte & Schensul, 1998). Such immersion requires an examination of many issues that may influence the research. First, researcher's biases and values influence the research process. Researchers must acknowledge personal views on social issues (i.e., gender, age, class, and ethnicity), and how these views may affect what is noted during observations, as well as how the researcher conducts interviews. Angen (2000) wrote, "Because we cannot separate ourselves from what we know, our

subjectivity is an integral part of our understanding of ourselves, of others, and of the world around us. Consequently, the researcher's values are inherent to all phases of the inquiry process" (p. 385). The ongoing interactions between researcher and participant require that the researcher abides by several ethical principles, such as keeping participants informed of the research purpose, requirements for participation, and ensuring confidentiality and anonymity throughout the study.

Generalizability from one population to another is unlikely in qualitative research, however, the findings of one study may be generalized to test theory, establish causality, or improve programs and policies from the lessons learned (Patton, 2002). However, interpretivists use transferability to explain the application of research findings. By providing "thick descriptions" (Geertz, 1973) of the social setting, methods and purposes, and participant's perspectives, readers can "live through" the interpretations and then transfer these interpretations into their contexts and circumstances. These thick descriptions permit the researcher "to create the conditions that will allow the reader, through the writer, to converse with (and observe) those who have been studied" (Denzin, 1998, p. 324). Transferability of research is dependent on both the reader and the researcher. The researcher can provide clear and detailed accounts of who, what, where, and how they carried out the study, and then use the findings to justify interpretations. However, only the reader can apply the findings to their individual, unique social contexts and expand their understanding of similar issues.

### **Study Methods**

In this section, I describe the research participants (Alexis, Brad and Candie), as well as the schools where they teach, and the physical education programs at each school. Within this

description, I also include rationale for teacher selection as well as the data collection methods. A discussion of trustworthiness strategies and ethical practices concludes the section.

*Criteria for Participant Selection.* Three recently certified K-12 physical education teachers were chosen through purposive sampling (Patton, 2002), based on five specific criteria. First, physical education teachers in urban schools were studied since the unique teaching conditions in urban contexts are often much more challenging than the teaching conditions in suburban or rural contexts. The U.S. Census Bureau (2000) defines “urban” communities as those with high population density, or at least one thousand residents per square mile. The Council of Great City Schools, comprised of 66 of the largest urban public school systems in the U.S., deems a school district eligible for membership in the council if the district is located in a city with a population over 250,000, or with student enrollments over 35,000 (Council of Great City Schools, 2009). While there is no official designation for identifying a school as “urban,” (Fairbrother & Russo, 2006), Kincheloe (2004) described urban schools as sharing a comprehensive list of characteristics. Some of these characteristics include: schools in areas of high population density serving a large number of students; schools in areas with profound economic disparity; schools with high rates of ethnic, racial, linguistic, and religious diversity; schools where students have high rates of health issues; schools with high rates of student, teacher, and administrator transience; schools with high immigrant populations; and schools where teachers are less likely to live in the communities surrounding the school (Kincheloe, 2004). Selecting PE teachers in urban schools was important for three reasons: (1) because the urban school setting presents several unique challenges that are not present in most suburban and rural schools; (2) students in urban schools have more health issues than students in suburban and rural schools; and (3) teacher attrition is higher in urban schools than suburban and rural

schools. These three factors create exceptional circumstances for teachers in many urban schools, and studying teachers in these circumstances may provide strategies for coping with these circumstances.

Second, I recruited teachers whose cultural backgrounds differed from the students they taught. The majority of the teachers in the U.S. come from White, middle-class backgrounds, while most students attending schools in urban districts are minorities and come from lower to lower-middle-class families. These differences can create a significant clash between teachers and students in urban schools. Teachers in urban schools are likely to encounter students whose ethnic, cultural, economic, and geographic backgrounds are very different than their own. High teacher attrition rates in urban schools mean there are more teaching vacancies for new teachers to fill in urban versus suburban districts. Therefore, it is likely that a new teacher from a White, middle-class background will obtain his or her first teaching position in an urban school, teaching students who are culturally, geographically, and economically very different from the background of the teacher.

I studied teachers who taught in urban schools, but only teachers who did not grow up in urban areas. This discrimination resulted from the focus of the study, which was the clash between teachers' personal biographies and the cultural realities of urban students and the urban schools where they taught. Specifically, elements of this cultural clash included differences between urban teachers' and students' racial and ethnic, geographical, and economic backgrounds. Studying teachers with different cultural, economic, and geographical backgrounds than their students was important because so many White teachers obtain teaching positions in urban districts, only to be shocked by the circumstances they encounter. By studying teachers involved in this type of cultural clash, insights and strategies for improving teacher preparation

programs and induction practices can be gained so that entry into urban teaching positions are not as difficult for future teachers.

Third, I recruited three teachers to establish a balance between breadth and depth in the research. By studying three teachers, adequate time was spent in each setting (discussed later in this chapter) to obtain “insider status” with each participant. Studying only three teachers allowed a thorough examination of the cultural context at each site, and the opportunity to identify specific factors that influenced how each participant learned to teach in an urban school. Additionally, a cross-case analysis of all three participants was conducted to identify common issues or themes related to teaching in urban schools that may cut across teachers’ experiences, which would not have been possible with only one case study. Identifying a specific teaching level (i.e., elementary, middle, or high school) for the participants was not a point of departure in this research because other criteria for participant selection influenced the findings more than the grades each participant taught. Teachers were recruited on recommendation of university faculty, school district administrators, and by word of mouth.

Fourth, teachers were recruited who had between 3 and 8 years of teaching experience. This span of experience was desirable for the study because a teacher with less than 3 years of experience may still have been experiencing a “learning curve” and would not have as many insights about learning to teach in an urban environment. Conversely, a teacher with more than 8 years experience may have had fewer recollections regarding early induction years. Ideally, participants in the study would have between 3 and 5 years of teaching experience; however, the financial climate in some urban districts require that teachers with the least amount of seniority are dismissed in an economic crisis. In summary, the search for participants was for teachers

with 3 to 8 years of experience and included the most recently certified pool of physical education teachers possible.

Fifth, teachers were recruited that maintained more of a teaching focus than a coaching focus. Teachers with a coaching focus may not be as invested in teaching, especially if they are “in-season” (i.e., working with a teacher who is also a volleyball coach during the competitive volleyball season). Teachers who are preoccupied with coaching responsibilities may have a “roll out the ball” philosophy (as opposed to a teaching philosophy), may be more interested in planning practices or strategizing for upcoming competitions during free periods, or may want to leave school as soon as possible after teaching the last class of the day. All of these situations would severely limit data collection.

I studied three teachers (Alexis, Brad and Candie) over the course of the 2009-2010 school year. Following is a brief description of each teacher, including how many years they had been teaching at the time of the study, what other job responsibilities they had at their school, where each teacher grew up, and any additional information that may have influenced the study.

Alexis is a White female in her late 20s who grew up on the outskirts of a middle-class, rural town. She has been teaching PE for five years, four at her current school. Alexis is the PE teacher and Athletic Director at her school. Her responsibilities as Athletic Director include hiring coaches, scheduling and attending athletic competitions, and serving as a liaison for community agencies wishing to promote after school programs (such as dance and gymnastics) at the school. Alexis is also the vice president of an animal rescue organization, which requires her to attend weekly adoption events, find foster homes for pets prior to adoption, maintain the organization website, and other administrative tasks. When Alexis began her job search, she applied to many teaching positions, both in- and out-of-state. She was not confident that she

would find a teaching position near her hometown, and was very willing and interested in teaching in an urban school.

Brad is a White male in his mid-30s who grew up in a very segregated, middle-class suburb of a major city. He has been teaching PE for four years, all at his current school. Brad used to be the boy's basketball coach at his school, but family and professional commitments (finishing a master's degree) forced him to resign two years ago. Brad lives with his long-term girlfriend and their three sons. He is very active in his sons' community recreation baseball and football teams, serving as a coach and a board member. Brad applied for several positions near his hometown. He was called for an interview at a charter school near his neighborhood, but was not qualified to be hired because he did not have a health certification. The hiring director referred Brad to another charter school managed by the same company in an urban environment. Although teaching in an urban school was not Brad's first choice, he was happy to get a teaching position after graduating.

Candie is a White female in her early 30s. She grew up in a middle-class, rural community. She has been teaching PE for six years, all at her current school. Candie was hired as the school's original PE teacher when the school opened. She organizes the school cross country program, bowling club, and the "Green Club," which was responsible for building a nature trail on the school grounds and promoting school-wide recycling. Candie lives with her partner of 7 years and is involved with a local multi-sport training group and competes in several marathons and triathlons throughout the year. After graduating with her teaching certification, Candie worked as a lifeguard in an urban district approximately 30 miles from her hometown with the hopes that she could apply for a teaching position in the same district when there was an opening. Candie's seniority in the district did not transfer to teaching positions, so she looked for



other teaching positions across the state. Candie had to choose between two positions: a half-time position in a community in the northern region of the state that was well-known for having a strong winter-sport program for residents, and a full-time position in an urban charter school that was located less than 20 miles from where her partner lived.

*Research Settings.* Each research setting was as unique as the teacher studied. In this section, I describe each of the research settings (Achiever Academy, Bentley International, and Chestnut Academy), including the grade levels taught at each school, number of students attending each school, as well as the demographic information of students attending each school. Additionally, this section includes background information on each school that had an impact on the physical education program or teacher, and a description of each physical education program, including equipment, space, and frequency that students had PE.

Alexis taught at Achiever Academy, a K-8 charter school located in a major city on the border of a much wealthier suburb. Most students attending Achiever Academy lived in the city and were driven to school. Approximately 700 students in grades K-8 attended Achiever Academy during the 2009-2010 school year. Among the student body, 99% were African American, 51% of students were male, and 79% of students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Achiever Academy had a strong academic focus, and the school principal required all teachers to use the same classroom management procedures. Classes were divided by ability, and students in the lowest-achieving classes were provided with two certified teachers in their classroom. Each classroom entrance included the students' projected year of high school graduation. For example, kindergarten classrooms had signs that read "Welcome Class of 2022." Students were encouraged to apply to the more academically rigorous high schools in the city in order to prepare for college. Bulletin boards with high school information were placed

throughout the school, not just in the middle school wing. Additionally, professionally designed and printed posters with recent Achiever Academy alumni were placed throughout the school, and included information about what high school they attended, the extracurricular activities they were involved with, their grade point average, and their college and career aspirations.

The school itself was originally a Catholic school, with the associated church facilities located across the street. Therefore, the school building where Alexis taught did not have a gymnasium, cafeteria, or multi-purpose room. Students ate lunch in their classrooms, and the “lunch line” was located in a hallway. Alexis shared a large room divided by filing cabinets with the four other “specials” teachers, and this is also where she stored her equipment. Alexis did not have much equipment because of space and practicality issues. Most of her equipment was donated or purchased at garage sales. Alexis rarely had enough equipment to teach the entire class at the same time. She had approximately 10 hockey sticks, eight baseball mitts, a dozen basketballs, some long and short jump ropes, and other small manipulatives such as beanbags, tennis balls, and racquetballs. Alexis also had a portable basketball hoop that was stored in a stairwell. The campus did have a large, public playground that Alexis could use for instruction. The playground had several sets of swings, a large, wooden play structure with bridges and climbing apparatus, slides, and bars. The playground also had two open areas, one paved and painted with a map of the world closer to the school, and one area covered in wood chips beyond the play structure. The entire play area was fenced, but not completely secured. Community residents often walked through the playground area to get to the next street, and Alexis shared that stray dogs had entered the playground in the past.

Students attending Achiever Academy wore uniforms to school consisting of gray dress pants or skirt and a white collared shirt with a red sweater or sweater vest. However, students

were allowed to wear a “gym uniform” (dark sweatpants or athletic pants and an Achiever Academy t-shirt) to school with gym shoes on their designated PE day. Students at Achiever Academy had PE once per week for approximately 45 minutes.

Brad taught PE at Bentley International, a K-7 charter school in a racially diverse, densely populated city. Approximately 600 students attended Bentley International during the 2009-2010 school year. Many students lived in the surrounding community and walked to school, others were driven to school. The student body was comprised of 53% African American students, 32% White students, including Arab American students and European American immigrants, 13% Asian students, and the remaining 2% of students were Hispanic, mixed race, or “Other.” Approximately 52% of students at Bentley International were male, and 82% of students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Academics and standardized test scores were very important at Bentley International. Each of the “specials” teachers (i.e., PE, health, music, etc.) tutored a small group of students for one class period every day that were considered below grade level in one or more subject areas. Additionally, each of these teachers had a longer tutoring day where they taught two to three class periods in the morning and then spent the rest of the day tutoring.

Bentley International had two buildings. The East campus housed grades 3-7 in what seemed to be a former Catholic high school. East campus had a separate cafeteria and full size gymnasium, complete with expandable bleachers and a stage area. Since Brad did not have an office or a storage room at the East campus, so his equipment was kept behind a curtain on the stage, locked up in large wire bins. Brad had several basketballs, footballs, and other playground-size balls, volleyballs, a badminton set, an indoor bowling set, baseball mitts, and a few hula hoops and jump ropes. Students usually had to share equipment, but only with one or two other

students. The gym had newer scoreboards and was rented out in the evenings for community recreation basketball leagues. There were a few large posters up in the gym, as well as a bulletin board that Brad used to display classroom rules and procedures. The gym at East campus was a “pass through” to the teacher’s parking lot and to two special education offices, so there were frequently teachers and students that walked through the gym when Brad was teaching. The West campus was a newer, remodeled building that housed grades K-2. West campus had a large multi-purpose room that was used as the cafeteria and gymnasium, as well as after-school programs. There was a small closet where Brad could store equipment; however, it did not lock, so equipment often went missing or was broken from being misused by the after-school program. Brad had beanbags and other manipulatives, a few small mats, some basketballs, scooters, hula hoops and an assortment of soft playground-size balls at the West campus. The multi-purpose area was accessible by a short flight of stairs. The entrance to the gym had a small area where the after school program stored books and toys, as well as a media cart where Brad kept his stereo. Although the space was adequate to teach in, most of the cafeteria equipment and lunch tables were kept in the margins of the space, which reduced the amount of useable space.

Students attending Bentley International were required to wear uniforms to school, consisting of navy dress pants or skirts and a collared Bentley International polo shirt. Students could wear a school t-shirt with their uniform pants on PE days, but could not participate if they were not wearing gym shoes. At both East and West campus, students had PE once per week for 50 minutes.

Candie taught approximately 375 students in grades K-6 at Chestnut Academy, located just outside of a major city. Most students lived in the major city and were driven to school. Chestnut Academy was located within a city with multiple industries and office high rises,

therefore it was convenient for many families to drop off and pick up their children when commuting to work. The student population was 53% female and 99% African American. Approximately 40% of students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Chestnut Academy had been open for six years at the time of the study. The school had added one grade level every year for several years after opening, but had remained a K-6 school due to space constraints. The teachers and staff were proud to advertise Chestnut Academy as “a public school with a private school feel.”

Chestnut Academy also occupied the space of a former Catholic School. Because of school growth, grades K-2 were taught in modular classrooms not directly connected to the main building. Candie taught PE in a large multi-purpose room that also served as the school cafeteria and auditorium. The last class of the morning would help set up chairs for the lunch period, and when school assemblies occurred, Candie did not meet with her class, either. Cafeteria equipment was stored on the south wall of the multi-purpose room, and Candie used cones to indicate a boundary for her students. Lunch tables were installed in the east and west walls of the multi-purpose room, and several racks of chairs were stored in the northeast corner of the room. Candie had her own media cart on the north wall of the multi-purpose room, and she would often bring her laptop to this area and play music for the students during instruction. Candie had two bulletin boards in this space, one with photos of students from recent school-sponsored events, such as the “Winter Olympics” and a fifth-grade skiing trip, and the other was the “Hey Hey Board,” where students who demonstrated excellent behavior or sportsmanship would be rewarded by having their name displayed. The ceiling in the multi-purpose room was slanted and was lower than a regular gymnasium ceiling. There were four basketball backboards installed in the multi-purpose room, as well as two portable volleyball standards. Her office and equipment

storage area was located down a short hallway from the multi-purpose room. All of Candie's equipment was newer and in good condition, students rarely had to share equipment. Candie also had access to the school playground, baseball diamond with shaded dugouts, and a large, open grassy field with another baseball backstop. The school's Nature Trail was just beyond the field in a wooded area.

The uniform policy at Chestnut Academy was very strict. Boys had to wear gray dress pants, a white collared shirt, a maroon or gray tie, and could wear a maroon sweater or sweater vest. Girls had to wear gray skirts or jumpers, white collared shirts, a shorter maroon tie, and a maroon sweater. Students were not allowed to change for PE except for their shoes, and Candie did not penalize students for forgetting their gym shoes. Students only had to sit out from participating if their shoes were considered unsafe, that is, if it had any sort of heel on it, or if it had an open back. Students at Chestnut Academy attended PE twice per week for 40 minutes each time.

### **Data Collection**

Data collection took place with one teacher at a time for a period of 6 weeks during the 2009-2010 academic years. During each 6 week period, I spent at least 3 full school days per week with the teacher. Data were collected mainly through teacher interviews, but also through class observation, and document analysis. Data collection occurred in a cyclical process. Data collection was consistently pursued across all three studies of individual teachers by drafting an interview guide and an observation guide, and was directed by the theoretical framework and research questions (i.e., how the teacher was socialized to teach in an urban setting, how the teacher was influenced by cultural relevance). I spent 18 full school days with each teacher for a total of 54 school days (across all three participants) over a period of 4.5 months. The study

continued until data saturation occurred, and answers to each of the research questions were fully developed.

*Teacher interviews.* The purpose of this study was to examine how early career physical educators learned to teach in urban schools. The primary means of data collection was through daily, one-on-one interviews with each teacher to obtain their interpretations and experiences. Interviews were the primary means of data collection, since this format “allows researchers maximum flexibility in exploring any topic in depth and in covering new topics as they arise” (Schensul, Schensul & LeCompte, 1999, p.121). Additionally, interviews allow “...access to that place where interpreted human experience and response intersect with an educational, social, cultural, spiritual, or political dynamic, providing the means by which privately held contents of memory can be communicated to a listening researcher” (C. Mears, 2009, p. 15). Since the purpose of this study was to examine early career physical educators’ perspectives of learning to teach in urban schools, interviews allowed participants’ specific experiences and “stories” to be told in response to the research questions. Specific concerns regarding research involving participant interviews is addressed in a later section involving ethical considerations.

Although the process looked different at each research site, daily interviews were conducted with each teacher during every visit. Each day, an interview guide including open-ended, non-leading questions and prompts (Schensul et al., 1999) was utilized; however, classroom observations also influenced interview topics. As the study progressed, the interviews developed into more informal dialogues in which the study participants felt comfortable to reflect about experiences and perceptions. As entire days were spent with the teachers, the opportunity to have informal conversations with teachers in between lesson periods, at lunch, or on prep periods, allowed more immediate interpretations and perceptions of classroom

observations. All formal interviews were audio recorded using two digital voice recorders. Finally, teacher interviews allowed the researcher to share interpretations as they develop. Informal member checking in this manner allowed determination of the correctness of interpretations and gave the teachers an opportunity to provide feedback and critique. Teacher interviews allowed specific questions related to each of the research questions guiding the study. In particular, teacher interviews helped answer questions regarding teacher's personal biographies and teacher's professional socialization.

Since I spent 18 full school days with each teacher, I conducted 18 one-on-one interviews with each teacher. Approximately 10 of the 18 interviews were based directly on the five research questions guiding the study (two 60-90 minute interviews for each research question). Three of the 18 interviews were member checking interviews, spaced at different junctures across the time spent at each research site to obtain feedback regarding interpretations. An allowance of five of the 18 interviews provided for a variety of topics that emerged during fieldwork (from classroom observations), or to re-visit any research questions that warranted additional attention. Sample interview guides are included in the appendix of this document. The process that unfolded with each teacher is outlined in more detail below.

I worked with Alexis at Achiever Academy on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. I conducted the formal, one-on-one interviews in Alexis' office during her prep period, which was before her lunch duty. During lunch duty, Alexis was responsible for supervising two different classes while their classroom teacher went to lunch themselves. During these lunch periods, I was able to have more informal conversations with Alexis about the school, the students and the community. Beyond the interviews specifically addressing the research questions for the study and member checking interviews, I conducted additional interviews with Alexis about her cross-



cultural experiences in college, her experiences playing AAU and collegiate basketball, her involvement in animal rescue, and the uniqueness of teaching PE without a gymnasium.

At Bentley International, Brad had approximately 50 minutes to conclude his last class, of the morning at the West campus, put away equipment, travel to the East campus and eat lunch before he had to teach his next class. We ate lunch in the computer room since Brad did not have any office space at either school. During lunch, I had a chance to have some informal conversations with Brad about the student body and community, as well as school procedures. After lunch, I observed Brad teach three classes, then conducted the formal interview in another teacher's classroom after school. This was the routine we followed on Mondays and Wednesdays. On Fridays, Brad had a longer prep period before lunch, and then he spent the rest of the afternoon tutoring at the West campus. Therefore, I went out to lunch with Brad where I conducted a longer interview (90 minutes or more) before he had to report to the East campus. Over half of the interviews I conducted with Brad covered the research questions, and three interviews were member checking interviews. In addition to these interviews, I focused other interviews on teacher burnout, Brad's relationships with his students, his family life, and the guilt he felt as an urban PE teacher.

Because Candie's teaching space was also used as the cafeteria at Chestnut Academy, she did not teach while students ate lunch. Therefore, I conducted formal interviews with Candie in her office during her lunch and prep periods, which ran back-to-back. Candie had an extended prep period on Wednesdays through Fridays, allowing for longer interviews and discussions. Often, Candie and I informally discussed interview questions and information about the school and community while walking out to the field or while students were transitioning to other tasks. After conducting interviews that covered the five research questions and four member checking

interviews, I interviewed Candie specifically about several topics that seemed to have specific influences on her teaching. These included her experiences of working at a camp and as a camp counselor, her experiences of studying abroad in college, her expectations for students and philosophy of teaching, and her sexuality.

*Classroom observations.* A secondary form of data collection utilized for the study was classroom observation. Using principles of participant observation (Spradley, 1980), lessons and interactions between each teacher and the students during each day-long data collection period were observed. It is important to note that these observations were not used as a basis for interpretation; rather, teacher behaviors noted during observations were starting points for interviews relating to teachers' perspectives of learning to teach in urban schools. During class periods, I took on the role of a passive participant (Spradley, 1980) as interactions between the observer and the participants were limited. Although my presence in the gymnasium or other teaching areas was initially obvious and somewhat distracting to students, regular visits made my presence unremarkable with time. Observations were made from an inconspicuous spot in the teaching space (gymnasium or playing field) such as the bleachers or another space in the margins, with the intention of maintaining the dual purpose of participant observation. These purposes, as Spradley (1980) argued, are "(1) to engage in activities appropriate to the situation and (2) to observe the activities, people and physical aspects of the situation" (p. 54).

Several aspects of lessons when conducting observations were noted. First, the focus of each lesson (activities, objectives, assessments, etc.) was noted, as this often changed for different grade levels. Second, the strategies the teacher used to convey these lesson activities were noted. Third, interactions between the teacher and students (i.e., feedback, questions, conversations, etc.) were documented. Fourth, any other noteworthy aspects of the lesson

observations that contributed to an understanding of what was happening in the particular class (i.e., interruptions to class, assemblies, etc.) were noted. Ultimately, classroom observations provided evidence that helped answer the research questions, especially the questions regarding the challenges encountered when teaching, and how teachers understood differences between cultural backgrounds.

By taking detailed field notes throughout lessons, I was able to ask teacher-specific questions regarding teaching practices during interviews. Likewise, material from teacher interviews (such as a teacher elaborating on a particular teaching strategy or class incident) allowed more focused class observations for additional examples of such behaviors. Recurrent classroom observations and teacher interviews allowed for richer data. Condensed accounts (Spradley, 1980) were taken on site, and then later transcribed into an expanded field note. Three principles were utilized to help create accurate ethnographic records. First, the language identification principle was used to identify the specific type of language used in each field note entry (i.e., language of the observer, language of teacher). Second, the verbatim principle was used when possible from the observation post. That is, word-for-word quotes was used when possible to determine the important details and meaning at a later time. Finally, the concrete principle was used and exceptional detail was noted when recording observable occurrences in the research setting. By doing so, specific details could be discussed with the teacher at a later time (Spradley, 1980). Field notes were taken each day, and were written to indicate when a new class period began, and how long each class period lasted. In total, at least 18 sets of field notes were recorded for each teacher.

*Document analysis.* The final source of data came from document analysis. I spent six weeks with each participating teacher, and multiple units were taught throughout the

observations. I was able to collect 23 lesson and unit plans from two of the teachers throughout my fieldwork. Alexis and Candie provided electronic copies of lesson and unit plans that they submitted to their principals every week. Brad did not have to submit weekly lesson plans to his principal, so he did not write formal lesson plans. Reviewing lesson and unit plans allowed me to uncover data that would not be uncovered in observations or interviews alone. Patton (2002) stated, “These kinds of documents provide the evaluator with information about many things that cannot be observed” (p. 293). Additionally, when discussing teacher preparation programs, I reviewed class assignments, class notes, and syllabi when available to gain additional insights. Again, this provided data that would not otherwise be discussed in observations or interviews, and provided historical information regarding each teacher’s preparation program.

By analyzing documents, I was able to compare statements from specific documents to what was said and done in interviews and observations. Reviewing lesson plans, unit plans, and previous PETE program assignments can reveal goals or decisions made by each teacher that would have been unknown, and built on the strengths of other types of data collection (i.e., observations, interviews), which would minimize the weaknesses of these methods alone (Patton, 2002). Finally, including document analysis as a method of data collection provided “...stimulus for paths of inquiry that can be pursued only through direct observation and interviewing” (Patton, 2002, p. 294). Document analysis, in particular, may provide an understanding of how PETE programs influenced teachers’ early career experiences, challenges that physical educators encountered while teaching, and how personal biographies influenced early career experiences in urban schools.

### **Data Analysis**

Using principles of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), data were analyzed using constant comparison and inductive analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; LeCompte & Schensul, 1999), to identify relationships and themes from the data. Careful data management and constant comparative inductive analysis provides a means to organize the findings into themes that represent the teachers' experiences in learning to teach in urban schools, and how culturally relevant physical education influenced teaching.

*Data Management.* By crafting a careful data management plan, data were organized, time could be spent analyzing the data, and interpretations from each data collection session were organized for subsequent interviews with teachers. Data was managed by first transcribing all field notes into Microsoft Word at the end of each data collection day (Spradley, 1980). Next, each audio-recorded teacher interview was transcribed. Then, all transcribed data were read and re-read to maximize familiarity with the data. The final step in the data management process involved coding field notes and interviews.

*Study Process.* In summary, data collection and analysis followed a 13-step process on each data collection day, outlined in Table 1 below. First, the process began by writing an interview guide based on the research questions guiding the study. Second, observations of the teaching environment were taken at the research site. Third, the interview guide was expanded based on the observations. Fourth, pertinent documents from the environment (e.g., lesson plans, assignments, etc.) were collected. The fifth step of the study was the formal interview, following observations and document collection.

After leaving the research site, data analysis began with the sixth step, typing all field notes into expanded accounts. Seventh, the formal interview was transcribed. The eighth step of the study process was re-reading all of the data from the day, including field notes and interview

transcripts. Ninth, data from field notes and interview transcripts were coded and categorized. The coding process provided interpretations from the data with which to make comparisons, conclusions, and determine significance of events in subsequent data collection sessions (Patton, 2002). Additionally, coding field notes allowed separate behaviors and language observed in the classroom, as well as responses from interviews, into distinct concepts to be noted (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). Excerpts from field notes and interview transcripts helped provide evidence for answering the research questions guiding the study. Excerpts with similar codes were grouped together, and helped build interpretations into different themes.

The tenth step of the study process was to write up preliminary interpretations using data to support these interpretations. Then, in step eleven, any disconfirming evidence was written into negative case analyses. Twelfth, researcher bias was addressed in a research journal. The thirteenth and final step of the study process was to draft an interview guide for the next data collection session with two types of questions: (1) questions based on new phenomenon relative to the research questions, and (2) member checking questions that allow the teacher to respond to the developing interpretations. This process was repeated 18 times with each teacher, and until the research questions were fully developed. This recurring process allowed data to be thoroughly assessed and interpretations to be clarified with adequate support as they developed.

Table 1.

*Steps in the Research Process.*

Step	Description
1	Write an interview guide based on research questions
2	Observe the teaching environment
3	Expand the interview guide based on observations of the teaching environment
4	Collect pertinent documents in the teaching environment
5	Conduct formal interview
6	Type up field notes into expanded accounts after leaving research site
7	Transcribe interview
8	Re-read all data (field notes and interview transcripts)
9	Code and categorize data in field notes and interview transcripts
10	Write interpretations supported with data, based on emerging categories
11	Conduct negative case analysis, based on disconfirming evidence
12	Record researcher bias in researcher journal
13	Draft interview guide for next session with two types of questions: (1) Questions based on new phenomenon relative to research questions (2) Member checking questions allowing teacher to respond to interpretations

At the end of data collection with each teacher, a case study profile was written with specific interpretations for the research questions guiding the study. Evidence from the coded excerpts from field notes and interview transcripts were incorporated. Then, data collection began with the next teacher. After data was collected from all three teachers, a complete cross-participant analysis was conducted to note similarities and differences between participants. Approaching data collection and analysis in this manner will provide the information with which to answer the research questions as thoroughly as possible.

## Researcher Perspectives

This section outlines several facets related to the procedures of the study. Included in this section are the trustworthiness strategies, ethical considerations, and the role of researcher bias in the study.

*Trustworthiness Strategies.* When conducting research, investigators must address several trustworthiness criteria to substantiate findings. The criteria used to establish trustworthiness in this study included credibility, transferability, and confirmability.

*Credibility.* Loosely defined, credibility is the measure used to determine if a researcher's findings are accurate. It is a measure of "truth value" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was established in the study through prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, and member checking. Prolonged engagement ensures that the researcher spends adequate time in a research setting to learn the culture and build trust with the research participants. Spending time in the research setting adds scope to the description of the research study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I spent 6 weeks with each teacher, for at least three full school days per week while collecting data, therefore prolonged engagement helped establish credibility in this study.

Persistent observation allows the researcher to identify occurrences that are considered "normal" to the research site, and identify events that are noteworthy. Determining what is relevant and irrelevant to the research study permits the researcher to focus on the research question in more detail, and adds depth to the description of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Again, I spent an extended period of time at each research site; consequently, persistent observation improved credibility.



Triangulation employs different verification methods to substantiate research findings. In this study, authentication of the data occurred across data collection techniques. When noting events of suspected importance during teacher observations, questions were included in teacher interviews to verify the importance of these events. Additionally, interview responses were compared to teacher observations to determine if teachers' responses match their actions. By triangulating data in this way, credibility of the research findings was enhanced.

Another method of establishing credibility is meeting with a peer debriefer. A peer debriefer helps the researcher by the assessment of potential hypotheses, problems and concerns relating to the research, and other obstacles that may prevent good research from occurring. A peer de-briefer should be someone who does not have a vested interest in the research project, who will ask "searching questions" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 308), and present other viewpoints. The peer debriefer will listen to assertions as they develop and force the researcher to substantiate assertions with sufficient data. The peer debriefer chosen was familiar with qualitative research, the focus of the study, the relevant literature in the physical education and urban education fields, and the research setting. I consulted with a peer debriefer with extensive experience with ethnographic research on a bi-weekly basis to discuss concerns and interpretations as the study unfolded.

Yet another credibility measure, negative case analysis, is, in Lincoln and Guba's (1985) terms "a process of revising hypotheses with hindsight" (p. 309). When doing a negative case analysis, a hypothesis is continually refined until it accounts for every situation. Upon establishing data categories, field notes and interview transcripts were searched for contradictory data. When this occurred, excerpts were compared to other excerpts in the same category to determine whether the category needed further study, alteration or elimination.

A final technique for establishing credibility was member checking. Interpretations were summarized during member checking interviews for confirmation of interpretations by the research participants. Member checking allowed comparisons to be made about the accuracy of analysis and interpretations. Formal member checks occurred once the final case studies were completed. All three teachers were provided with a draft of the final report, and asked for comments regarding the accuracy of the interpretations.

*Transferability.* The criterion that measures the applicability of research findings from one research study to another is transferability. It is not the responsibility of the researcher to establish transferability of the findings; rather, it is the province of the reader to apply these judgments (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). By providing rich descriptions of the time, place, and context of the hypothesis, the researcher supplies the “data base” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 316) for the reader to make application of the findings. A thorough description of each research context was provided for the study so that the final product has maximum transferability; however, ultimately, the reader must make any transferability judgments.

*Confirmability.* The final trustworthiness criterion, confirmability, establishes the neutrality of the research, or whether the findings were the result of the research itself or the result of the interests and biases of the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study a researcher journal was used to establish confirmability. Reflections about the methodology and concerns as the study progressed were noted. This allowed the peer debriefer and dissertation committee to follow the inquiry to its conclusion. Entries were kept weekly during data collection.

## **Ethical Dimensions of Research**

Most qualitative research studies include several ethical concerns due to the extended amount of time spent in research settings. Researchers ask for great time commitments from participants, and as a result, relationships often emerge from these interactions. Howe (2001) claimed, "Interpretive (qualitative) research is intimate insofar as it reduces the distance between researchers and participants in the conduct of social research" (p. 207). C. Mears (2009) found that, "...researchers have a responsibility to dutifully and accurately represent those stories and to appropriately acknowledge the contributions that the narrators have made to the research" (p. 44). Ethical issues that arose during the study related to permission to conduct research, and participant anonymity and confidentiality.

Permission to conduct the research was obtained through the Institutional Review Board at Wayne State University. Permission from each teacher was obtained by carefully outlining and describing the study, including all data collection methods prior to initiating the study. Each teacher was assured that participation in the study was voluntary and they could withdraw from the study at any time. Further, it was emphasized that all settings, participants, and references to former institutions would remain anonymous, and that written reports generated from the data would use pseudonyms so schools, individuals, locations, and institutions cannot be identified. Teachers were asked to sign an informed consent form after acknowledging their understanding of the research. Permission from each teacher's school principal was also obtained. Since this research occurred in participants' workplaces, it is important to eliminate any social and economic risk. Howe (2001) claimed that qualitative research has as many, if not more, ethical considerations than experimental research because of the relationships formed between

researchers and participants. Howe argued that, "...discoveries may put research participants at risk in ways that they had not bargained for and that the researcher had not anticipated" (p. 207).

Nothing in the research findings that could potentially identify any individual, school, school district, or community were included in the final document. In addition to using pseudonyms, demographic information was rounded to the nearest 10% to protect school and community identity. Each teacher's direct supervisor (department head, principal, etc.) was informed that no information obtained during the research could be used for teacher evaluation purposes. Queries from participant's colleagues regarding the research or the teacher were answered by suggesting an interest in the teacher's methods for a school project. Maintaining confidentiality of the study participants was of utmost importance, as each teacher participant shared perspectives of their schools, teaching practices, and preparation programs. Ethical obligations required that these perspectives remained confidential. Any potentially harmful information regarding teachers, students, administrators, or former instructors from teacher preparation programs were omitted.

While protecting the identity of the research participants, schools, school districts, and communities was an important ethical consideration, protecting the data collected was equally important. All field notes taken while at the research site remained with the researcher at all times, and were not left where others could access them. In the field notes, no identifiers such as teacher or school names were used. Original field notes were destroyed after they were expanded into an electronic format. Although interviews were recorded, the audio files were only kept until the interview had been transcribed. Paper copies of interview transcripts and field notes were kept in a locked filing cabinet throughout the study, and only the university advisor and the researcher had access to these files. At the conclusion of the study, and upon final approval of

the dissertation, all paper copies of interviews and field notes were destroyed, but will be maintained as an electronic copy on a portable media storage device for an additional three years.

### **Researcher Subjectivity**

Patton (2002) wrote that “What people ‘see’ is highly dependent on their interests, biases, and backgrounds” (p. 260). Therefore, it is critical to address the influence of researcher bias on the study. Researcher subjectivity influenced not only the reasons for pursuing particular research questions, but also the events ‘seen’ during classroom observations, methods used to interview research participants, and interpretations of the data collected. Several factors, including an upbringing in close proximity to an urban area, previous studies of urban education and culture, and a desire to improve the experiences of urban students and teachers in schools influenced researcher perspectives throughout this study.

Growing up near an urban area and attending school in a diverse school district certainly influenced the researcher’s perspective in this study. Attending a high school with no apparent majority or minority, and learning side-by-side with students of African American, Asian American, Hispanic, Arab American, Greek, and other European cultures meant that being “different” was not noticeable. Therefore, cultural “clashes” were a part of everyday experiences, and were used as a tool for learning, growing, and understanding, rather than a point of contention. During freshman orientation for college, a great emphasis was placed on understanding diversity, diverse cultures, and diverse perspectives. This emphasis was confusing, however, because it was just part of the educational experience in school. Because of this early and frequent interaction with individuals of various cultures, it was important to pay close attention to the language and emotions expressed when discussing cultural clashes with the teacher participants, since this language was somewhat unfamiliar to the researcher.

In graduate school, opportunities to learn about and work in urban schools with students and teachers were abundant. Working with urban students in elementary schools revealed their eagerness to move and participate in physical education, but also revealed the health disparities students dealt with daily. Interviewing elementary PE teachers in urban schools uncovered the many challenges to being an effective teacher, such as inadequate spaces and sparse equipment, but it also opened a door for those teachers to express the emotional toll that teaching in urban schools took. Later, when working in urban middle schools, students shared their desires for relevant content and teachers who understood them. When speaking with middle school PE teachers in urban schools, many conveyed the need to establish relationships based on care and respect before trying to teach students anything, while others inadvertently distanced themselves even more from students by ignoring the emotional needs of students. Past experiences in urban schools and reading the literature regarding issues and best practices in urban schools influenced this study because it served as a reference point when conducting participant interviews and observing teachers in the present study. It was important to keep a sharp focus during data collection to obtain the perspectives of the current study participants, rather than clouding teachers' perspectives with recollections from past readings or work with other urban teachers.

Having spent time in urban schools with teachers and students, and having spent several years teaching in an urban school fueled a desire to improve the experiences of students and teachers in urban schools. This desire had a direct impact on this study. Experiences in urban schools and in teaching students in urban schools meant that it was easy to identify when students were disengaged, when teachers were struggling to connect with students, and when lessons were not going as planned. As the researcher, it was important to maintain the status of a passive participant (Spradley, 1980), and not offer strategies or feedback regarding teaching

practices, regardless of how it could have improved teaching situations or class management. It was also important not to get caught up in a one-sided version of the teaching situation at each school, focusing on only the positive aspects or the negative aspects observed and shared. As a researcher, it was important to take in the whole of the situation and understand what specific events meant to each teacher.

Interest in and passion for improving PE in urban schools inevitably influenced this study. However, by discussing these sources of subjectivity during the study with a peer debriefer, the researcher prepared for and developed strategies to diminish the effects of any researcher subjectivity.

### **Summary**

The aim of this study was to examine how early career physical educators learned to teach in urban schools. Personal perspectives on culture, effective teaching, and emotion shaped observations and how each teacher was interviewed. Although having a small, purposive sample for this research was initially a concern (for example, if a participant chose to drop out of the study), it was not a limitation to the research. Using a sample this size provided a balance of the breadth and depth of the research. However, one limitation to the study included the absence of perspectives of teachers who had left urban settings or the profession of teaching altogether. Teachers with these perspectives may have offered more insights than those who still teach, since the challenges they faced while learning to teach in urban schools may have been enough to drive them to seek employment in other districts or to leave the teaching profession altogether.

## **CHAPTER 4: THE ROLE OF PRE-PROFESSIONAL SOCIALIZATION**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to examine early career physical educators' perspectives on learning to teach in urban schools. The major findings described in this chapter focus on the role that teachers' pre-professional socialization (Fuller, 1969; Lacey, 1977; Lortie, 1975) played in the teachers' early career experiences in urban schools. This chapter is organized into three sections based on each teacher's experience. Using case study format, I describe how teachers' personal biographies prior to formal teacher education influenced their early career experiences in urban schools, and how these experiences played a role in their development as a teacher in an urban school.

Each of the teachers in this study shared their personal biographies prior to their PETE programs, including elements of their childhood and family upbringing, their individual experiences with sport and school PE, and their eventual decision to pursue a career as a physical education teacher. While sharing their stories, the teachers related how their experiences contributed to both their successes and struggles as early career physical educators in urban schools. In this section, I will outline a case study of each teacher's pre-professional socialization experiences, and how these experiences had an impact on their early career development.

### **Alexis' Pre-professional Socialization**

Like all three teachers in this study, Alexis did not grow up in an urban environment. She was raised in a small town, just outside a mid-sized city. Alexis shared that beyond the city, the communities were mostly farmlands. Her parents were high school sweethearts who married young, and she had one slightly younger brother. Neither of her parents graduated college, but were able to provide many things for the family working in more "blue-collar" occupations. Her



father worked in a machine shop in a nearby city after graduating high school, and her mother worked several different jobs while raising Alexis and her brother. Once both children went to school full time, Alexis' mother became the county's Register of Deeds, an elected position. Alexis shared four important components of her pre-professional socialization that had an impact on her early career development in an urban school.

*Element 1: Middle-class upbringing.* The first element of Alexis' pre-professional socialization that had an impact on her early career development was her middle-class upbringing. Alexis grew up in a small town, and the population was not very diverse. She said, "It wasn't diverse at all, everyone was White. Most everyone was middle-class. The nearby city had more residents that were lower income than my town" (Alexis, Interview #1). As a resident of a middle-class, suburban community, Alexis enjoyed several aspects of her childhood that individuals growing up in urban communities may not.

Alexis benefitted from growing up in a two-parent, two-income household. Although she recalled a time early in her childhood when finances were tight, Alexis' family eventually had enough financial resources to provide the children with everything they needed to thrive, such as clothing, food, school supplies, and transportation. She said,

I know that we didn't always live in a nice house, and I can remember for a little while the food we would eat was kind of cheap. But once my mom started working a regular job, we were fine. We moved to a nicer part of town when I was in first or second grade. We definitely weren't rich, but we always had what we needed. (Alexis, Interview #3)

In addition to the basic necessities, Alexis and her brother had their own bicycles, a yard where they could play, parks nearby, a basketball hoop attached to the garage, and plenty of toys, sports equipment, and other items that enriched their physical activity experiences.

Alexis spent much of her childhood playing outside in vast, wooded parks and play spaces near her home. She said, "There were lots of kids in my neighborhood, so we played

outside all the time. We would build forts in the woods; I'd play soccer and basketball with my brother a lot, and ride bikes" (Alexis, Interview #7). With little concern about crime or safety, Alexis had the freedom to roam in her community, and took advantage of this by spending long days outside with her brother and friends. She said,

We played "country games." We'd play games of hide-and-peek, capture the flag, and "squish sardine." We didn't have to worry about crime or safety or anything, so we stayed out playing as long as we could, making up games and keeping ourselves entertained. We just had to be home by the time the street lights came on. (Alexis, Interview #7)

Playing outside with carefree abandon was a luxury that Alexis could take advantage of throughout her childhood. Her safe community included plenty of parks, fields, green spaces, and homes with front and back yards, so Alexis could participate in physical activities that required ample space.

In addition to the leisurely recreational games Alexis played as a child, she also played several team sports in unstructured and structured ways. She shared that playing pick-up games of soccer, baseball, and basketball with her brother and neighborhood friends was a common pastime. Alexis and her brother also participated in structured sport programs within the community. While her brother excelled in soccer, Alexis focused on basketball. She played basketball on several teams throughout her childhood, including after-school intramural teams and community recreation leagues. Once Alexis reached middle school, she played for the school basketball team as well as a travel basketball team that practiced several days per week and participated in tournaments all across the country. She said, "I started playing for my AAU team when I was in seventh grade. We played in tournaments all over the country, and I probably wouldn't have seen half of those places without that experience" (Alexis, Interview #4). Although participating with the travel basketball team created additional expenses, her family

could afford them and valued the experiences and the exposure to higher level competition that she received as a result. She said,

I'm sure there were a lot of extra expenses that I didn't understand. My parents drove me back and forth to practice every week, so I'm sure that was a lot of extra gas money. We had to pay for uniforms. And there were tournament fees and travel expenses like hotels and meals and stuff that we paid for every season, too. (Alexis, Interview #2)

She continued playing with the travel basketball team until she graduated from high school, and because of her skill, earned an athletic scholarship to play basketball at a small university not too far from her hometown. Team sports, then, were a very important part of Alexis' youth, and became engrained in her cultural template for physical activity.

*Struggles resulting from middle-class upbringing.* The elements of middle-class life that Alexis enjoyed during her childhood translated into sources of struggle when she was hired to teach PE in an urban school. Alexis grew up in a community where she could enjoy playing outdoors in spacious parks, as well as enjoy the resources and opportunities to play organized team sports. These elements of her childhood hinged on having adequate space, equipment, and financial resources. However, the components of her White, middle-class background that helped form her cultural template for physical activity did not carry over well to the spaces, available resources, or the socioeconomic statuses of the students that she taught in an urban school. Alexis encountered three specific struggles while teaching at Achiever Academy that reflected her White, middle-class upbringing.

One struggle that Alexis encountered when trying to teach a traditional, sport-based curriculum in her urban school was that she taught in a school without a gymnasium, and could only teach outdoors on the school playground approximately four months of the year. Achiever Academy was housed in a former Catholic school, with the sponsoring Catholic Church located across the street. The gymnasium was located in the larger church building, and was not included

in the lease agreement between the church and Achiever Academy. Alexis could teach her classes outside on the adjacent playground during the fall and late spring months, however, she had to teach PE in classrooms or hallways when inclement weather and temperatures prevented her from using the outdoor space.

Since Alexis had grown up playing team sports and had established this in her cultural template for physical activity, she continued to teach team sport content to her urban students, even though the spaces she had access to did not accommodate these activities. When she had access to outdoor space, Alexis included content such as hockey, basketball, baseball and soccer. These units lacked continuity because of unpredictable weather, however. Alexis said,

There's a lot of minute-by-minute decisions that I have to make when I plan my day based on the weather. I don't want to say that I wing it, because I do have a plan, but I really have to be able to change my plan based on the class. I can't really do things sequentially. I have things that I like to do every year, and I'll just do them in pieces where they fit and when the weather cooperates. (Alexis, Interview #2)

So, if students had begun a soccer unit outside, there was not a corresponding indoor activity for her students to do indoors if the unit was interrupted by inclement weather. Even when she could teach team sport activities outside, however, she did not have the appropriate space to teach these activities effectively. For example, when including basketball content, Alexis could only allow half the class to shoot baskets at the one portable hoop that she rolled out to the asphalt portion of the playground. The rest of the class was allowed to play on the playground equipment until Alexis blew her whistle for the groups to switch. The wrought iron fence that enclosed the playground was approximately three and a half feet tall, and was several inches off the ground. Therefore, depending on the size and type of ball the students used, a high bouncing ball or a ball that was not retrieved by a student right away could go beyond the fenced playground into the busy street. This happened several times during classes when Alexis allowed the students to use

the basketball hoop (Alexis, Field Note #8). When she was confined to teaching indoors, Alexis taught smaller components of particular team sports, such as the overhand throw, in classroom spaces or hallways. After a lesson in a seventh grade classroom, Alexis reflected,

When I'm inside, I teach in a ten foot by six foot space. I had 27 kids in that class – middle schoolers that are almost as tall as I am – and I had four absent today, which meant we had a little more space than usual. I'm usually teaching in less than a hundred square feet. Even if I'm in the hall, I might have eight feet, but I still can't use that much equipment. (Alexis, Interview #9)

I observed students throwing beanbags at a small net and foam balls at a target Alexis drew on the classroom whiteboard (Alexis, Field Note #5, #9). These activities still required abundant space, so very few students were active at the same time during a lesson, and only for a few minutes at a time. During one of these lessons, I tracked the activity of two different students, who were only active for three minutes out of a 50-minute class. Alexis' physical activity experiences in a White, middle-class upbringing were so deeply embedded in her cultural template that she did not think to consider activities that were active but not as space-dependent, such as yoga, Pilates, resistance band training, dance, or stepping. These activities could be done in large or small spaces (i.e., within the confines of a classroom), so Alexis could have implemented these activities indoors as well as when weather permitted her to conduct lessons outside. Unfortunately, because Alexis unknowingly clung tightly to the concept that PE had to involve team sports, most of her indoor lessons were extremely inactive.

Another struggle that Alexis encountered at her urban school because of her cultural template was a lack of storage space for PE equipment, which discouraged her from utilizing her \$500 annual budget for equipment. Without a gym, Alexis also did not have a gym closet to store equipment. Alexis' instructional resources were limited to what she could store in her shared office space in a few plastic bins and on shelves. Bags of equipment were stepped over,

rearranged, and moved around weekly to accommodate both of us in her office space. She had purchased two large pieces of equipment to accommodate her team sports curriculum. One of these pieces was a portable basketball hoop that she wheeled out during warmer months, and was stored in a stairwell not often used by students. The other was a large soccer net which was disassembled in her office and placed behind crates and bags of other equipment (Alexis, Field Note #4). She said, “Those soccer nets back there are like giant puzzles, and they don’t stay together well during lessons. They come apart really easily, so I almost wonder if it’s worth the trouble of taking them out with us” (Alexis, Interview #3). Even if Alexis did have the budget to purchase the instructional resources to provide each of her students with their own piece of equipment during lessons, there was no space for the students to use the equipment, or for Alexis to store the equipment. Most of Alexis’ equipment was older and worn, and she did not have enough for her students to have their own piece of equipment, regardless of the activity. Her equipment was limited to a large duffel bag full of older basketballs, playground balls, and soccer balls; a few jump ropes; a garbage bag full of baseball mitts that her grandmother bought at garage sales the previous summer; eight hockey sticks, and a variety of smaller items in milk crates such as beanbags and tennis balls. When Alexis taught indoors, she usually carried equipment from classroom to classroom in a plastic crate. Alexis’ socialization in a White, middle-class community, and the cultural template for physical activity that she developed during her youth for team sports requiring large spaces and specialized equipment limited her from thinking of activities and equipment that could accommodate the small indoor spaces where she usually taught, such as fitness activities that could be done in small spaces (i.e., yoga, Pilates, resistance band exercises), various forms of dance, stepping, movement exploration activities, or scarf activities (i.e., scarf juggling, tossing and catching, etc.). Implementing these types of

activities would eliminate the need for large, bulky equipment that she did not have the space to store, and would provide significantly more activity time during PE classes when Alexis was forced to teach indoors.

A final struggle that Alexis encountered because of her White, middle-class background was her inability to genuinely connect with her urban students who lived in unsafe neighborhoods and had limited access to physical activity. Unlike her own upbringing, most students attending Achiever could not and did not play outside after school because of the threat of violence, crime, safety, and gang culture. Most students at Achiever Academy did not have access to the same type of equipment in their homes to play team sports, nor did their families have additional resources for participating in recreational or travel athletic teams like Alexis did as a child. The low socioeconomic status of the students in the Achiever community meant that there were few additional resources for expensive toys and equipment to play with, except perhaps, for video games. Alexis said,

I'm not sure my students use their imaginations that much. I know they can't play outside because it's not safe, and I know they don't have a lot of extra money for things like we had in our garages growing up, like sports equipment. I don't hear much about them *playing* at home, except for video games on their Wii or PlayStation. (Alexis, Interview #3)

Alexis understood at some level that the neighborhoods where her students lived were nothing like the safe and carefree community where she grew up. She said,

I know that my kids can't just go outside and ride their bikes in their neighborhoods like I did, so I try to pass on that they can have fun with anything they have. For my kids, being active isn't going out and running half a mile in the neighborhood. Being active is getting up and maybe throwing a ball in the living room. Sometimes that's a big deal to my students. (Alexis, Interview #5)

Despite this knowledge, she did not alter the types of activities that she included in her PE curriculum, and made no effort to encourage students to use the available materials in their

homes to continue being physically active away from school. Alexis had the opportunity to include several activities in her classes that would have connected better to her students' lives. For example, integrating activities such as stepping, dance, or other fitness activities within classes would demonstrate several activities that students may enjoy, would require almost no special equipment or incur any costs, and could be done in their homes. The White privilege that Alexis experienced as a youth in a middle-class community prevented her from critically examining her own cultural template and comparing this to the realities of the students that she taught in an urban school.

Since Alexis clung to the concept of teaching team sports activities to her students, despite a lack of space for such activities, a lack of storage space for the necessary equipment to employ a team sports curriculum, and her students' limited access to participating in team sports outside of school PE, the lessons she taught were sport-like and inactive, especially when held indoors. Lessons that were completed inside seemed more like a means to keep students entertained, rather than designed to create meaningful physical activity experiences for the urban students that Alexis taught. Throughout observations and interviews, Alexis expressed a sense of anxiety and uneasiness about what she was teaching to her students, and whether it was "enough" given her space limitations. For example, she said,

I'm really limited to what I can do, and some people don't understand. I'm self-conscious about how and what I teach, because I know our circumstances are so different. I want to do what's expected of me, but I also want to do what works and what makes sense. It's not typical, but it's not...I don't know. Like if someone from the management company came and told me that I had to do things a certain way, I'm not the kind of person that's going to fight that, but I'll figure out a way to do it that meets that expectation, or I'll make it just look like it's supposed to look. Our charter company has some recommendations for what they want us to cover, but they don't care. So I've kind of made my own curriculum over the years. And sometimes I question whether what I'm doing is enough. (Alexis, Interview #2)



This sense of uneasiness demonstrated the inner turmoil that plagued Alexis' teaching, and the guilt she felt for the type of curriculum she taught. Comments about whether she was providing her students with an adequate physical education experience surfaced in multiple interviews. Outwardly, Alexis claimed that given the circumstances in which she taught, meant that the curriculum she provided was appropriate for the students she taught. However, her words and expressions demonstrated how conflicted Alexis felt about the activities she provided for the urban students that had such vastly different cultural templates than she. Even with a sense of anxiety and uneasiness about what she taught, Alexis never questioned her own cultural template for physical activity, or considered what PE might or should look like when planning for urban schools and urban students. Alexis' White, middle-class norms clouded her ability to meet the needs of her urban students, and a vast cultural disconnect between teacher and students was created.

*Element 2: School PE experiences.* A second element of pre-professional socialization that had an impact on Alexis' early career in an urban school was her own experience in school PE. Although Alexis enjoyed sports and physical activity as a child, she did not enjoy school PE. This component of her pre-professional socialization influenced her to choose teaching PE as a profession. Alexis' elementary and middle school PE teacher encouraged the girls in his classes to be passive, inactive, 'girly-girls.' This teacher often made an example of Alexis by pointing out her mistakes to the rest of the class, or stopping intramural basketball games in the middle of a play to talk to students about strategy and tactics that she should have used. She said, "I was always really uncomfortable in PE because I didn't feel like I belonged. I wanted to play and be active, and most of the other girls didn't" (Alexis, Interview #1). She shared, "Thinking back on it now, I'm not even sure why he encouraged it, but the girls would all just kind of sit out near

him. But I wanted to play, so I was different” (Alexis, Interview #1). Her unwillingness to sit out in PE brought quite a bit of negative attention from this teacher that made her feel uncomfortable. She said,

He was always a little harder on me. I’m not really sure what his deal was, but I can remember him stopping intramural basketball games to make an example out of me to the rest of the players if I did something wrong. I’m a pretty sensitive person, so that really bothered me. (Alexis, Interview #9)

Alexis felt that because her students experienced harsh living conditions in the urban community, and because her students were under constant pressure to perform academically, that PE classes needed to be enjoyable. She said,

My students are really hard on each other. They’re so quick to react, it can be a really hostile environment. I’ll open the car doors during morning drop-off, and you hear parents screaming at their kids. And then you’ve got the classroom teachers reminding students of all of the work they have to get done. So I really want PE to be a place where they can let loose and just not have any stress. (Alexis, Interview #3)

Since Alexis observed a glimpse of the stressful lives her students experienced outside of school, and she was aware of the pressure to perform academically at Achiever, she wanted to focus on students having fun and feeling comfortable in her classes. However, since Alexis experienced several years of bad teaching during elementary and middle school, she did not have examples of how to connect with and understand students. Therefore, Alexis grappled with creating an emotionally safe and comfortable teaching environment, which often resulted in students taking advantage of the situation.

*Struggles resulting from school PE experiences.* Alexis admitted that her experiences in school PE did not make her feel emotionally safe and comfortable in that setting. Therefore, she wanted to do everything that she could to prevent her own students from feeling that way. She said, “I always felt really uncomfortable in PE because of that teacher, it really caused a lot of

anxiety when I was younger. I don't want my students to ever feel like that" (Alexis, Interview #9). She continued,

He [the negative PE teacher] is actually the reason that I wanted to become a PE teacher. I want kids to feel comfortable being active and not have to worry about an adult making them feel bad about it. Think about how many adults are terrified of going to the gym, or don't know how to exercise...PE teachers like him are the reason! (Alexis, Interview #9)

Alexis' strategies to create emotionally safe and comfortable classroom settings hinged on doing things to appease students. This strategy, however, resulted in trivial actions such as letting students sit out and trying to be understanding. For example, Alexis made it clear that she would not force students to participate in any activity that they were not comfortable doing. Because students knew this was her policy, several students (especially at the middle school level) chose not to participate, or played the role of the competent bystander during lessons. During one eighth grade class where students formed two lines and took turns jumping as far as they could over two ropes on the ground, an overweight boy who had only attended Achiever for a year and a half, masterfully moved up in the line until he was only two places away from having to perform this skill in front of his peers. At this time, he slipped out of the line and went to the back of the line so it did not appear as though he was not participating. Since Alexis was busy observing the other students in the class, she did not notice his absence in the activity (Alexis, Field Note #4). Alexis was adamant about not wanting to push students too hard to participate in activities. She shared,

The biggest thing to me is that the kids feel comfortable enough to try everything. I really try to create an environment where they are comfortable to participate. Some kids are so competitive that the kids with lower self-confidence don't feel comfortable, and it's my job to make sure that everyone feels okay. I'm hoping that they learn that it's okay no matter what happens – whether they succeed or not. (Alexis, Interview #3)

Yet, Alexis toiled over why some students would not participate in some activities. Her previous negative experiences with her PE teacher only taught her what she did not want to do with her

own classes. Alexis, then, tried to do things that were the opposite of what her former PE teacher would do, such as not making examples of students when they made mistakes, and allowing students to sit out when they felt uncomfortable performing certain skills in front of their peers. Rather than the trivial approaches that she used with only moderate success, Alexis could have taken a more proactive approach and implemented more inclusive policies and equitable management practices (such as preventing students from taunting others) to promote an emotionally safe environment.

Alexis also labored over this aspect of her teaching because she lacked the skills to genuinely connect with students, or to understand them enough to form meaningful relationships with them and get them comfortable enough to participate in her class. Alexis took great care to not push her students too hard to participate if they seemed uncomfortable, however, she did not take any measures to find out what was really going on with students. She would gently coax students to try and assure them that her class was a safe place; however, many students were still not comfortable enough to participate. One kindergarten student would not participate in the locomotor skill warm-up. This young girl told Alexis that she was afraid to do the skills and did not want her classmates to laugh at her (Alexis, Field Note #7). Alexis assured the girl that she would not allow her classmates to laugh at her; however, the student had no evidence to see that this would be the case. Rather than talk with the students about what was acceptable and what was not acceptable in physical activity settings, Alexis allowed the concerned student to jog around the perimeter of the playground twice rather than completing the warm-up with the rest of the class (Alexis, Field Note #7). Although Alexis shared several times that she tirelessly attempted to establish a safe social and emotional climate in her classes so that all students felt

comfortable, she never included any activities to create this type of climate such as cooperative games, trust-building activities, and adventure initiatives that could create a class community.

Because Alexis' PE teacher as a youth did not understand her on an emotional or personal level, she did not have a positive example of how to establish these types of relationships with her own students. Alexis was unable to connect that her urban students faced a variety of challenges in their everyday lives, such as poverty, crime, the lure of drugs and gangs, and a culture of basketball. These challenges meant that students often operated under a survival mentality that partially depended on stifling any potential signs of weakness within their neighborhoods. Within PE, these mentalities continued, and students took opportunities to express their athletic prowess and superiority whenever they could through showboating and taunting, whether during Alexis' lesson activities or during free play. For example, during a long jump activity, two of the most athletic boys in a seventh grade class continued to see who could out-jump the other after all of the other students had an opportunity to jump. This turned into a large spectacle, and before long, most of the class was looking on and shouting both taunts and cheers at the boys (Alexis, Field Note #6). Similarly, groups of highly-skilled boys played football during their free play time, and could be heard taunting one another about their skill level, and showboating after big plays or when somebody scored (Alexis, Field Note #11).

This type of classroom climate would be very intimidating for many students, but especially for lower-skilled students that may not feel confident in their ability to perform the sport-based tasks that Alexis often included in her lessons. Intimidation was only exacerbated in this urban community because of the cultural contexts that students faced outside of school. Although Alexis did not have the means to change the challenges within the community that students faced, her sport-based lessons that required students to perform in front of their peers

only intensified the stressors facing her urban students. Despite wanting to create a haven of emotional safety for her students to experience physical activity, her ineffective teaching practices and choice of curricular content only extended the harsh communities from which her students came.

*Element 3: Early experiences with cultural difference.* A third component of Alexis' pre-professional socialization that had an impact on her early career as a physical educator in an urban school were early experiences with cultural difference. These experiences could best be described as voyeuristic, because she was able to experience the cultural differences but could then leave these settings and retreat back to the comfort of a White, middle-class lifestyle.

The first of these early experiences with cultural difference was her participation on a travel basketball team. Although she played on several community and school teams, playing on the travel AAU team allowed her to have exposure to teams that were culturally much different from hers, and to travel to communities that were also much different from hers. She said, "If I hadn't had those experiences, I wouldn't have been exposed to other cultures or races before I went to college. Our community was just really, really White" (Alexis, Interview #1). Playing basketball on a team that travelled to and competed against teams in urban areas allowed Alexis to have preliminary exposure to urban communities and residents. This eventually helped Alexis have some understanding about urban communities and the students she taught. However, her first experience with minorities as a seventh grader left her somewhat fearful. She explained,

I distinctly remember playing in a tournament in a big city. I didn't know much about the city, but I knew that we were in a bad part of town – there were abandoned houses and broken down cars and stuff. The game was late at night at this school, and the gym was small. It was really dark and loud, there were a lot of people there to watch the game. The team we played and their spectators were really rowdy. It just seemed so crazy. That was the first time I played in a place that really didn't seem too safe. (Alexis, Interview #1)

With continued participation and travel to tournaments in urban areas, Alexis began to become more comfortable and less fearful of minorities because the differences were not as shocking to her anymore.

Another way that Alexis was exposed to cultural difference early in her life was also through her travel basketball team. During her high school years, an African American girl joined Alexis' team and taught them about cultural differences, which Alexis found "intriguing." She said,

One of the girls that we played with was so different. She didn't have much support from her family, so our AAU coach would pick her up before every practice. It was just interesting to me to learn about other people's experiences and life situations. She really opened my eyes about how it is in certain areas and circumstances. She was a character, even though her life seemed pretty tough. The rest of the team was just a bunch of country girls, so she really enjoyed teaching us about the kind of music she listened to, the slang she would use. It was intriguing because I had never experienced anything like that before. I always want to understand, I always want to get the whole story. (Alexis, Interview #12)

This up-close encounter with someone who lived in an urban area and experienced urban culture firsthand allowed Alexis and her teammates to learn about the challenges that were possible when living in an urban area, and the aspects of culture that were so different than how Alexis experienced life.

Alexis was exposed to cultural difference through several avenues during her pre-professional socialization. However, these experiences were somewhat voyeuristic in nature. Both of Alexis' experiences allowed her to go into urban environments or interact with individuals from urban communities, but also allowed her to leave these environments. In her experiences with the travel basketball team, Alexis played in tournaments in urban communities and competed against teams made up of mostly culturally different players. Alexis also had additional exposure to the cultural differences among her own team. However, in both situations,

Alexis was never forced to grasp the reality of urban contexts, such as why crime rates and gang culture were more prevalent in urban areas, and why poverty was rampant in many urban communities. Alexis could always retreat back to the safety net of White, middle-class culture, where she had little concern for safety or crime, and where she and her family had adequate resources.

*Success and struggle resulting from exposure to cultural difference.* Alexis' experiences with cultural difference were important in her early career as an urban physical educator because it led her to succeed in some ways, yet struggle in other ways. One area of success in her career as an urban physical educator, that resulted from Alexis' early exposures to cultural difference, was gaining some knowledge of the values, beliefs, and issues faced by individuals living in urban environments. Her early experiences in other urban communities allowed Alexis to understand students' living conditions and some of the challenges that students might face outside of school. For example, Alexis understood that nuclear families were less common in urban communities, and knew that her current students lived in a variety of circumstances. She said,

A lot of my kids might stay with one parent during one week, and then with another parent the following week. Or just on weekends. You have kids living with grandparents, aunts, step-parents, whoever. When we send things home with kids that say 'Dear Parent or Guardian,' the guardian part is usually more accurate! That's a lot different than when I was growing up. (Alexis, Interview #8)

She also had a basic understanding of the differing parenting styles in urban communities. Since she greeted students every morning during drop-off and in the afternoon during dismissal, she would often overhear parents and caregivers yelling at or making threats of punishment towards children. She said, "I'll hear kids getting screamed at by a parent when I open car doors in the morning, and I'll hear the kids talk during classes about getting 'whooped.' I don't like that it



happens, but I understand it's acceptable here" (Alexis, Interview #5). Another example of Alexis' understanding of some cultural knowledge because of her early experiences with cultural difference was her ability to connect with students by using current slang and having knowledge of current pop culture. Alexis would try to use slang that students knew when it was appropriate in her lessons, and she would ask students what words meant when she had not heard the slang terms before. For example, Alexis shared a new term that her students had used during class. She shared,

I know most of the terms they'll use, but sometimes I don't know them all. I learned a new slang word the other day....a girl said she was 'gettin' froggy' And I asked what that meant, I hadn't heard that one. It means you're getting ready to fight, you're ready to jump because things are getting intense. (Alexis, Interview #2)

During several classes, students would often dance in place while listening to instructions or waiting their turn for activity (Alexis, Field Note #3). She pointed out one particular dance step – “the jerk” – to me during an observation. This dance step, made popular by a rapper's recently released music video, was done by students in almost every grade. On a few occasions, Alexis even incorporated this step into her warm-ups, allowing students to perform “the jerk” in place of another locomotor skill (Alexis, Field Note #6, 8). Alexis felt that being aware of what was popular in urban communities allowed her to connect more with her students. She said, “If I didn't know what they were doing or saying, they probably wouldn't give me any effort. But since I do have some insight into their slang and what they like, I can get them to do more” (Alexis, Interview #3).

Although Alexis' early, voyeuristic exposures to cultural difference provided her with some measure of success as an early career physical educator, she faced several struggles because of her lack of deep understanding of the realities of urban communities. Alexis mentioned several issues and viewpoints that she grappled to understand when teaching her

urban students, and this stemmed mainly from the blinding effects of the White privilege she experienced throughout her life.

One of the things that Alexis did not understand was her students' defensive demeanors, or why students were quick to place blame on others. She said,

I have a tough time with the kids always thinking that people are always out to get you. Some of the kids were convinced that I was 'cheating' when we did the long jump activity, and I couldn't convince them otherwise. Really, whose team am I on? I think we have a lot of kids in this school, and in other urban areas I'm sure, that always think people are 'hating' on them or out to get them. I think they see that mindset a lot from parents or TV or whatever, so they take that mindset. It's always the first response – you know, 'that cop is always....' or when they get written up by a teacher, they'll say 'that teacher is always trying to get me in trouble.' Maybe they don't even believe that's the case, but it's always the first thing out of their mouths – you, you, you. It's a blame game. (Alexis, Interview #5)

Alexis' students were defensive with one another, with their teachers, and sometimes with Alexis herself. Students would often accuse one another (and in the example above, Alexis) of cheating during competitive class activities, especially if a student or team was not as successful their competitors. For example, during a floor hockey game in a fifth grade class, one four-person team with two lower-skilled students on it complained to Alexis that another (higher skilled) team was cheating because they were having a very difficult time scoring a goal against them (Alexis, Field Note #11). In several classes, from second grade up to seventh grade, I observed several students snapping back at their classroom teachers whenever the student heard their name called. For instance, even when a classroom teacher was calling a second grade student up to her desk to retrieve an information packet to take home, the student defensively said, "What did I do?" when he heard his name called (Alexis, Field Note #5). Alexis tried to calm a sixth grade girl in PE who was very irritated by her classroom teacher, who allegedly singled her out in class for talking during lessons, when, according to the student, there were multiple students who would talk when they were not supposed to (Alexis, Field Note #9). Finally, as Alexis and I left

one classroom on the bottom floor of Achiever Academy and walked up the stairs to the second floor one day, Alexis confronted Diamond, a seventh grade student who was speaking loudly enough to disrupt other classes. Alexis said,

She was really noisy, and I don't know who she was yelling at because there was no one else on the stairs with her. Obviously something happened upstairs, and I just told her that she was being too loud and she needed to quiet down. But then she got an attitude with me, and I don't take that well. If you have a problem, tell me, but don't do it like I'm the one that caused the problem. Even if the student doesn't stop, I'll remind them that they shouldn't talk to a teacher that way, especially when I'm just trying to help out. I told Diamond any other teacher would have given her a referral to the office and she would have been suspended. (Alexis, Interview #5)

Alexis did not understand the aggressive, sometimes violent environments that many urban students lived in that caused them to be defensive, but she was especially unaware of the political and historical circumstances that caused many African American students in this community to be so distrustful of White individuals. Alexis also did not understand that her position as a teacher in an urban school did not automatically grant her any authority over students as it might have in a suburban school.

Alexis felt that establishing some level of trust with her students may overturn their perceptions that all individuals interacting with them had bad intentions. She attempted to teach social skills during her lessons and encouraged students to communicate with one another so that assumptions could be avoided. She said, "I definitely have to teach kids how to talk to one another, their choice of words, it may not be meant offensively, but a lot of times others will interpret it that way. There are usually better choices of words..." (Alexis, Interview #3).

Alexis also struggled to understand her students' viewpoints surrounding their own health, as well as family health histories and approaches to physical activity. Many students would tell Alexis that their "heart hurt" during activities. She said,

I was convinced when I first started that I had students with all of these undiagnosed heart conditions. So many kids would tell me that their heart hurt, and they could feel their hearts 'beeping.' But really, it wasn't that their hearts hurt, it was that they could feel their heart beating and their chest might hurt a little. My students are so unaccustomed to being active that it's a shock to them when that happens. And I think they're taught not to overdo it, and to slow down if they do feel their heart beating, which I just don't understand. (Alexis, Interview #4)

Many students at Achiever also suffered from asthma, and their perceptions of how active they could be confused Alexis. She said,

They're kind of taught if you have asthma, you don't exercise. And I try to teach them that they just have to know their boundaries. If you need a break, you take a break, then you come back in. I had to stand strong and tell them that I didn't buy the whole asthma excuse. So, just because you have asthma, you don't get to be healthy? I'm sure it's a cultural thing, and maybe it has to do with other health issues or things that happened within families, but I don't get why you would discourage your child from being active. (Alexis, Interview #4)

Often, students with asthma would get started in an activity in Alexis' class, and then realize that they needed to use their inhalers in order to continue. This would frustrate Alexis, because students would then have to leave the lesson to go to the office to retrieve their medications (Alexis, Field Note #10). She was completely baffled by the idea that some parents may not want their children to be active because of health concerns. Alexis said,

I know some parents almost discourage their kids from being active, because they're afraid that the kid might overdo it. Asthma rates are high and then telling kids not to let your heart beat too hard? Like hard enough to feel it? That could happen when you warm up! My parents never discouraged us from being active – they couldn't keep us in the house long enough to tell us that! We were always outside playing! (Alexis, Interview #7)

Both of these examples demonstrated how many urban residents have very different approaches to healthcare than White, middle-class individuals. Alexis had very little frame of reference for the limited access to quality healthcare that her students and families had. Alexis did not consider that many students may be uninsured, may not have transportation (or be able to afford transportation) to go see a doctor or fill a prescription, or may not know of a quality

physician within their community. Furthermore, many families in urban communities were not always trusting of doctors and garnered great skepticism towards others in the healthcare field because of past injustices such as the Tuskegee experiment which took advantage of African Americans. Regardless of the reasons behind students' interpretations of physical activity and health, it was apparent that it was very different than Alexis' understanding of physical activity and health.

The final dilemma with which Alexis struggled due to her limited understanding of urban students' cultural contexts was PE uniforms. Students at Achiever wore uniforms consisting of gray dress pants or skirts with a white collared shirt and a red sweater or sweater vest. On days when students had PE, they were allowed to wear a PE uniform to school. This uniform was supposed to be black or gray sweatpants or athletic pants and an Achiever Academy t-shirt (red, black, or gray) with gym shoes. This was to prevent ruining school uniform clothes, especially if the PE activity took place outside. In previous years, Alexis would send warning slips home with students who were not dressed in PE uniforms, and if a student had received more than two warning slips, they were not allowed to participate. During my observations, Alexis admitted that she was being more lenient with students this school year, but still did not understand why so many students were having an issue with their PE uniforms. She said,

It's hard with gym clothes to stay strict about it. Something's holding me back from grilling them about it. It seems to be disorganization at home – kids will tell me, I can't find my clothes, they're in the washer, they've got a hole in it, all kinds of reasons – I don't understand that part. I know things happen, but for it to be so often and so much? You have gym once a week. Wash the clothes the day after. Or two days after. Or whenever. Sometimes the kids will say 'I knew it was gym day, but my mom told me to put on these clothes.' How do you react to that? I don't know if I'm being flexible or if I'm being a pushover. It's hard to say. I want to try to understand why they don't have their gym clothes and try to help them think of a way to be more organized or have their things prepared for gym days or whatever. And when you don't remember your gym clothes and you're not allowed to play, it's totally devastating. (Alexis, Interview #7)

Alexis tried to be sympathetic to students' reasons for not having their PE uniforms, but it was apparent that she was unsure whether students were giving her legitimate reasons or simply excuses. Alexis' middle-class upbringing meant that she did not necessarily understand what it meant to live in poverty. She said,

...when I was younger, my parents had it tough, but I think that's normal. My mom had different jobs, like babysitting, where she didn't earn much. But then she got a job with the county, so things were never that bad. We always were able to do our extra things, though. Like playing AAU had to be expensive because of all of the different fees and stuff, and our family always had two cars. (Alexis, Interview #8)

Alexis expressed uneasiness about what to do if students could not afford gym uniforms, creating another instance of her grappling with the cultural disconnect between her own middle-class upbringing and the realities of the students she taught. While she wanted to allow students the opportunity to participate regardless of what they wore to school, she strained to understand the dire economic circumstances that many of her students experienced, and that prevented them from having the appropriate PE uniform to wear on designated days.

The issues that Alexis struggled to understand as an early career physical educator in an urban school pointed to the lack of depth of her early experiences with cultural difference. While her involvement with athletics on a travel basketball team and her temporary immersion in an urban community during her college years provided some level of understanding of cultural difference, these experiences did not have the power to overcome the influence of her White, middle-class upbringing and the privileges she took for granted as a member of this group. In these limited experiences, Alexis never had to question the realities of urban life, and therefore never fully understood the many challenges that individuals in urban communities faced. Alexis had a surface level understanding of the differences in cultural viewpoints and beliefs because of her early exposure to other cultures, however, the individual nuances of her students' behavior

that she struggled with illustrated how little she understood about the many contexts of living in an urban community. Alexis failed to understand the history of injustice that affected students and their families, which caused many of her students to react in defensive ways. She failed to understand the limited access to nutritious food or affordable health care in urban communities, which may have caused families to be overly cautious about physical activity. Finally, Alexis failed to understand the impact of poverty and family dynamics in urban communities which resulted in students not having the appropriate PE uniform on their designated day. All of these misunderstandings caused Alexis to constantly question her effectiveness as a teacher. Although she did not usually discipline students with “time outs” or referrals to the principal for misbehavior, when students reacted defensively, Alexis grew visibly frustrated. She said,

I know that I’m inconsistent with the kids sometimes, and I’m working on that. I struggle with whether to sit some kids out or just try to accept their behavior if they are being snappy. Most of the time, I don’t think my kids do things in malicious ways, but if that’s how you hear your parents talking at home, that’s how you’re going to respond, too. (Alexis, Interview #6)

Alexis’ misunderstanding of her students created a continual sense of uneasiness, and she often expressed this during interviews and when she would talk to me during her lessons. She said,

I try to do the best that I can for the kids, I know what we have here isn’t perfect. I wonder if what I do is enough or if I should be doing things differently, but the kids seem to have fun in gym, so I guess I can’t be doing that bad. (Alexis, Interview #9)

Similarly, if students did not wear the appropriate gym uniform to class, she toiled over the most appropriate action to take. She said, “I’m not sure if I’m being flexible or being a push-over. Do I let them play so they’re not miserable, or do I make them sit out so they don’t forget again? What’s the right thing to do?” (Alexis, Interview #3). If Alexis had a richer understanding of the complexities of living in an urban community, she may have been more confident in making management decisions and implementing different policies. Although Alexis had much more

early exposure to cultural difference than many early career teachers may experience, her ability to truly understand and connect with her students was limited because of the voyeuristic nature of the experiences.

*Element 4: Family views of culture.* The fourth and final element of Alexis' pre-professional socialization that influenced her early career development as an urban physical educator was her family's view of other cultures. Although Alexis grew up in a primarily White, middle-class community, her family was somewhat progressive in that they did not have negative views of other cultures or speak about minorities in negative ways during her childhood. She said,

There was never any 'grumpy talk' about different cultures in my family. I had a friend, whose father was a police officer, and I would hear him say things about certain parts of town, but I never really understood it or paid much attention to it. (Alexis, Interview #12)

In particular, Alexis discussed the role that her grandfather played in influencing her outlook on individuals from different backgrounds. She said, "My grandpa would talk to anybody, people are people, you know? And he never judged people; it was more about figuring out where people were coming from. That seems to carry through with how I operate now" (Alexis, Interview #11). Alexis' grandfather encouraged her to recognize the qualities of individuals, not just their ethnicity. Alexis was not sheltered from negative comments about other cultures, but because of the impression that her immediate family members left on her regarding 'difference,' she knew that there was little validity in the negative remarks that individuals made about African Americans and Hispanics. In fact, as she matured, Alexis would speak out to individuals who did make negative remarks. She said, "Once I was old enough to understand the comments, I would tell them to shut their trap or tell them how inappropriate they were being" (Alexis, Interview #12). The example that her grandfather provided taught Alexis to



dig deeper to learn about people, to consider their background, history, values and personality rather than simply 'writing them off' based on race or ethnicity. The progressive views of her family and the acceptance that Alexis was taught as a young child led her to experience some success as well as encounter several struggles as an early career physical educator in an urban school.

*Success and struggle resulting from family views of culture.* By approaching people the way that her family members did (especially her grandfather), Alexis succeeded in her urban school environment because she was inquisitive, open, and curious to learn the whole story rather than make assumptions or generalizations about students and their life circumstances. Alexis was able to succeed in an urban school because she was able to obtain partial "insider status" with the students and families she served. She knew almost all of her 700 students by name, and would point out the siblings of certain students to me during classes (Alexis, Field Note #10). Students and parents trusted Alexis because of the many things she did to try to get to know them, and interacted with them in genuine ways. She said, "I've earned the trust of my students and their families because I'm real. I can't stand fakeness, and I won't be fake with my students or their parents" (Alexis, Interview #5). Alexis conversed with students and families during daily drop-off and dismissal times, at athletic contests, and at school events (Alexis, Field Note #7). She was diligent about contacting parents or other caretakers during school hours if there was ever an injury during her class, which she also felt improved trust among families. She said, "I think the parents trust me, they know that I'm in control of what's going on. If something happens I'll have the secretary contact a caregiver and I'll touch base after school, so they've been cool about most things" (Alexis, Interview #10).

Alexis also succeeded in her urban school by using this inquisitive approach with individual students. Alexis was cautious to accept other teachers' assertions about students, especially since she felt that students who sometimes struggled to focus in the classroom were very successful in PE settings. She said,

Some of the kids that are in the lower-performing classes are so desperate for a break and just need a chance to move around. Sometimes a teacher might say something to me about watching a certain kid, but I don't usually have any issues. When you're ten years old and have to sit in a desk all morning long, yeah, you might be a little antsy. They need to let loose a little, so I won't discipline a student unless they're being malicious. (Alexis, Interview #8)

Alexis' willingness to get the whole story also allowed her to connect with students enough to know when something was "off" with a student. She explained two scenarios with students who were behaving in ways that were not usual for them, and how she handled these situations. The first student expressed his behavior in her class. She said,

I have a student that used to always play in my class, but was sort of stand-offish in his class. Now he hasn't played in my class once this year. When we come outside, he takes his time and he stands off to the side. I'll ask him every time if he wants to participate, and the answer is always 'nope.' But I know that the more I ask, the more he'll back off. I've talked to his teacher to find out if there's anything going on, and she doesn't know. So I just try to talk to him individually during class when the class is doing something else. He just wants to be by himself right now, so I'll respect that. (Alexis, Interview #10)

Another student caught her attention because of how the classroom teacher complained to her about him. In a second grade class, a boy whose 'color' was often changed on the behavior chart was considered a nuisance by his classroom teacher. Alexis spent time talking to the boy during PE and observed how he interacted with the other students in his class, and learned that a recent domestic dispute involving his mother and her ex-boyfriend was causing him to act out during class (Alexis, Field Note #9). Since most of her students could be identified as "at-risk" due to their race and socioeconomic statuses, learning to look beyond these labels allowed Alexis to establish trust and connect with the students in her urban school.

Despite the success Alexis had with her students because of the progressive values regarding difference and diversity she learned from her family, she still agonized in some ways as she approached her students with a color-blind perspective. Alexis struggled to understand several aspects of African American culture (as discussed previously) because she did not understand the oppression and the disadvantages that minorities experienced in urban communities. Viewpoints on authority, parenting, and personal health, as well as access to nutrition, healthcare, and physical activity were some of the elements of urban culture that did not align with her White, middle-class viewpoints. Because of this, she did not always understand her students' resistance to some of her procedures, and Alexis often blamed students for their behaviors and reactions, rather than reflecting on the urban issues and urban history that had an effect on her students.

Perhaps the greatest area of struggle resulting from Alexis' color-blind approach to teaching was the curriculum she taught to her urban students. Alexis did not completely consider the circumstances of her students when she taught or planned activities for students, and claimed she would keep things very similar even if she did have an actual gymnasium to teach classes. She said,

If I had a gym? I don't think a lot would change. I guess it's hard for me to imagine since we've never had one. I wouldn't have to worry about spatial issues and weather, but I'd probably do a lot of the same things. I probably make up activities for the students using whatever we had. (Alexis, Interview #3)

Alexis taught a team sport based, White, middle-class curriculum that did not connect with the realities of the students she taught. The activities that Alexis included in her PE classes were not accessible in her students' communities, and did not create meaningful physical activity experiences that could be continued outside of school. To Alexis, PE meant teaching team sports that required ample space and equipment, regardless of the community or the students she taught.

She did not consider the contexts of the community where she taught, what students may have access to outside of school, or the cultural value of the activities she included. She said, “There’s not much background knowledge for my students to build on when I teach things. I don’t really think about their home lives when I plan. Across the board, I just try to show them things they would enjoy” (Alexis, Interview #9). She did not critically analyze her own teaching practices, or the community where she taught. Therefore, many of her students were not engaged or invested in the activities taking place during her class, and Alexis’ role transformed into more of an entertainer than a teacher. Alexis enjoyed her position in an urban school and could not imagine teaching in a suburban school (Alexis, Field Note #11), however, her limited understanding of cultural difference also limited her ability to be truly effective with her urban students.

Although the values Alexis’ family taught her were somewhat progressive and did not create any racist feelings during her childhood, the casual approach they took to cultural difference was not enough to allow Alexis to deeply understand the students she later taught in an urban school. The experiences of growing up in a mostly White community limited Alexis’ understanding of the realities that minorities face in urban communities, and therefore created an ongoing struggle for her at Achiever Academy.

### **Brad’s Pre-Professional Socialization**

Brad grew up as the youngest of five children in a working-class suburb of a major city. He was raised mostly by his stay-at-home mother, and his father worked in the auto industry. This upbringing was quite typical for his neighborhood. Brad shared, “My dad went to college for a while, but dropped out when he got the job at the factory. I swear he worked every day. My mom stayed home with us, and we were a handful!” (Brad, Interview #6). I identified two

elements of Brad's pre-professional socialization that contributed to his early career development as a physical educator in an urban school.

*Element 1: Images of race.* The first element of Brad's pre-professional socialization that had an impact on his early career as an urban physical educator, and perhaps the most influential component of his upbringing, was the images of race that Brad developed through his upbringing. Brad and his family lived in a White, middle-class community that was well-known for its racism, and was inhabited almost entirely by White families. He said, "I grew up in that suburb, and that's where I went to school. When I was growing up, there were no African American families. Maybe a few Hispanic families, but otherwise it was, and still is all White" (Brad, Interview #1). Growing up in this White, working class community indoctrinated Brad into taking a one-sided view of race where anything outside his own family's White values was viewed negatively. Brad's parents and grandparents, his friends, parents, and most other adults that he encountered, held racist views and used racial slurs freely. He recalled hearing complaints and concerns from his parents and neighbors when word spread that an African American family might move to the neighborhood. He shared, "There's a lot of negativity towards other races in my family. They've got some choice words, my dad and grandfather especially" (Brad, Interview #1). Brad participated in the racist actions and attitudes that surrounded him, especially as a high school athlete. Brad shared that during sporting events against teams from predominantly African American communities, he and his teammates would heckle the other teams with racist slurs and comments, play rougher than usual (in basketball especially), and partake in other forms of poor sportsmanship, such as spitting on their own hands before the post-game handshake. He said, "When we would play against teams from the city, we would taunt the other teams and use slurs and stuff during the games" (Brad, Interview #6). Brad spoke about a

particularly tense basketball game that ended in a near riot when players from opposing teams began fighting at the end of the game, drawing other students, parents, and spectators out of the bleachers to participate, and requiring the local police department to break up the fight.

Although the values that Brad learned regarding race from his parents and other community members were very negative, he encountered a few situations that caused him to question these values as a youth. He shared two specific instances where the values he was taught as a young person created inner turmoil regarding the validity of the negative images his parents portrayed. He said,

I saw a lot of negative things growing up there. When I was a freshman, there were some seniors who beat up these two Black kids that were cutting through our subdivision to get home. The Black kids weren't trying to cause any trouble, but the White kids beat them so bad they were in the hospital for a few weeks. I remember thinking, what idiots; I can't believe someone would do that. I thought it was so stupid that the White guys did that. For whatever reason, I just knew it wasn't right. I think seeing that all the time can make you brainwashed into thinking that things like that are OK. (Brad, Interview #8)

He also started to question the racist values and words of his family and peers when he began working in a retail hardware store a few years out of high school. He had very limited experiences with other cultures until this time. However, working in the hardware store, Brad encountered employees and customers that came from different backgrounds. He said,

I met so many people in retail, customers, my co-workers, and managers. I had never had interactions with Black people that close before. Everyone I worked with was so nice. I really got to know some people well by working with them (Brad, Interview #6)

Brad worked side by side with several African American individuals, and had opportunities to talk, laugh, and joke around with his co-workers. Brad claimed that several times while he worked at the hardware store, he would join several co-workers after their shifts at a local bar (Field Note #7). Because of the positive interactions that he had with African Americans while

working at the hardware store, Brad grappled with the tenets of cultural difference that his parents taught him. He said,

I got to a certain point that I just realized that African Americans and people from other cultures weren't bad people. They're just human, like me. Sure, some folks acted how my parents described, but that happens in every culture. I guess you get to a point where you start making your own decisions and forming your own opinions, drawing your own conclusions. I met lots of nice people when I started working at the hardware store; you just start realizing that people are people. I had all of these preconceived notions, and I just didn't know. When I started working with people and meeting people, I realized my family was wrong. My parents were wrong about African Americans. (Brad, Interview #6)

Brad later reflected that his parents, as well as their values, were “old school” and were very narrow-minded (Brad, Field Note #11).

These experiences led Brad to re-think the intolerant views that he had been surrounded by as a youth, and he began his first job in an urban school feeling that he had experienced some level of “enlightenment” regarding race. He was almost ashamed to admit his racist past during interviews, and assured me that he no longer harbored such negativity. However, the White, middle-class values that he was raised with were quite powerful, and they remained a steady factor even as he became a teacher in an urban community. Although he disagreed with overt racism and had learned some tolerance of other cultures, Brad seemed to hold on to some underlying beliefs about minorities, especially African Americans, which he learned as a youth. Brad approached his teaching through a lens of race – that is, he did not take time to learn about the community, those who resided there, and the history of the community. Rather, he interpreted the actions and behaviors of his students that aligned with his expectations of White, middle-class behavior as a byproduct of racial difference. Brad did not understand or consider the complexities of cultural differences, which encompassed much more than just race. Cultural differences, which encompass socioeconomic status, language, family structures, violence and

crime, personal and public safety, immigration issues, race, ethnicity, and religion, all have an impact on the beliefs, values and actions of community members. For example, Brad grew irritated with his African American students' constant requests for basketball, and took pride in the fact that he had never included an entire unit on basketball since he started teaching at Bentley (Brad, Field Note #5). However, what Brad failed to understand was the cultural importance that basketball held in this African American community. For many students, playing basketball was enjoyable because it resulted in positive attention and praise from family members. Additionally, basketball was much more accessible in the community than many other sports. For some students, excelling at basketball might provide avenues to attend college and provide a means to improve their socioeconomic status. His actions as a teacher demonstrated that he did not understand cultural difference, but simply attributed differences exclusively to race. He said,

The differences, you know, I guess I've always just felt like there ARE differences between the races, and if people would just realize that there are differences and just respect them for what they are, there would be a lot less issues with racism and stuff like that. There's nothing wrong with differences, I mean all people have differences – you can learn from them. (Brad, Interview #6)

Unfortunately, Brad's simplistic views on race neglected to take into consideration the complexity of culture, especially the cultural differences in urban communities.

*Struggles based on images of race.* One of the first areas of cultural difference that Brad encountered as an early career teacher in an urban school was the culture of basketball that the community collectively embraced. Brad was eager to share his experiences as a basketball coach at an urban school with me. He said, "When I go to my son's school, you can hear a pin drop during basketball games" (Brad, Interview #3). This was much different than what he saw at the urban school where he taught. He said,



The first basketball game I coached, I could not believe the atmosphere that had been created. The fans were going nuts, cheering, going back and forth. Music was playing so loud before the game; I'd never seen so many parents out before. Then later that same season, we won a game on a last-second shot, and everyone, including my principal, who was an African American lady, stormed the court like we'd just won the national championship! Coming from my home town, that's just not what I as used to. (Brad, Interview #2)

Since the behavior of students, parents, and other faculty members did not align with his own experiences of extracurricular basketball, where spectators were quiet, attendance was low, and the atmosphere was much less festive, he was very critical of the actions and behaviors that he observed. The differences were quite shocking, and he admitted that it took him several months to get used to how important basketball was to community members, the style of play in the community, and celebration that accompanied the game. Speaking about his African American students, he said, "I was totally shocked by the behavior. Their loudness and volume, especially in competitive situations. Why do they have to celebrate every little thing that happens? I'm used to it now, but part of me wants to change it, too" (Brad, Interview #2). Comments such as these were usually expressed in a negative tone of voice, and he would shake his head in disbelief at how much of a spectacle he believed the African American community created out of what he felt was a simple middle school basketball game (Brad, Field Note #3). Brad also shared his disgust with professional African American basketball players whom his students wanted to emulate. He said, "The guys in the NBA can be such thugs...that's another reason I don't let the kids play too often. They want to act just like the pros. I don't think many of those athletes are very good role models" (Brad, Interview #3).

Another area of cultural difference that Brad encountered as an early career physical educator was the interactions that he had with students. Since Brad did not take the time to learn about the community where he taught, or details of the lives of his students, he did not

understand the history of the community, the challenges that residents faced in everyday life, and how this affected all facets of his students' lives, including their views of education and their teachers. Brad was nearly clueless about the influence of pop culture on his students' lives. Even though Brad had three school-aged sons of his own, he had very little knowledge of the music that his students enjoyed, the television programs they watched, and the slang they used to communicate with their families and peers. He said, "There are things that the students will share with me in class that I have no idea about. They'll talk about some movie or some rapper, and I have absolutely no clue" (Brad, Interview #3). He seemed annoyed and judgmental of the type of music his students listened to, and mocked some of the lyrics having to do with cars, drugs, and violence (Brad, Field Note #6). After a parent came to pick up a student during an afternoon class, he commented on how very little parental involvement he saw at Bentley International, and said that many parents were either drug addicts or drug dealers. During one lesson involving stations, he had to encourage one particular group of girls to stay on task several times throughout the class period. Rather than staying engaged with the station activity, these four girls were practicing a dance that they had learned from a recent music video (Brad, Field Note #5). On several occasions, Brad approached me from where I was observing his lesson, apologized and rolled his eyes for what he perceived as students' terrible behavior (Brad, Field Notes #4, 7, 9). Brad often seemed very frustrated by his students, and the cultural differences that existed between them.

Brad's White, middle-class values also created a misunderstanding in his expectations of student behavior. His approach to cultural difference situated his own White, middle-class behaviors, values, and norms as positive or 'right' and the actions, beliefs, and values of the urban students and families he had contact with as negative or 'wrong.' In his own experiences

as a student in a middle-class community, Brad learned how to sit in a desk quietly and listen to the teacher's directions. He brought those same values and expectations to the urban school where he taught. In his own classes, Brad placed great emphasis on students being quiet and orderly throughout the lesson, however, this was not what he encountered in his urban school. He shared,

...if I was a classroom teacher I'd have to have it quiet. I know that in the gym it's gonna be louder – but I still like to have it a little quieter. I know that my kids are really vocal, but there's gotta be some way that they can just be quiet when I'm giving directions before we start a game. I usually have to stop them a couple of times during each class to get them to refocus. I can't make it through attendance in their teams without having to totally stop or give some type of reminder about behavior or talking. (Brad, Interview #9)

Brad claimed that many of his urban students would talk in class while he was giving instructions. He said, "...the not listening hour after hour just drives me crazy. I give the kids chance after chance, and they still keep talking when I'm teaching" (Brad, Interview #6). Although Brad taught at a very diverse school with students of various ethnicities, races, and religions, most of his comments about cultural differences and undesirable behaviors were about African Americans. When questioned about this, he claimed that his African American students had more behavioral issues in his classes than Arab American, Asian American, or European American students. He said, "...they're the group that I have the most problems with. They have more of the behavior issues" (Brad, Interview #10).

In classes, Brad disciplined and gave warnings to African American students more frequently than other students (Brad, Field Note #4). During my first week of observations, Brad would warn me about particular students that he felt caused a great deal of disruption in each class. In most of these instances, the student was an African American boy (Brad, Field Note #4). His identification of African American students as "bad Black kids" seemed to be a product of the racist upbringing that he experienced, because he had very few negative remarks about the

other culturally diverse students he taught. Brad did classify his other students' behavior in positive ways. He said, "I do notice a difference in the kids. Most of the Arabic kids are very well behaved, and the European kids are probably the most respectful of all the students" (Brad, Interview #6). Based on Brad's actions during classes and the feelings he shared during interviews, the foundation of negativity towards African Americans that was built and supported by his family and community during his childhood had not been completely erased. When I asked him about the disproportionate amount of comments he made about African American students, he said,

I guess I talk about the African American students the most because they're the group that I have the most problems with, like with behavior issues and stuff. I've even talked with our Dean of Discipline about it, because I just don't have the same issues with the other groups of kids. (Brad, Interview #10)

Brad was unaware of the history in this urban area that would lead community residents to be distrustful of outsiders, especially White, middle-class individuals. Decades of workplace discrimination, racial segregation, housing discrimination, and other inequalities against African Americans by more powerful, wealthy Whites generated feelings of skepticism and distrust in this urban community. However, because Brad was raised in a family that believed the unemployment and poverty of African Americans in this urban community was caused by their own attitudes and laziness, rather than the consequences of racism and bigotry, he was unable to comprehend why some students may be distrustful of a White teacher. This had an impact on the way he viewed his ability to be an effective teacher of non-White students. He said,

I see how some of the Black kids connect with some of the other Black teachers, and they seem to trust them more. Sometimes I stand up there at the front of the class and think the kids must be thinking 'White boy, you don't know anything about me, or what I'm doing, or what I've been through.' What am I supposed to do about that? (Brad, Interview #2)

Brad thought the distrust he witnessed had more to do with the students' own issues than his teaching practices and behaviors. He said,

I don't know what it is about this culture or being in an urban area, maybe it's because of the way they grow up, but it seems so hard for kids to open up and trust you. It seems so hard for kids to open up and trust anybody. They're immediately on the defense, they're immediately making excuses, they don't want to listen, and then when you do try to say something or help, they'll say 'you don't know anything about me' or 'you don't understand me, so you don't have a right to tell me what to do.' (Brad, Interview #7)

Brad had been at Bentley International long enough to realize that many of his students were not simply testing the tolerance of a new teacher, but he did not understand why his connections with students were so limited. He described the struggles he had, especially with middle school students, to be taken seriously. He said,

The biggest challenge I have right now is some of the middle school girls – there's drama there. Some of the girls won't try, they give me attitude. I got into it with one of the girls this morning – she is totally full of sass, and she was yelling at me that she wanted to call her mom to go home. I was trying to talk to her about following through with things that she starts. She's quit the basketball team and has been a problem on the volleyball team. I spent a good five minutes just trying to talk to her, but it's such a battle, is it worth even talking to her if she's not going to listen to me or hear me out? (Brad, Interview #5)

He continued that many of the middle school students were his most challenging classes and that he questioned his ability to be a good teacher when his students were so different than him. He shared,

I do sometimes wonder if the kids take me seriously. I wonder if they look at me and think I'm crazy or just don't get them or whatever. I'll stand up at the front of the class sometimes and think they must be thinking, 'White boy, you don't know anything about me, or what I'm doing, or what I've been through' (Brad, Interview #2).

He was concerned enough about the lack of rapport with his students that he sought the advice of other teachers and administrators. He said, "I've talked to our Dean of Discipline about it, because there seems to be a big issue of trust with those [African American] students" (Brad,

Interview #10). However, Brad did not have any concrete strategies for improving his connections with students.

To compound the issue of feeling little connection with his students, Brad felt that many African American teachers at Bentley International were most effective with African American students. He frequently discussed other teachers on the Bentley staff to whom his African American students responded well and also respected. According to Brad these teachers, “knew the right lingo to use with students and what their lives are really like” (Brad, Interview #6). Brad specifically mentioned two African American male teachers that he felt had the respect and trust of the students. He said,

Mr. W., he’s in charge of discipline, but I see that the kids respect him a lot more. He connects with them in a different way than I can. And Mr. G., one of the writing teachers – he’s Black, too, and I just think it’s easier for them to connect with the kids. (Brad, Interview #2)

The images of race that Brad developed prior to teaching in an urban school prevented him from realizing the complexity of cultural difference. Therefore, Brad used race to explain many of the struggles that he encountered in his early career as an urban physical educator, including how his Whiteness inhibited him from creating deep and meaningful connections with his diverse urban students.

*Element 2: The value of team sports.* Another element of Brad’s pre-professional socialization that had an impact on his early career development as an urban physical educator was his participation in and the value placed on team sports by his family. Brad’s father, who worked nearly seven days a week for an automotive company, made time to participate in multiple sports leagues throughout the year. Brad recalled his father playing on softball leagues during the summer and fall, as well as bowling leagues during the winter (Brad, Field Note #4).

Their suburban home was located directly across the street from a community park, so Brad and

his friends would play pick-up games of football, baseball, and basketball every day after school, and all day during the summer. Brad shared, "...we were outside playing all day long with our friends, even during the school year. We'd get home from school and head right out to the park to play – football, baseball, whatever we had" (Brad, Interview #6). Since Brad's mother stayed at home and raised all five children, she often encouraged the kids to get outside and play. Brad played baseball on a community recreation team and was involved in basketball, wrestling, and baseball throughout middle school and high school. Brad continued his involvement with sports when he started a family of his own. Once Brad's oldest son was old enough to participate in community recreation sports, he began coaching his teams, and has continued to coach at least one season since then. During my observations, Brad often had to leave immediately after school to attend board meetings for the fall football league that two of his sons played for, and also mentioned his preparation for an upcoming summer baseball season (Brad, Field Note #9). Brad felt that sports provided an outlet to teach many life lessons, and found several ways to keep sport as an integral component of his life.

*Struggles resulting from the value of team sports.* Brad's positive experiences with sports while growing up lead him to believe that teaching PE would be a natural career choice. He was excited at the prospect of sharing sports and physical activity with students and inspiring them to stay fit and healthy across their lifetimes. Brad's love of team sports did not seamlessly transfer to the urban school where he taught, however. His analysis of team sports were based on the White, middle-class interpretation that he was taught as a youth, and he never considered any other version of sport. Brad incorporated several White, middle-class competitive team sports into his PE classes, which were met with fierce resistance by his students. Brad taught many sports that his students had very little experience with, and had even less access to outside of

school PE. He was surprised when students had little knowledge of team sports like hockey, baseball, and volleyball. When he shared how much effort it took the students to learn floor hockey, he remarked, “I had to spend a lot of time just showing the kids how to hold on to the sticks – they were holding them like brooms!” (Brad, Interview #6). Brad justified his choice of teaching team sports because he felt that his students could benefit from the “life lessons” taught in competitive team sports, life lessons that he learned as a youth. He said,

Sports and physical activity were always a positive source when I was growing up. I think it influences the way I teach now. I have such a strong belief in sports and in activity and games. Playing hard, having fun, there’s so much you can get out of that. You can learn a lot about things you can take with you in the real world – teamwork, leadership, losing and winning the right way, sportsmanship...things you might not learn otherwise. They give you skills that you can use out in the real world. Where else can kids really learn that? (Brad, Interview #7)

Brad felt that the sports that he played as a young person and the principles that he learned by playing those sports, were appropriate for all students even though what his students experienced growing up was very different than what he experienced as a child. Although Brad hoped that students would pick up on principles such as sportsmanship, fair play, and effort during games, the activities he chose to teach those skills did not resonate with the students he taught.

During lessons, students asked Brad when they would have the chance to play basketball, and on other occasions, could be heard groaning when Brad revealed the activities the class would be covering that day (Brad, Field Notes #5, #8). Brad proudly shared that he had never taught a basketball unit in his four years at Bentley, and did not intend to include basketball during the school year since his students “could get that anywhere” (Brad, Field Note #5). Brad’s desire was to teach team sports that would provide students other options for remaining physically active throughout their adult lives. These options aligned with Brad’s White, middle-



class values, rather than providing options for students living in urban communities to remain active outside of school PE. He said,

When I first started, I realized that a lot of the sports and content that I had included the kids had never seen before. Like hockey – none of the kids even knew how to hold a stick or had seen hockey before, even with the pro team here in town. They'd never seen it – it's not the most popular sport in an inner city. For most of my students, they didn't have the first clue about it. That's what I really like to do, is introduce them to new things – even with volleyball, there were lots of kids that were unfamiliar. And badminton, too. That's my goal, I guess, is to introduce the kids to new things that they might actually get interested in and go out and enjoy – maybe they'll actually get some physical activity out of it when they go home from school every night...that's a big part of my philosophy, I want to introduce them to some skills that they can use for the rest of their life. (Brad, Interview #6)

Brad grew frustrated at his students' lack of motivation and laziness when it came to many of the team sports that he taught, however, he had not considered that the sports he taught were culturally irrelevant, and that students had little access to these sports outside of school PE. For example, during a volleyball game in the first week of observation, several sixth grade students argued over what the score was and whose team was supposed to serve. When points were scored, it was usually due to error, such as a ball being hit out of bounds or a serve going into the net, rather than an actual rally. Brad split his time between two courts to try to keep the games flowing and to diffuse conflicts between players. Many students stood still during game play, or would try to move out of the way to avoid getting hit by another player or the ball. At the court that Brad was not observing, three students decided to quit playing and sat on the bleachers. Finally, Brad blew his whistle and told the entire class to sit down at their courts, and lectured the students about needing to have better sportsmanship for over ten minutes. After the class was dismissed, Brad apologized to me for having to see a class with such “behavior problems” (Brad, Field Note #1). What Brad interpreted as poor sportsmanship and behavior issues seemed more like a lack of interest, relevance, and skill for the students. Unfortunately,

Brad's view of appropriate content to teach in an urban community did not match the expectations and interests of the students he was teaching.

### **Candie's Pre-Professional Socialization**

Candie was raised in a rural community, nearly 25 miles from the closest city. She described her community as a farming town made up of White, middle-class families. Candie had a slightly older brother and a much younger sister. They were raised by Candie's stay-at-home mother, while Candie's father worked for an automotive company nearby. Candie and her brother attended school in a racially homogenous school district with only one middle school and one high school. Neighboring school districts that they competed against in high school athletics included several districts that were closer to a mid-sized city, and had more diverse student populations. Two significant elements of Candie's pre-professional socialization contributed to her success and struggle as an early career physical educator.

*Element 1: Appreciation of cooperative activities.* The first element of Candie's pre-professional socialization that had an impact on her early career as an urban physical educator was the appreciation of cooperative activities that she developed during her upbringing. Throughout her childhood, Candie was more apt to play outside with her older brother in their family's wooded property than to play sports. She said,

I played outside a lot – the opportunities were vast – my brother and I were only 19 months apart, so we played outside a ton, out in the woods. We rode our bikes all over our property, not so much on the road because that was dangerous, but we were outside all the time (Candie, Interview #5).

The family also had a swimming pool, so Candie was involved in Red Cross water safety courses. Candie was never involved in community or recreational sports prior to middle school, so her lack of experience in organized team sports resulted in being cut from the basketball team

her freshman year of high school. After being cut from basketball, Candie decided to join the swim team, a milestone that she reflected as an important turning point in her life. She said,

I enjoyed plenty of activities when I was growing up, but I was cut from a few sports, too. I got cut from the basketball team, so I decided to swim. That was probably one of the best things that happened to me, because it turned out that I was a pretty good swimmer. I lettered my freshman year, and competed at the state meet a few times. I even swam in college for a few years. But I was also cut from the volleyball team and the softball team my freshman year. I had never played any of those sports before high school, and I remember being angry with my parents for not signing us up for organized sports. I know I was upset about it then, but I look back now and think, thank god, because it turned out better for me. Sure, I wanted to be on those teams, but there were a lot of negative things associated with being on a team, too, like getting cut. (Candie, Interview #3)

As a swimmer, Candie was still a member of a team, but the nature of the sport was much more individual. Candie shared that she learned to be competitive with herself, and learned to set goals as a member of the swim team. She said, “I prefer to just be competitive with myself, not with others. I know I learned that from swimming, and I think that definitely affects how I teach” (Candie, Interview #3). Her extracurricular activities in high school were limited to the swim team and the marching band, therefore, Candie did not possess a strong team sport background before she entered her teacher preparation program.

Additionally, Candie spent several summers working as a camp counselor at a nearby Girl Scout camp, where she was introduced to more inclusive activities. It was during these summers where Candie was able to completely appreciate participating in physical activities in a cooperative manner, rather than in a competitive manner. The culture created at Girl Scout camp allowed all of the campers to be involved. She said,

I loved the camp aspect because everybody got to participate. Everyone was involved. If my campers wanted to play basketball, they could, and it didn’t have to be this competitive, five-on-five scenario where we kept score. And if they wanted to play softball, they could go out to the field and play and maybe they didn’t have the bases exactly where they were supposed to, but they kept the spirit of the game. It was an

awesome experience for the girls I was in charge of, so why wouldn't I want to reproduce some of that here? (Candie, Interview #10)

During the summers she spent as a camp counselor, Candie led week-long adventure trips, served as the coordinator of a high ropes course, and coordinated other educational initiatives that encouraged the female campers to explore career possibilities that were considered non-traditional for the girls. Candie said,

I was really able to see what equal opportunities provided to the girls at camp. I learned so much myself – a lot of times we were in high risk situations, on the high ropes course or on our adventure trips – and the girls would not have been successful if there wasn't a cooperative environment established from the start. (Candie, Interview #11)

*Success resulting from appreciating cooperative activities.* Candie's appreciation of cooperative learning allowed her some success in her early career as an urban physical educator because she identified that her urban students experienced many challenges and pressures outside of school, and did not need the added anxiety of competitive activities in school PE. Most of Candie's curriculum was taught in a cooperative way rather than in a competitive manner, and students did not appear upset that competition was missing from their PE program. To stress an inclusive environment, Candie avoided most competitive activities in her classes and designed lessons to provide students with maximal opportunities for success. She said, "I want the kids to be successful, and if that means I alter the activities to make that happen, like not keeping score or whatever, than I'm okay with that" (Candie, Interview #6). Candie believed that competitive activities were detrimental to the inclusive culture that she worked to maintain in her gym. She said,

I try to do things where they're working with teams, but I try to do more individual things and cooperative things, rather than competitive things. I just don't like to diffuse the negativity at the end when we do competitive things. If they're in 6<sup>th</sup> grade and their parents choose to put them in competitive team sports, that's their choice, but too many kids get left out. Rarely in a unit will I ever go up to a full game, maybe 5 on 5, with the first team to score a point wins, so they're constantly rotating in and out. We'll play a

game and the kids will ask what the score was, and I'll say, oh, it was 7 to 7, it was a tie, and they'll say "it's always a tie Ms C!" And some of the kids will ask if they can keep score, but I always tell them they don't have to. I came in with a pretty similar philosophy, the team building background, so I've always tried to do things where all of the kids are involved. If there's an elimination game, then there's an aspect of the game where they're going to get back in, too. And they're instantly back in and running, there's no reason to wait 5 minutes for a new game to start. (Candie, Interview #3)

Candie also shared that some students demonstrated negative behaviors when competitive situations arose in her PE classes. She said,

I just really don't like the way they leave after we've done a competitive activity. So I've chosen to shy away from those types of activities. Some of my students are naturally competitive and have been brought up with competition, and that's fine, but there are some students – I'm thinking of a 3<sup>rd</sup> grader in particular – that are completely changed by competition. It ruins him. He's very bright and very polite, and he's an awesome kid in every other situation, but when we do competitive things, he gets pissed, he gets frustrated, he lies and makes up excuses when he doesn't win, he turns into a completely different person. In any other case, he's a great student – principal's honor roll, the whole deal. But he'll lose little competitions, and every time he doesn't win, there's a reason. So clearly he's never been taught a healthy competition, and he'll break down and cry. And I don't want that on a grand scale, so I choose more cooperative activities. (Candie, Interview #11)

Candie understood that many of the urban students she taught had very difficult living circumstances. Although all students wore school uniforms, she knew that some students could not afford gym shoes. A high percentage of students attending Chestnut Academy received free or reduced-price lunch. Many students spoke about having family members in jail, and at least two students that she knew of lived in a homeless shelter. These circumstances, as well as challenges that Candie was unaware of, prompted her to avoid competitive activities. Additionally, Candie adamantly believed in avoiding activities where students were put on display, could possibly experience any type of domination, or have such negative experiences that they would want to avoid the activity altogether in the future. She said,

I think at this age, if a kid wants to be involved in competitive sports, they can do that outside of school. There are plenty of free opportunities for kids to do that in the community, and I'll put announcements in the school newsletter about it when I hear

about them. I just don't think competitive, organized sports belong in my curriculum. I teach so many young kids, anyway. And things like fitness testing, I haven't done it once. I'll do fitness stations and the kids have fun with that, and they improve their fitness that way. The kids will even ask for some of the fitness stations, and they can give me all sorts of examples of different fitness activities. There's absolutely no need to make the kids feel bad about themselves, I think there's plenty of chances for that to happen every day, especially since some of them have such difficult lives. For some of my kids, the deck is already stacked against them with family health history and being able to eat nutritious food. When they don't eat here, there's no telling how nutritious their meals are. I don't need to make matters worse by making them hate physical activity. I want the kids to remember the fun things and take those things with them, not be the teacher that makes them do fitness testing and have bad memories about having to do demeaning things... (Candie, Interview #3)

Because of her experiences in cooperative activities prior to her teacher preparation program, Candie strongly believed in a PE program that was inclusive and cooperative rather than competitive. However, because of the community dynamics in the urban environment where she taught, Candie felt that it was even more important to focus on non-competitive activities. This resulted in some level of success during her early career because Candie's students seemed comfortable and at ease with participating in most of the physical activity during her classes. During a "Raffle Run" that Candie used to improve students' cardiovascular fitness, students received a ticket each time they completed a lap around a large field. After a designated amount of time, Candie would stop the students and draw tickets for prizes, such as healthy snacks, stickers, or pencils. At the end of the designated time, Candie announced to the students that time had expired, however, if students wanted to, they could run one additional lap. In a class of fifth graders, all of the students chose to run an additional lap, even though some of the students were clearly better runners than others (Candie, Field Note #9). Candie rewarded students' effort, not the number of laps that they completed, which made all of the students comfortable to try their best in an activity such as the Raffle Run.

*Element 2: Gradual exposure to diverse environments.* The second element of Candie's pre-professional socialization that had an impact on her early career as a physical educator was the gradual exposure into more and more diverse environments prior to enrolling in a teacher preparation program. Rather than having her first teaching job also serve as her first experience with diverse students, she had several experiences that progressively exposed Candie to more diverse populations.

Candie's background in swimming and water safety allowed her to get a job at a local YMCA her freshman year of college. The YMCA was located in a large city, and she was assigned to several shifts as a lifeguard that coincided with after-school latch key programs and open swim hours that attracted local students. The latch key director, who noticed Candie's easy-going relationship with the kids, recruited her to work in the latch key program, rather than just serving as a lifeguard. Candie shared,

That was my first experience with more diverse kids. I remember being excited about having the chance to work with them – most of the kids were African American, but there was a large population of Hispanic students, too. Some of them were 'hard' and rough, but that was probably because it was after school and they just wanted to play! I really just had to absorb what was going on and ask questions when I had them. There wasn't any formal training, I was just thrown in there with the kids and tried my best to learn about them as I was working. (Candie, Interview #8)

Working with the latch key program led to employment in an after-school program, which provided Candie an opportunity to work with yet another diverse group of students in a Spanish speaking school. She said, "I was assigned to this one school, and it was called 'Academia de Espanol.' The kids didn't have to speak Spanish, but some classes were all in Spanish, so that was a learning experience, too!" (Candie, Interview #9).

Because of her interest in the outdoors, Candie applied for and was hired as a counselor for a Girl Scout camp the summer between her freshman and sophomore years of college, a

position she returned to every summer until she graduated. In this role, Candie worked with several other counselors that were hired from all over the world and began learning about other cultures. She said, “I worked and lived with people from Russia, Korea, all over. It was great for the campers to experience that, to have mentors that were coming from different cultures” (Candie, Interview #11). The counselors went through extensive training to learn about how to help the campers have a positive experience. Much of the camp experience involved challenging trips, such as the first trip that Candie led, a two-week camping trip that kicked off with a six-mile hike where campers carried canoes and all of their equipment. Counselors had to be trained to help the campers build trust, handle difficult and risky situations, and solve problems throughout their trips.

During this counseling experience, Candie became very close with Charlotte, another counselor, who ultimately helped Candie recognize her own sexuality. This realization altered her approach to the rest of her schooling. After returning to school in the fall, Candie came out to her close friends and family, enrolled in more liberal coursework, and even signed up to travel abroad. She said,

So I get back from working at Girl Scout camp, I’ve discovered something about my own sexuality, I’ve signed up to study abroad, I had a totally different outlook on everything. I switched classes. Before I left that summer, I was really uncomfortable with some of the things we were reading in my liberal arts classes, and then I came back and I signed up to take a ‘Love, Sex and Gender’ course. You could say I did a total 180... (Candie, Interview #11)

During her study abroad program, Candie spent six weeks in Capetown, South Africa where she lived with the Dean of the host university and his family, and experienced Capetown in two very distinct ways. For part of her experience abroad, she worked in a private, all-girls boarding school that was quite diverse. This school was a college preparatory school, and students could earn scholarships to attend. Because students wore uniforms, Candie claimed it



was difficult to determine the socioeconomic background of students. Another part of her study abroad experience was in the “townships” of Capetown, where Blacks were subjected to apartheid and were not allowed into the cities without a passport. In the townships, families built their homes out of whatever materials they could find, and the local schools usually had only one room. During her time in Capetown, Candie was able to witness the drastic differences in how citizens were treated, valued, and respected.

*Success and struggle resulting from gradual exposure to diverse environments.* Candie’s gradual introduction to diverse experiences allowed Candie some success in an urban environment for several reasons. By being “weaned” into more diverse environments, she was not bombarded with the shock of cultural differences between her White, middle-class upbringing and the urban students that she taught at Chestnut Academy. Her experiences at the YMCA latch key and summer programs, as well as the experiences at Girl Scout camp allowed her to develop a richer frame of reference for cultural differences and develop a more inclusive philosophy for teaching overall. She shared,

I didn’t grow up in a diverse environment, but this teaching experience wasn’t my first experience, its almost like I was “weaned” into it. The after-school program at the Y was pretty diverse, and then camp, and then here. So it might be that some teachers have their first experience with non-white students when they get hired in an urban school, but I was totally weaned into it, and I think it worked well. (Candie, Interview #7)

Secondly, identifying herself as a sexual minority gave Candie a better understanding of the experiences of other minorities (i.e., racial minorities). She said, “I don’t think I’d be half the teacher I am today if I hadn’t worked as a camp counselor. There are so many things I learned there that I just didn’t get from the PETE program” (Candie, Interview #11). Candie identified that her sexuality definitely played a role in her teaching philosophy and allowed her to be accepting of differences of all kinds. She shared,

My sexuality does contribute to my philosophy about being open minded and inclusive. And that affects how I see the kids I teach. I don't like to point out big differences and I don't want the kids to feel uncomfortable in any way, so everything is affected by that. What I teach, my management, all of it. I think that allows me to connect with my students so much better. (Candie, Interview #11)

Third, Candie's participation in the study abroad program allowed her to see the effects of discrimination and apartheid firsthand, which she would reflect back on frequently. The injustices that she witnessed in South Africa were powerful examples of how oppression and discrimination can affect communities. Candie even kept a photo album from her trip to South Africa in her office to share with other teachers and students at Chestnut Academy because the experience had such a profound effect on her (Candie, Field Note #11).

Although the experiences that Candie had during her pre-professional socialization allowed her some success in an urban school, these experiences were not foolproof for preparing Candie to be a successful urban physical educator. She still encountered several areas of struggle because of her background, especially as she realized how much her "Whiteness" had an impact on her teaching. Many experiences and activities that Candie considered 'normal' as a White, middle-class female were actually brand new phenomena for the students she taught at Chestnut. It took Candie several years and many frustrating experiences to grasp that her values and ideals were not necessarily shared by the students and families that she taught.

For example, during her first year at Chestnut, Candie was excited to start the school year off with an exciting new unit with some of her older students. Armed with enthusiasm and a closet full of new equipment, Candie chose to teach a lacrosse unit to her sixth graders. She had all the equipment prepared, had a full unit plan written, and was excited to share the sport with her students. However, her urban students, who had never seen lacrosse sticks, watched a game, or knew of any places to play lacrosse in the area, did not share her enthusiasm. In fact, during

the first lesson, one student mildly raised her hand and said, “Um, Miss C., Black kids don’t really play lacrosse” (Candie, Field Note #3). Floored, Candie continued through the lesson, but went home that evening to try and find examples of African American lacrosse players. She was frustrated when she could only find two African American players, both of whom played at the college level. Later that same year, Candie was given permission by her principal to organize a weekend-long cross-country skiing trip for all fifth graders. She had secured funding so that students would not have to pay anything, had facilities rented and an entire weekend of activities planned for the two fifth grade classes at Chestnut. However, after sending home information to families about the trip, very few students brought their permission slips back, and many students told Candie that their parents said they could not attend the trip (Candie, Field Note #5). Despite Candie’s pre-professional socialization experiences that included students from a variety of cultural and economical backgrounds, she still assumed that the activities she valued as a White, middle-class female would be interesting to all students. Unfortunately, Candie was still very naïve about students’ culture, and approached the activities she chose and the content she included without much consideration. She said,

I think that first year I really understood how ‘White’ I really was. Like the lacrosse unit, I didn’t even consider that it was only a ‘White’ sport, but then I looked it up and couldn’t find anything. And then the skiing trip, that’s not something my students had ever even had the opportunity to do. We would do a lot of activities outside, and when a soccer ball would go into the trees, the kids would look at me, clearly concerned, that the ball had gone into the ‘forest.’ I had to tell them it was okay to go in after it. One day we were out there, and the kids were literally silent for ten minutes because they were watching a raccoon walk along a fence. Something I’d seen a hundred times, they were seeing for the first time. So yeah, I guess I didn’t realize just how ‘White’ I was until I had the experiences here to point that out. (Candie, Interview #3)

## Conclusion

The pre-professional socialization experiences of Alexis, Brad, and Candie all had profound effects on their early career development as urban physical education teachers. Each

teacher encountered different successes and struggles which had a direct impact on their ability to be effective teachers of urban students. The commonalities and discrepancies among the pre-professional socialization experiences of these three teachers will be analyzed in the discussion section. The discussion section will also include implications for these findings as it relates to future research involving the early career development of urban physical educators. In the next chapter, I will outline the findings based on the next phase of occupational socialization, the professional socialization experience.

## CHAPTER 5: THE ROLE OF PROFESSIONAL SOCIALIZATION

### Introduction

The three teachers in this study all attended different PETE programs with different requirements, core philosophies, and student expectations. The teachers conveyed how their professional socialization in formal PETE programs played a role in early success and struggle as an urban physical educator. In this chapter, I will describe the experiences of each teacher in their PETE programs in case study format, and suggest the significance of these experiences in relation to their early career development.

### Alexis' Professional Socialization

Alexis attended a small, private, Christian college close to her hometown, on a basketball scholarship, and knew she wanted to major in “something having to do with sports” (Alexis, Interview #1). The requirements to be a physical education major within the College of Education involved several swim courses, and because Alexis admitted that she had a fear of water, she chose to major in language arts and minor in physical education to avoid the swimming courses. Through Alexis' description and discussion of her teacher preparation program, I identified six elements of her professional socialization that were laden with White, middle-class ideals, which in turn created several challenges as she began her early career as a physical educator in an urban school.

*Element 1: Lack of diversity in PETE students and faculty.* The first element of Alexis' professional socialization that demonstrated a White, middle-class agenda was the lack of diversity within her PETE program. Alexis shared that most, if not all, of the students in her program were White. All of her professors and instructors were White, and did not have any experiences in diverse or urban schools. She said “...my university was kind of in the country, so you had mostly kids from the local rural areas that went there. I think it was all White students,

and none of our professors were Black” (Alexis, Interview #3). Therefore, throughout Alexis’ professional socialization, there was never any mention of diverse students, or teaching in diverse or urban schools. Alexis’ courses did not include any information about teaching students of color, teaching students who spoke languages other than English, teaching students who may not fall under the category of “middle-class,” teaching students that did not live in a nuclear family or teaching students who did not live in safe neighborhoods.

The teaching principles that Alexis learned in her courses applied mostly to White, middle-class suburban students. So, when Alexis’ professors and instructors discussed “students” and “teachers” in her courses, they referred to “White, middle-class, and suburban” students and teachers. The curricular models, management strategies, and best practices that Alexis learned in her professional socialization were all based on teaching White, middle-class students in White, middle-class schools. Alexis said,

None of our teachers talked about urban schools in our classes. It probably didn’t cross their minds, and they probably didn’t have the experiences to tell us any different. Maybe they just thought we’d all get jobs in the districts that we all went to, and we wouldn’t need that information. (Alexis, Interview #2)

Because the PETE program lacked diversity, Alexis did not benefit from the perspectives of individuals who had attended or taught in urban schools, or could discuss the complexities of urban contexts and urban schools, especially as it related to PE. Alexis was not provided with information regarding school budgets, standardized testing, class sizes, community safety, conflict resolution issues, or language diversity, which can all be elements to consider when preparing to teach in an urban school. So, when Alexis began teaching in an urban community after completing her professional socialization, she encountered several struggles as a physical educator.

*Struggles resulting from lack of diversity within the PETE program.* Enrolling in a PETE program with such homogeneity reinforced many White, middle-class values and ideals about physical education and physical activity that Alexis had experienced during her pre-professional socialization. She gained no frame of reference for the complex landscape of urban communities, such as the diversity of residents' races, ethnicities, religions, and languages; the challenges that residents faced due to poverty, crime, drugs, and gang cultures; or the family and community dynamics that affected urban residents' lives, such as extended families, single-parent households, family members that were incarcerated, and parents who had to work multiple jobs to support their families. Speaking about her lack of preparation for urban schools, Alexis said,

...if you had someone that had taught in different areas and settings, they could tell you about it, they could relate their experiences to you, or they could take you there. There's no way to know how to teach in an urban school without actually going there and seeing it. (Alexis, Interview #4)

Therefore, when Alexis began her career at an urban school, she encountered many situations that she was not necessarily prepared for throughout her professional socialization. As she began working with students at Achiever, she realized that discussing students' families had to include more than just the suburban prototype of "mom" and "dad." She said,

When I talk to my kids about who is at home, I found out quickly that it's not just parents. Some kids are living with an aunt or a grandparent, or even a friend of the family. So when I tell kids to take something home to their mom, dad, aunt, uncle, whoever, the 'whoever' is probably most accurate. (Alexis, Interview #6)

By having such little exposure to diversity within her PETE program, Alexis took many things for granted as a White, middle-class individual that were major concerns for the students she taught. For example, Alexis was not prepared for the health conditions that she encountered in the urban community where she taught. She said,

There were a lot of adjustments I had to make. I really had to understand how my students understood their own health. The asthma rates are so high; I would guess that

three-quarters of my kids have asthma. Some have inhalers, some don't. It's really hit or miss. And when the kids feel their heart beating hard when we're being active, that's a bad thing, it's something to be concerned about. When I first started, I remember thinking that I had all of these kids with undiagnosed heart conditions, but really, it's a matter of them learning that a pumping heart is not a good thing. So that's cultural, too. I don't remember many kids having health issues in my classes when I was growing up...this was all new to me. I had to figure out how to deal with that when I started teaching here (Alexis, Interview #7).

The lack of diversity in Alexis' professional socialization program meant that she had little frame of reference for the issues facing residents of urban areas. Therefore, she was unaware of the limited access to health care that many urban residents experienced because of transportation issues, the high cost of healthcare, and a proportionally smaller number of quality physicians in urban versus suburban areas. Additionally, lack of diversity within her professional socialization program meant that Alexis was unaware of the skepticism that many urban residents harbored towards the healthcare system because of previous injustices that exploited minorities, such as the Tuskegee experiments. Alexis was also unaware that many urban residents were hesitant to trust doctors and other healthcare professionals because of the fear that a White doctor may not have the best interest of an African American patient in mind.

The cultural distance between Alexis' cultural template and the cultural contexts of the urban students she taught at Achiever was not reduced during her professional socialization. The lack of diversity within Alexis' professional socialization program only extended the notion that what occurred within White, middle-class, suburban communities and White, middle-class, suburban schools was the norm. So, when Alexis encountered situations in her early career that fell outside of the White, middle-class cultural template that she developed during her pre-professional socialization and that was extended and strengthened throughout her professional socialization, she had no way of understanding or interpreting the situation. Since Alexis had no frame of reference for what her students experienced in their urban community, it was more



difficult for her to connect with and understand her students, meaning that her effectiveness as a teacher was also severely limited.

*Element 2: Lack of urban field placements.* Another area of Alexis' professional socialization that demonstrated a White, middle-class bias was the school placements that she and other students in her program were assigned to for different learning opportunities. Even though Alexis' university was located within a mid-sized city with a concentrated area of diverse residents (and thus, diverse schools) on the eastern border of the city, all of the schools that Alexis and her classmates visited for observations, student teaching experiences, and other school-based assignments were either in suburban or rural schools with all-White students and mostly-White teachers. Alexis shared, "...all of the kids in the schools where we did our site-based instruction were White, too. The schools were mostly in the suburbs or in the rural areas" (Alexis, Interview #2). Therefore, Alexis' learned nothing about urban communities, the culture of urban schools, and the challenges that face urban students and teachers, either from her professors and instructors, or the sites she visited for applying the knowledge she was taught in her coursework.

Despite the lack of urban school placements within her professional socialization, Alexis was required to complete a cross-cultural experience during her undergraduate studies. Although there were several options for students to choose from, many of these opportunities involved extensive overseas travel and were very expensive. Alexis chose the most cost-effective experience and spent four weeks working and living in a homeless shelter on the south side of Chicago. In addition to her duties at the homeless shelter, Alexis and several other education majors were assigned to assist teachers at a local school that served some of Chicago's poorest students. The school was located in an unsafe neighborhood, and during Alexis' daily commute

to the school, she noticed things that were in stark contrast to the safe, suburban college campus where she was used to living. According to Alexis, she and the other education majors would see drug dealers, prostitutes, and several homeless individuals on their walk to the elementary school where they volunteered. In fact, since it was unusual for White, middle-class individuals to be in this particular area of the city, Alexis and the other college students were frequently stopped by local residents to find out if they were lost or looking for a particular drug dealer. She said,

The school was about a mile from the shelter, and we walked there every day. We were in a pretty unsafe part of the city, and we were pretty much the only White people in that area. People would say stuff to us all the time. Really, the only reason White people would be in that area was to buy drugs. (Alexis, Interview #3)

This was much different than the scenery Alexis was used to in her hometown or on the college campus, and initially, it was somewhat shocking to her. For Alexis, living in Chicago was not her first experience with minorities; however, it was the most intense experience that she had since she was more immersed in the community. She said, "...staying in the shelter was pretty eye-opening. We lived among the homeless women and children. Just being in that neighborhood showed me how a lot of people live; it was like the worst area to be" (Alexis, Interview #3).

Her role at the school was to assist some of the teachers and participate in activities with the students when appropriate. Since it was the end of the school year, Alexis mostly observed class activities and tried to get to know some of the students. She said,

I don't remember much about the classes I helped out in, it was more about the kids. I really enjoyed getting to know them and learning about what they liked to do. Some kids were very willing to open up and talk to me, but most of them were very guarded. It really made me think about how I would teach classes in that environment. (Alexis, Interview #1)

Spending time in Chicago provided Alexis with a glimpse of the challenges that students in urban communities may face. She said, "...the students would tell me about where they lived, they talked about rats and stuff. A lot of students were in ESL classes, and some only spoke

Spanish. It seemed like they struggled in school because of the language barrier” (Alexis, Interview #1).

*Struggles resulting from a lack of urban placements.* Alexis claimed that her cross-cultural experience was one of the most enlightening and life-changing events that she had experienced, and she felt inspired to pursue a teaching career in an urban community because of her encounters with the students and residents that she met in Chicago. She shared, “I don’t think I would have even applied at an urban school if I didn’t have that experience. I wouldn’t be here” (Alexis, Interview #3). Yet, her university did little to prepare her for work in such a diverse environment. Alexis recalled having some type of workshop or seminar about multiculturalism before leaving for Chicago; however, it had little impact on her because she could not recall much of the content of the workshop. She shared, “We took a culture workshop before we left. I don’t really remember what it was about, though. That was the only ‘preparation’ we had, if you can call it that” (Alexis, Interview #3). Once she was in Chicago, there was little discussion about what the pre-service teachers saw, heard, and experienced, and how the pre-service teachers were reacting to the drastic cultural and environmental differences between the severely economically depressed urban area where they were living, and the sheltered, safe atmosphere of their small college campus. Alexis was able to interact with many students and was given a glimpse of the challenges that these urban students faced in their communities and schools. However, there was no discussion about how these challenges affected urban students’ education.

Although Alexis was assigned to live in Chicago for a period of four weeks, the experience appeared more like an extended observation rather than an immersion experience. Alexis lived in the same conditions as the homeless community members might, walked to and

worked at a school where these urban residents sent their own children, and witnessed the same events in this urban neighborhood that its residents would. However, Alexis did not have the cultural understanding of that particular community which the residents did because she was not given an opportunity to do so. During her experience, Alexis was never asked to question how or why the neighborhood became so unsafe, was never taught about why most of the residents were poor, or why so many residents suffered from drug addiction. The experience was similar to a field trip at best, because there was little discussion of the political and social circumstances that led to the existing culture in that urban area. The residents of that Chicago neighborhood were a part of this culture because their experiences within the community had longer-term effects on their lives, and the residents were genuinely immersed in the culture and community. Alexis' short-term immersion was a required component of her professional socialization, and the university seemed to simply scratch the surface in discussing the real cultural differences that students witnessed, and the reasons those cultural differences existed. Unfortunately, Alexis' description of her cross-cultural experience demonstrated that the university expected students to magically learn about the complexities of the urban community and learn to understand and respect the culture just by placing students in the environment for four weeks. Therefore, even a required multicultural experience was marked with a distinct White, middle-class flavor.

*Element 3: Team sports curriculum.* A third element of Alexis' professional socialization that portrayed a White, middle-class bias was the limited, team sports curriculum that Alexis' university promoted. Throughout most of Alexis' PE coursework, the majority of the activities covered and taught were team-sport oriented. Activities such as basketball, soccer, floor hockey and volleyball were all commonplace in Alexis' PE courses. She said, "We did a lot of sports in our classes, which was fun, because we all liked to play them. We would write up lessons for

different games and share them, I remember one for ‘ultimate football’ that was pretty good” (Alexis, Interview #7). As Alexis mentioned, she and her classmates all enjoyed playing these sports. In Alexis’ case, these were the same sports that she enjoyed playing with her neighborhood friends as a child, and were the same sports that she had played in her own PE classes in school. Therefore, these activities were not only very familiar to Alexis (and probably the rest of her classmates), but they were highly accessible in her White, middle-class neighborhood due to the availability of safe, green spaces to play in with her friends, family resources that provided the necessary equipment to play these sports, and the availability of recreation programs to offer these sports within the community.

By concentrating so heavily on sport content, Alexis’ professional socialization program made several assumptions about teaching PE and encouraging physical activity outside of school. Including mostly team sport content assumed that the schools where the pre-service teachers would eventually teach would have adequate resources to purchase and supply the equipment necessary for a team sports curriculum. Furthermore, including team sport content assumed that students in *all* communities (i.e., suburban, rural, and urban) not only enjoyed team sports and preferred this content over more diverse curricular choices (such as fitness activities, dance, or outdoor pursuits), but would have opportunities to participate in team sports outside of school PE, including safe places to play (i.e., parks, safe neighborhoods, etc.) or resources to participate in recreational leagues within their communities. Finally, by including a strong team sport emphasis in the professional socialization program, Alexis’ university assumed that the value placed on team sports and the accessibility of such activities, common in many White, middle-class communities, extended to urban and rural communities as well. The emphasis of

team sports as the foundation of physical education in Alexis' professional socialization led to significant struggles during her early career as an urban physical educator.

*Struggles related to learning a team-sports curriculum.* Since her PETE program emphasized the same types of activities that she enjoyed in her White, middle-class neighborhood as a child, Alexis continued to include team sport activities that required ample space and equipment during her early career at Achiever. This presented several struggles based not only on the space she had available in her school, but with her students' connection to the activities she included in her curriculum. She did not consider what students had available to them in their communities, in their homes, or even at her own school when planning content.

As discussed previously, Alexis taught at a school without a gymnasium, therefore she was limited to teaching in the outdoor playground space, the hallways, and often, due to weather, in classrooms at Achiever. However, this did not stop Alexis from including team sport content in her PE classes. Alexis included floor hockey, basketball, soccer, and baseball in her curriculum during my observations, despite not having the space or adequate equipment to teach an entire class these activities. Since Alexis did not have a gym at Achiever Academy, she also did not have any storage for PE equipment. She was limited to storing the team sport equipment she used in her classes in a small, shared office, and in a rarely-used stairwell.

Since the weather in this Midwestern city was a major determinant of whether Alexis could use the outdoor space to teach her PE classes, team sports were taught non-sequentially, and in ways that did not allow students to either learn or practice many skills before playing games. A class of students may have an opportunity to play soccer outside one week, but then be stuck inside their classrooms participating in a completely unrelated activity the next week

because of changes in weather. Alexis justified her non-sequential approach by declaring that a skill focus in her class was impractical since she only saw students once per week. She said,

I'm not so much concerned about skill development, I'm concerned with the students being active and having fun. I think the skill development will come, but I only see my students once a week for 45 minutes. Activity has to be number one, because they don't get much of it. Why should I stand there and say 'ok, stand straight, lift your leg, oh great, perfect form!' What a waste of our 45 minutes! My kids don't get much exercise and they barely get recess. It's not realistic to do that; my kids have to play. (Alexis, Interview #9)

However, because Alexis insisted on playing team sports in a physical environment that was not conducive for team sports, the amount of activity that students actually completed in her class was minimal.

Another struggle that resulted from Alexis' team sport focus was her students' disconnection with team sports. A majority of Alexis' students lived in unsafe neighborhoods without access to parks and green spaces, and did not have the equipment necessary to play soccer or hockey outside of school. Additionally, there were few opportunities outside of school PE for students to play team sports. At the time of the study, there were boys' and girls' basketball teams that had a roster of twelve players each, and a cheerleading team of no more than fifteen girls available for middle school students. Younger students had even fewer options – they were limited to after-school programs in gymnastics and dance that were quite expensive. Alexis identified that opportunities to play in the community were limited; however, she did not connect this to the mismatch in her curriculum. She said,

...for my kids, it's different. Being active isn't going out and running half a mile or riding their bike to a friend's house. It's getting up and tossing a ball in the house – sometimes that's a big deal! Besides the skating rink near the school that sponsors skate nights, and the few sports teams we have, the kids don't have many chances to play. Most kids go home after school, and I know a lot of them play video games. Usually I hear about the kids going home and doing their homework, having dinner, and going to bed. The academic focus here is so strong, and the neighborhoods are that unsafe. (Alexis, Interview #4)

Although Alexis understood that opportunities for her students were scarce outside of school PE, she continued to push a team sports agenda because her socialization experiences had ingrained this tenet into her teaching philosophy. Instead of including activities in her classes that her students could enjoy at home, such as dance or fitness activities like yoga and Pilates, Alexis focused on activities that she had played as a middle-class, suburban child, and were taught at her conservative, mostly-White university.

The cultural distance between her students' preferences for physical activity and what Alexis included in her PE classes was most apparent during classes that she taught outside. When classes were outside, Alexis usually had to split the class in half because she did not have enough equipment for multiple activities to occur simultaneously. For example, during the floor hockey lessons she taught, she separated the class by gender, and then worked with each group individually. If the boys were playing hockey with the available hockey sticks, the girls were playing on the playground equipment or dancing, jumping rope and practicing cheers in small groups. Likewise, when the girls were playing hockey, the boys would play on the playground equipment and participate in other challenges amongst one another, such as trying back flips and other stunts (Alexis, Field Note #4, 5). Alexis usually allowed the entire class several minutes of "choice time" at the end of an outdoor lesson, where students could choose from several activities, including the sport Alexis had taught. With the exception of basketball, very few students chose to continue participating in the sport that Alexis had included in that day's lesson (Alexis, Field Note #5, 6, 9, 12). Instead, students continued participating in the activities they selected when they were not playing the sport that Alexis had chosen for the day, such as jumping rope, dancing, cheering, stunting, and using the playground equipment.



Alexis felt that her teaching methods and content were appropriate for her students because she felt that her students were simply having fun and getting a break from the rigorous academic demands they faced in the classroom. She said,

When I show up, either to the classroom or to take them outside, I'm giving them [students] a break from tough work. I like to create an atmosphere where the students don't have to stress out about anything. It doesn't matter what we're doing, as long as the kids are having fun. (Alexis, Interview #9)

Alexis failed to connect the decisions her students made during choice time and the realities of the community dynamics in this urban area, to analyze that the curriculum she provided for her students was not culturally relevant. Therefore, the emphasis of team sports that was promoted throughout Alexis' professional socialization prevented her from being as effective as she could have been had she learned to identify activities that were meaningful to students, could be done in students' homes and communities, and could be done with little to no equipment.

*Element 4: General education coursework.* The fourth element of Alexis' professional socialization that exemplified White, middle-class ideals was the emphasis of general education coursework throughout Alexis' program. The majority of courses required to graduate from the College of Education were catered to the classroom teacher, and were not specific to the unique circumstances that a physical educator may encounter. These general education courses included courses such as classroom management and child development, which have very different applications in a classroom with desks and chairs compared to a gymnasium setting where students move about much more. As a PE minor, Alexis took a limited number of PE-specific courses. She recalled taking two or three courses on team and individual sports, one course on dance and aerobics, and several science-based courses such as anatomy, nutrition, and exercise science (Alexis, Field Note #6). Most of Alexis' education classes were in the elementary education department, and the principles taught in these courses were geared toward the general

classroom teacher. She said, “I learned about general classroom management, not classroom management for the gym. There wasn’t a whole lot for the PE majors, that piece was extra. I took team sports and aerobics and other content courses for that” (Alexis, Interview #1).

The limited coursework in PE meant that much of Alexis’ learning about how to teach PE was outsourced to the “site-based instruction” that was a major component of her program. During site-based instruction, pre-service teachers worked with local teachers who acted as mentors at individual school sites. This experience was designed for the PE majors and minors to pick up the specific nuances of teaching physical education that were not taught in the general education courses, such as policies and procedures, management strategies, rules, and routines that would be appropriate in the gym.

At first, the pre-service teachers observed their assigned mentor, and eventually assisted their mentor during lessons. Later in the course, the pre-service teachers would send their mentor teacher a videotape of a lesson they taught for feedback. These experiences were designed to allow the pre-service teachers to receive more “hands-on” instruction in their chosen field. Alexis and her PE classmates were assigned to different mentor teachers for site-based instruction in either rural or suburban schools near the university. When asked, Alexis knew of no specific criteria that the university had for qualifying local teachers as mentors (Alexis, Field Note #7). Therefore, there was no guarantee that what Alexis learned from her mentor teacher was appropriate or that the teacher used best practices. Since Alexis’ site-based instruction took place in a suburban school, the management practices, curricular choices, and overall teaching philosophy to which she was exposed by her mentor teacher were all tailored to the suburban students that attended that school. So, the bulk of Alexis’ education about how to be a PE teacher

came from a local physical educator who had expertise about students in the local school context, but little else to offer Alexis.

*Struggles resulting from general education coursework.* The great emphasis on general education classes during Alexis' professional socialization translated into significant challenges in applying the skills she learned in her teacher preparation program to the students she taught in an urban community. Most of what Alexis learned throughout her general education coursework was designed for a classroom teacher who would eventually teach students in a White, middle-class, suburban school. This type of preparation was almost completely opposite to the teaching environment that Alexis encountered at Achiever, a physical education teacher in a diverse, socioeconomically disadvantaged, urban school. Alexis had a very difficult time applying the management strategies, routines, and procedures that she learned for effective teaching to the teaching position that she obtained after graduating. For example, the management strategies that Alexis learned in her education courses were very teacher-directed, and had little application to settings outside of the suburban settings from which many of the pre-service teachers came. Alexis said,

When you go into a classroom and ask a room full of students to sit down and they all sit down, that doesn't happen. All of my classroom management stuff was taught in a way where things would just happen like that." (Alexis, Interview #4)

The coursework emphasizing general education did little to prepare Alexis to be an effective physical educator. The teacher-directed management strategies that rewarded obedient behavior did not align with the cultural templates of the diverse students that Alexis taught at Achiever. Her management strategies were not effective with students whose cultural templates included different values about authority and respect or whose diverse family structures meant that the students may spend more time unsupervised and have additional responsibilities in the home

compared to a suburban student. The general education coursework that Alexis was required to take also did not prepare her for larger class sizes, or communicating with students with diverse language and communication needs. Perhaps the most significant struggle resulting from Alexis' emphasis in general education coursework was that she was prepared for teaching students in a general classroom setting, seated neatly in desks or tables, but she was a physical educator approaching students who were eagerly expecting to be active. This was compounded even further by the fact that Alexis did not have a gym or other teaching space where she could establish her own policies and procedures.

Alexis often grew frustrated with her lack of established protocols with students, since most of her teaching occurred within other teachers' classrooms. Alexis felt it was easiest to follow the classroom teachers' management protocols while she taught in their classrooms, especially since she viewed PE as a privilege for the students. She said,

Really, PE, just like playing sports in middle and high school, is a privilege. You have to have your act together in the classroom if you're going to play on a sports team in high school, so they may as well learn that now. I have to support what the classroom teachers want, even if I don't necessarily agree with it. (Alexis, Interview #6)

On many occasions, though, the classroom teacher remained in the classroom while Alexis conducted her lessons because they needed to work on their computer or grade assignments (Alexis, Field Note #6, 9, 10). Alexis shared several instances where teachers would undermine her management strategies in front of the students because the classroom teacher felt that students were being too loud or getting off task. When this happened, Alexis had to be respectful to the classroom teacher, but sometimes she also communicated to the students that she did not believe that they were behaving inappropriately. Alexis reflected,

Its tough when the teacher stays in the room, because then I'm always concerned that we're going to be bothering them. But where am I supposed to go? Last week in Mrs. V's 5<sup>th</sup> grade class, the students were working on a throwing activity. I thought they were

behaving just fine, but I guess it was too loud for Mrs. V. She stopped the class and made them sit for like three or four minutes and yelled at them about being too loud and getting out of control. I took them out in the hallway for the rest of the class, and I apologized to them, because I didn't think they were being too noisy. It does make it hard, but again, I'm here to support the classroom teachers. (Alexis, Interview #9)

Since Alexis had not developed a strong sense of how to manage PE classes, she struggled to find appropriate methods for managing student behavior, and wavered between feeling a flexible, understanding teacher, and an inconsistent 'pushover' with her students. She said,

I never know if I'm doing enough or not. I want the kids to have fun and get some activity, but then sometimes I think I'm too lenient. I probably let too many things slide because there's no way for me to track behavior like the classroom teachers do, like with changing the colors on the behavior chart – especially if we're outside and I have to remember that. But then, gym should be a little less strict than the classroom – it's their time to blow off a little steam. So yeah, it is a little difficult to know how much to take. (Alexis, Interview #5)

The general education coursework in Alexis' professional socialization did little to help her develop into an effective urban physical educator during her early career at Achiever.

*Element 5: Lack of coursework in socio-cultural issues.* The fifth element of Alexis' professional socialization that demonstrated a White, middle-class bias was the lack of coursework regarding socio-cultural issues within her program. During her professional socialization, Alexis did not take any courses specifically dealing with topics such as race, class, gender or sexuality. These issues, which have implications in society as a whole, have even greater implications when considering their impact on education, and particularly in physical education. Despite volumes of research about these issues in the general social order, and remarkable references to these socio-cultural issues in education and physical education, Alexis did not recall ever discussing these topics during her professional socialization. Even within the general requirements of her university, Alexis was never asked to examine any of these topics or to critically analyze how these topics might affect her individually and those she would

encounter throughout her career. Because she attended a Christian college, Alexis' coursework also included courses about the Bible, Christianity, and religion. Rather than choosing from courses such as "Racism in America," "Gender and Society," or "Sociology of Sexualities," Alexis usually took one or two education-specific courses, a liberal arts course, and a course about religion and Christianity every semester. She shared,

Each semester was a little different, but I might have a communications course, a class management course, my exercise science course, and then a course on 'Gospels and Acts.' It was like that every semester, we had to have so many credits in 'Christian perspectives' classes. (Alexis, Interview #2)

Therefore, Alexis never had the opportunity to consider what the experiences of racial, ethnic, sexual, or language minorities might entail, or apply these concepts to her own teaching philosophy and teaching strategies in physical education. Because these topics were never addressed during her professional socialization, Alexis came across many challenges during her early career as an urban physical educator.

*Struggles resulting from lack of socio-cultural coursework.* Whether intentional or not, Alexis' professional socialization program completely omitted teaching about topics and issues that extended beyond White, middle-class culture, especially issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality. This ultimately resulted in Alexis encountering several struggles in her first years as an urban physical educator. One of these struggles included Alexis' naiveté regarding the history of racism that affected many members of the immediate community where Alexis taught. Alexis had a very difficult time understanding the anger and defensive attitudes that many students and family members possessed. Alexis described her students' lives on many occasions as tense, stressful, and hostile (Alexis, Field Note #4, 7). She noticed this at her first teaching position at another charter school and at Achiever Academy. She said, "My students are really hard on each other. They're so quick to react; it can be a really hostile environment" (Alexis, Interview #3).

Alexis felt that this was a learned behavior, because she observed parents in this community acting similarly towards their children. She said, “Parents will yell at the kids and take their frustrations out on them” (Alexis, Interview #3). The defensive demeanors and tensions that Alexis observed may have stemmed from a variety of other community dynamics, such as low socioeconomic status, stresses of unemployment or having to work multiple jobs to support a family, and the risks of crime and violence within the community. Had Alexis learned about these socio-cultural issues during her professional socialization, she may have been able to develop a sense of empathy for the frustrations that her students and their families often faced in urban communities.

Another struggle that Alexis faced because of her lack of coursework in socio-cultural issues was the clothing concerns that her students faced because of low socioeconomic status. Having appropriate clothing or shoes for participating in PE or physical activity was never a concern for Alexis, and this issue was never raised during her professional socialization. However, during her first years as a physical educator, Alexis was faced with understanding students’ circumstances and determining what the most appropriate course of action would be. She said,

I learned right away about clothing issues. Kids might say, ‘I can’t play today, because if this gets dirty, I’ll get in trouble.’ Or, ‘If my shoes get scuffed, I’ll get a whooping.’ So what am I supposed to say in that situation? Don’t play? Play but don’t get dirty? I know that my students only have what they have, so if they ruined their clothes in gym, there could be some real consequences. (Alexis, Interview #8)

To try and prevent this from becoming an issue, Alexis instituted a “gym uniform” at Achiever. Alexis worked with the school administration to allow students to wear different clothing on students’ designated PE days. Rather than wearing collared shirts, dress pants, and dress shoes, students were allowed to wear dark sweatpants or warm-up pants, an Achiever Academy t-shirt,

and gym shoes to school on the day they had PE. This way, students would not be as concerned about getting their clothes dirty or ruining more expensive uniform clothes. In years prior to my observations, Alexis would not allow students to participate if they were not wearing a gym uniform, and she would send home notices with students who frequently were out of their gym uniform. During my observations, however, Alexis felt that she was being more lenient about having students sit out, yet she could not pinpoint why this was happening. She said,

It's hard with gym clothes to stay strict about it. Something's holding me back from grilling them about it – in past years I'd get on them about wearing the right gym uniform. Kids will say things that make me think there's just disorganization at home – 'I can't find my clothes, they're in the washer, they've got a hole in it.' I know things happen, but for it to be so often and so much? I don't understand. You have gym once a week. Wash the clothes the day after, or two days after. Whatever, I'm sure there are so many things that go on at home – people are busy, people have different situations, and all I can do is remind the kids. Sometimes the parents aren't very cooperative. Sometimes the kids will say 'I knew it was gym day, but my mom told me to put on these clothes.' How do you react to that? I don't know the situation, all I can say is 'OK, well, try to remind them that you have gym on Mondays or whatever.' (Alexis, Interview #7)

Alexis' professional socialization program did not provide any opportunities where she had to consider students' circumstances outside of school, or the tools to understand the political, economical, social, and emotional differences that exist between urban and suburban communities. Therefore, Alexis probably did not consider that many students did not live in homes with washers and dryers. In this case, families may have had to rely on a Laundromat to wash their clothes, so laundry was probably only done once a week. Alexis also did not consider that many students were members of single-parent or extended families, and that family routines might be difficult to keep because of work schedules and other responsibilities. So, if a student unexpectedly spent the night before a designated PE day at another family member's home, the student may not have the appropriate gym uniform available to wear to school. Alexis also did not consider that requiring another set of clothes for school (in this case, a gym uniform), may be



too great a financial burden for some families, or, that if a student out-grew or ruined their gym uniform, families may not have ample resources to replace ripped sweatpants or too-small gym shoes. Alexis tried to be very accommodating and flexible with her students, especially when they did not have their PE uniform. However, she was concerned that her flexibility was being taken advantage of, probably because she did not have a genuine understanding of the cultural contexts her students faced outside of school. Alexis seemed to have a vague understanding of what her students encountered outside of the school setting, yet, her furrowed brow and her inability to be stringent with her students about wearing their gym uniforms demonstrated that she frequently wavered about the situation (Alexis, Field Note #6). She said,

There are so many situations that my students encounter...things you would never think of or imagine. It's not fair for me to say, 'Well, you should have had your uniform.' I don't know if I'm being flexible or a pushover. I want to try to understand why they don't have their gym clothes and try to help them think of a way to be more organized or have their things prepared for gym days. When you don't remember your gym clothes and you're not allowed to play, it's totally devastating. I'm not sure what's holding me back from being strict...(Alexis, Interview #7)

Unfortunately, by never having coursework in the socio-cultural aspects in education, Alexis struggled to completely understand her students and their cultural templates. This made it very difficult for her to connect with her students and be as effective as she wanted to be.

*Element 6: Lack of interpersonal skill development.* The sixth element of Alexis' professional socialization that affected her early career as an urban physical educator was several "missing pieces" having to do with interpersonal skills. Alexis admitted that her professional socialization program did very little to teach pre-service teachers to establish meaningful relationships with students, how to develop trust with students, or how to make other connections with students prior to teaching. She said,

The social relationship aspect was really lacking in my teacher prep program. There's a lot of things that you should do before you even teach kids, you know, so you can learn how to earn their trust, and that was never covered. (Alexis, Interview #1)

These interpersonal skills were especially important for Alexis to develop because she eventually taught students who had completely different cultural templates. Alexis' students had different ways of communicating with their peers and families, different language patterns, different historical experiences in their communities, and different beliefs and values about education, pop culture, religion, healthcare, and other such institutions. Therefore, Alexis had to learn to acquaint herself with these differences in cultural templates if she was going to be an effective teacher. By ignoring interpersonal skills, Alexis' professional socialization program registered another White, middle-class bias by assuming that pre-service teachers would not need the skills to relate to students with different cultural templates. Additionally, omitting interpersonal skills from the teacher preparation program demonstrated that the university assumed that teaching was value-free, and that issues of trust and relationship development were unnecessary for teaching students. According to the model that Alexis' professional socialization program promoted, teaching was a transfer of knowledge from teacher to student, rather than a process of building on prior knowledge and relating information to local community dynamics. Since Alexis' professional socialization denied pre-service teachers the opportunity to learn about interpersonal skills necessary to connect with students, Alexis encountered several struggles during her early career as an urban physical educator.

*Struggles related to a lack of interpersonal skill development.* Alexis shared that she definitely sensed a missing piece from her professional socialization as soon as she began teaching in an urban environment. She claimed that managing classes was much more difficult than she had imagined, and she had little success in relating to students. She said,

I could tell something was off at my first job because I had a lot of trouble getting things under control. What I was trying to do with the kids was totally backfiring, and the kids had no interest in what I was asking them to do. My site-based instruction in college was in a suburban school with mostly middle-class kids, I wasn't prepared for an urban setting. (Alexis, Interview #2)

Alexis also felt that the limited vision of her university prevented her from relating to students and earning their trust. She felt that this type of information would have eased her transition into an urban teaching environment. She continued,

I realized that you can't just walk in and tell kids; okay this is what we're going to do...you have to somehow connect with the kids and let them know that you're non-threatening and that you're on their side before you can even go into teaching. (Alexis, Interview #1)

The “missing pieces” at Alexis’ university meant that she had to re-think her approach to teaching urban students during her early years as a new teacher when her students did not automatically show her respect and trust that she had students’ best interests in mind. During her professional socialization, Alexis was initially met with distrust at the school in which she volunteered in Chicago. She said, “A lot of kids in Chicago were very distrustful from the start. I would try and talk to some of them and they gave me these looks that said ‘who are you and why are you talking to me?’” (Alexis, Interview #1). At her first teaching position at another charter school, Alexis recalled a particular incident with a parent who came to pick up a student early. She said,

There were a lot of hostile people in that environment, maybe they were just overly sensitive, I don't know. But I remember a parent coming in and getting upset that a bean bag had hit her in the foot. She went off and asked the kids who threw the bean bag at her. A lot of the kids have the same mindset – like they're ready to react to everything. Everything was viewed maliciously, like getting hit with any object was done on purpose. Well, sometimes in a game it will just happen on accident. (Alexis, Interview #2)

The feelings of distrust that students and families in the urban environment where Alexis taught were very different than the way she experienced life as a school-aged student. Alexis recalled

usually trusting her teachers and the school staff, and never saw her parents question other's intentions the way that the parents in her school community did. Alexis' professional socialization did very little to portray any other type of school environment, so there was also no time spent teaching the pre-service teachers how to develop relationships with students and their families.

### **Brad's Professional Socialization**

Brad attended a mid-sized, public university that was well-known for its education program. However, Brad was a "non-traditional" student and did not enroll in this university directly after high school. Brad attended community college on a part-time basis after high school while he worked full time, started a family, and explored several career opportunities. After he decided on PE as his main interest, he transferred to the university. Brad was only able to attend part time since he had two young children and still needed to work full time to support his family. Brad did not live on campus, but was a commuter student. Therefore, he was not as involved in campus and departmental activities as some of the other students in his program. After several years of taking classes part time, Brad committed to attending full time and working when he could in order to complete his degree and obtain his teaching certificate. In discussing Brad's professional socialization experiences, five elements emerged as apparent instances of White, middle-class biases that influenced his understanding of how to teach PE. These elements eventually caused Brad to struggle in his early career as an urban physical educator.

*Element 1: Lack of diversity in PETE students and faculty.* The first element of Brad's professional socialization that demonstrated a White, middle-class bias was the lack of diversity among the PETE program. The majority of the students in the PETE program came from White,

middle class backgrounds. Brad remembered a few African American students in the program, but the majority of students were White. Adding to the lack of diversity in the PETE program was the PETE faculty themselves. There was one older African American professor among the PETE faculty, but the remainder of his professors and instructors were White. None of the faculty members at Brad's university had any experiences teaching in urban schools. Faculty members did not encourage any of the pre-service teachers who may have attended urban schools to share their experiences with the rest of the pre-service teachers. Brad said, "Most of the people at my school were White. Maybe a few Black students, and we had one professor, Dr. G., that was Black. We didn't hear much about urban schools there, I'm not sure anyone had taught in one" (Brad, Interview #1). Therefore, all of the information that Brad received from his instructors about appropriate content to teach in PE, curriculum models to use when teaching, management strategies, insights about school administration, and other topics that could help pre-service teachers be successful in building a school PE program came from the perspective of White, middle-class schools, teachers, and students. There was never any mention of the differences that the pre-service teachers may encounter in urban schools (compared to the White, middle-class schools that they attended) having to do with resources, school budgets, large class sizes, language and communication issues, socioeconomic status, and the extensive challenges that many students in urban communities may face outside of school. Learning to become a PE teacher at Brad's university was limited to the White, middle-class experiences and ideals of the faculty and the pre-service teachers who attended. Brad shared, "The things we learned in our classes were pretty straight-forward. Like ways to organize your classes and stuff, it was a lot like how I remembered my high school PE teacher doing things" (Brad, Interview #2). The White, middle-class professors and instructors at Brad's institution taught the White, middle-

class pre-service teachers how to manage classes of White, middle-class students at White, middle-class schools. Considering the very narrow view that Brad had of learning to teach PE, it was not surprising that he encountered several struggles as an early career physical educator in an urban school.

*Struggles resulting from lack of diversity in PETE program.* Since Brad's PETE program was quite homogenous in both faculty and pre-service teacher candidates, he encountered many challenges as an early career physical educator in an urban school as diverse as Bentley International. Brad had very limited experiences working with diverse populations throughout his pre-professional and professional socialization experiences, so his early career at Bentley International included many frustrating experiences.

Perhaps the most apparent frustration that resulted from the lack of diversity in Brad's professional socialization was the fact that his management strategies, which were taught by and designed for White, middle-class individuals, did not align with the cultural values of the diverse students that Brad encountered. For example, having students sit quietly while a teacher gives all of the directions for particular tasks and activities, and expecting students to respond immediately upon being asked to do something were the expectations that Brad was equipped with from his university. Brad shared on many occasions that what he learned in his PETE program did not transfer seamlessly to an urban setting. Although these techniques that rewarded obedience seemed appropriate when he was completing his professional socialization (because they were successfully practiced in White, middle-class schools), they were not as successful at Bentley International. He said, "I think that the people that I learned from in my prep program were under the impression that if you just told the students to sit down, they would listen, that we

were in this little fantasy world!” (Brad, Interview #1). Brad shared how ill-equipped he was to teach,

All of the things we did in college were based on teaching in the suburbs, like a totally White school. And they pretty much worked there. If you’re going to teach in the city, there are probably some things you should consider about the kids you’re getting. When I first started, it was a disaster; the kids didn’t want to listen to me. I tried to do instant activities to get them moving to see if that would help, and the kids just went crazy and I couldn’t get them to focus back on me. (Brad, Interview #3)

Because Brad’s professional socialization program lacked diversity, there was no one within his university to refute the methods that he was taught, or to challenge the pre-service teachers to think of reasons that these methods might not be successful in all cultural contexts (such as different values regarding authority, or diverse family structures that required children to be more independent and responsible). Therefore, Brad continued to use management strategies designed with a White, middle-class cultural template in a school where students’ experiences were drastically different.

Brad required that students sit silently in rows before taking attendance at the beginning of each class. With younger students, he would often reward the “team” who was able to get in their squad row the quickest and with the least amount of talking (Brad, Field Note #6, #8, #9). Brad often grew frustrated with how much his students would talk or fidget before they started an activity. When asked about his focus on order and listening, he said,

If I was a classroom teacher I’d have to have it quiet. I know that in the gym it’s going to be a little louder, but I still like to have it a little quiet. That’s why I do the teams, and I think everyone likes it to be quiet when they’re speaking. I know that my students are really vocal, but there’s gotta be some way that they can just be quiet when I’m giving directions before we start a game. I just know they’re not going to be quiet. Sometimes they’ll get wild when they’re waiting for me to do stuff. When they’re crawling around on the floor and going nuts, I have to stop them and get them to listen. I guess if they’re just sitting still I’ll take what I can get. (Brad, Interview #9)

Brad recognized that his students' behavior was different than the suburban students he taught during his student teaching experiences, yet he was unable to attribute this to cultural distance or community dynamics. As a result, much of Brad's lessons were spent diffusing disruptive situations and waiting for students to conform to his White, middle-class behavior expectations, rather than engaging students in physical activity or developing different procedures that aligned more closely with the cultural templates of his diverse student body. Several times throughout data collection, I kept track of how much time Brad spent managing student behavior, giving instructions, and time students spent in activity. During one typical 50-minute second grade class, Brad spent 23 of 50 minutes on management activities, 12 minutes giving instructions, and students were active for 15 of the 50 minute period (Brad, Field Note #10). During another lesson where Brad grew increasingly more frustrated with a first grade class' lack of focus, he disciplined the class by having them sit in silence for three minutes. He said to the students "When I ask for something, I mean it – you all need to learn a lesson – I've had this class before and I know you can handle it when I give you directions" (Brad, Field Note #3). If Brad had encountered more diversity within his PETE program, he may have learned from individuals who had more experience in urban schools additional management strategies that would keep students on task, rather than asking students who only had 50 minutes of PE per week to sit silently and receive directions from their teacher.

*Element 2: Loose requirements for urban experiences.* The second element of Brad's professional socialization program that promoted a White, middle-class agenda were the loose requirements for urban experiences throughout his PETE program. Brad recalled that most of the observations and assignments that required visits to local schools and teachers were completed in suburban placements, or in schools where the pre-service teachers already had contacts. In other



words, the university did not take any steps to secure a diverse range of sites or placements for pre-service teachers to visit throughout their coursework. Since most of the pre-service teachers came from White, middle-class backgrounds, many would visit or set up observations at schools within their current community, or perhaps with a former teacher they knew from their hometown. Brad recalled one assignment where the pre-service teachers were supposed to complete an observation in an urban school. However, because many students did not have teacher contacts in urban school districts, the instructor allowed students to drop the “urban” requirement, and complete the assignment in any school where they could gain access. He said,

“...I know that we were supposed to visit an urban school for one of our classes, but somehow I don’t ever remember going there. I think the professor just let us go wherever for that assignment, though, because nobody knew any urban teachers” (Brad, Interview #2).

The omission of urban school experiences continued into student internships, as neither of Brad’s placements were in urban communities, and there was no requirement by the university for either of his internships to take place in urban communities. Brad’s first teaching placement was at an elementary school in a community that bordered his hometown, and he shared that this experience was somewhat easy for him. He said, “My elementary placement was great. I had a really strong cooperating teacher and the kids were all really well-behaved. I didn’t have any problems there” (Brad, Interview #3). Brad’s second placement was supposed to occur at a high school in another community, however, when this placement fell through because of the cooperating teacher’s unexpected leave of absence, Brad had to find his own secondary placement. Brad secured a placement at the same middle school that he had attended as a youth, but the teacher he was assigned to work with was ineffective, and was more interested in planning basketball practice for the high school team that he coached than helping Brad learn to be a quality physical educator. These loose requirements meant that throughout Brad’s years as a

PETE major, he never set foot inside of an urban school, never met a teacher with any urban teaching experiences, never observed a single class period at an urban school, never worked with a student attending an urban school, and never had the opportunity to understand the intricacies of the urban school context. He said, “I didn’t have any urban experiences in college. My first experience at an urban school was my first day of school here at Bentley!” (Brad, Interview #2). Because Brad never had any experiences in urban schools or with urban students during his professional socialization, he encountered many struggles during his early career as a PE teacher in an urban school.

*Struggles resulting from loose requirements for urban experiences.* Brad had no exposure to urban schools during his professional socialization, and therefore was not prepared for the cultural differences among his students, the community dynamics that his students encountered outside of school, and how these community dynamics had an impact on his students’ education. His lack of knowledge was an incredible barrier as Brad often grew frustrated when trying to make sense of the cultural differences between his own White, middle-class upbringing, the diverse backgrounds of his students, and the unique contexts of urban schools and communities.

Since Brad’s lack of exposure to urban communities, urban schools, and urban students meant that he was not prepared for the drastic cultural differences he discovered between himself and his students, he claimed that any fieldwork in urban schools would have been helpful. He said, “The biggest thing that would have helped me would have been to actually do some work in urban schools, they’re completely different than the schools that I went to as a kid” (Brad, Interview #3). Without any experiences in urban schools, Brad was unaware that many of his students came from non-nuclear families or lived with extended family, that many students lived just at or below poverty, that many students were exposed to crime, violence, drugs and gang

culture in their communities. So, when Brad heard students talking about family members in jail, or learning of students who moved to three different residences during the course of a school year, he was shocked and saddened and did not know how to connect with students in these circumstances. Brad shared,

I used to take one kid home every day after basketball practice, and I even picked him up some mornings before school. He moved two or three times that year, and I think for a while he might have been living in a shelter. I think his mom was a heavy drug user. That's not really something I expected to run into when I became a teacher. That kid doesn't go to this school anymore; I think they finally moved far enough away from this school that he goes to another one. It was really depressing to learn about all of that. (Brad, Interview #3)

If Brad had spent some time in an urban school during his professional socialization, he may have learned about the unique cultural contexts where urban students live, and develop strategies for working with students who might be hungry or tired from not getting enough to eat or a comfortable place to sleep. Brad also could have learned to respond to students when they shared information that was outside the White, middle-class norm to which he was accustomed. Instead, Brad only felt pity for students or passed judgment on their families and lifestyles when he heard about the challenges they faced outside of school. He said,

I know there are a lot of single parents here, and some parents are heavy into drugs and alcohol. Some might even be drug dealers. Good example, huh? We get a lot of turnaround with our students because of their behavior. The good kids leave and more bad kids enroll. We'll get kids that have been kicked out of other schools. Kids will come here with a 'troubled past' and come with a file an inch thick. And if you get to meet their parents because you've had a problem with the kid, it's like, geez, no wonder... (Brad, Interview #5)

Unfortunately, Brad's lack of experience in urban schools during his professional socialization was a detriment to him understanding his students' cultural templates, empathizing with the challenges they faced, or being able to bridge the obvious cultural distance between himself and the urban students he taught.

Brad also failed to understand urban school circumstances when he began his teaching career. By never setting foot in an urban school throughout his professional socialization, Brad was not prepared for the dire financial circumstances common in many urban schools, which made equipment purchases difficult, and necessary repairs to the old building that Bentley International occupied very costly. Brad was unaware of the culture created by the standardized testing that occurred throughout the school year, which created scheduling challenges, required Brad to cover classes rather than teach in his gymnasium, and made him feel like a marginalized teacher because of the emphasis the administration placed on academic performance. Brad said,

I don't remember my schools being this crazy about testing when I went there, but I guess we're in a different time now. I spend one class period a day tutoring some of the younger students in reading, and then I see a larger group on Friday afternoons. I know that I'm not valued here as much as the classroom teachers; it's all about making sure the kids pass the tests. The other 'specials' teachers and I always get forgotten about on professional development days, so we have to sit through these meetings that have nothing to do with what we teach. (Brad, Interview #7)

Had Brad been required to spend any time in urban schools throughout his professional socialization, he may have been able to avoid many of the frustrations that he encountered during his early career as an urban physical educator. For example, by learning about the financial constraints that many urban schools face, Brad could have developed strategies to conduct classes with limited equipment, learned how to create equipment using common household items (i.e., paddles made from bent wire hangers and old nylon stockings), or learned about grant resources available in the community that could provide funding for PE equipment. Instead, Brad experienced shock at the conditions he encountered at Bentley International.

*Element 3: Traditional, team sports curriculum.* The third element of Brad's professional socialization that was infused with White, middle-class values was the traditional, team sports curriculum that was pushed throughout his coursework. According to Brad, his PETE program

was somewhat “self-serve” – students simply selected the courses they needed to take as it accommodated their schedules. Some courses had pre-requisites, but students typically did not take the same sequence of courses throughout the program. Brad described his program as a “sport-based program” where pre-service teachers were taught how to teach the skills and strategies necessary to play team sports, such as basketball, volleyball, floor hockey, and softball.

Brad said,

I had Team Sports 1 and 2, an officiating class, one Individual Sports class, and one class that combined dance, aerobics and fitness. They really emphasized sports, which I thought was great because I grew up playing sports and still enjoyed them so much. (Brad, Interview #3)

The sports and activities that Brad was taught in his professional socialization were very similar to the sports and activities that Brad had played as a youth in his suburban neighborhood, in his school PE experiences, and in interscholastic competition throughout middle and high school. This type of content was very familiar to Brad since he grew up in a safe neighborhood across the street from a park, had a family that could afford to provide the necessary equipment to play many of these team sports, and lived in a community that offered a variety of competitive and recreational leagues for residents to join.

Emphasizing team sports demonstrated to the pre-service teachers in Brad’s professional socialization program that teaching team sports in school PE was the best way to encourage students to be physically active, regardless of the type of community they lived in. Such a narrow vision of the content that could be included in PE assumed that all students valued team sports, and that all schools had the necessary resources and space to include team sports in the curriculum. Furthermore, by concentrating on team sports instead of providing more curricular diversity, Brad’s professional socialization program assumed that students would have access to play team sports outside of school, regardless of the type of community where they lived.

Although students in many suburban communities have safe parks and large yards, ample equipment, and working parents who can afford to provide their children with opportunities to play team sports, this is not always the case in urban (or rural) communities. Therefore, when Brad brought his team sport experiences and curriculum to Bentley International as an urban physical educator, he encountered several struggles.

*Struggles resulting from traditional, team sports curriculum.* Brad taught a curriculum that he felt was appropriate for upper elementary and middle school PE, based on the enjoyment he received from playing sports during his pre-professional socialization, and the confirmation of this type of curriculum he received through his professional socialization. However, his curriculum of mostly competitive team sports was distraught with problems, mostly because of a cultural disconnect between Brad's cultural template and his students' access to and value for team sports. During my observations, Brad taught volleyball, baseball, floor hockey, and badminton. Generally, Brad's students rejected the curriculum by frequently getting off task during lesson activities, quitting games during class, and not staying engaged during classes (Brad, Field Note #2, #3, #7, #8). Brad frequently complained that his students were lazy and unmotivated, and that his students' behavior was a result of "generational" issues such as being more interested in video games than physical activity. He said, "I hate to say, but kids these days aren't nearly as active as we were. It's all video games and TV, they don't want to play sports, and when they do, we have to reward everyone" (Brad, Interview #4). He was unable to identify his students' reactions to his curriculum as cultural disconnect because of a lack of access and resources for such activities.

Brad justified that teaching a team sports curriculum would be "good" for his students because it provided additional content for them to choose from beyond basketball. He thought

that including team sports would give his students “options” outside of urban environments. Brad was proud to share that in his four years at Bentley International that he had never taught a basketball unit. He said, “I’ll let them do some basketball activities in stations and things like that, but we don’t spend an entire unit on basketball” (Brad, Interview #4). Despite students’ requests for basketball, Brad felt it was more important to “expose” his students to the other possibilities for physical activity. He said,

I think they should be able to do some of the things they want, but my point is that you’re trying to expose kids to things that they can use after school that will keep them active and healthy for the rest of their life, so I want to teach those kids different things that they can do. Who knows, maybe I’ll catch a kid or two that doesn’t like basketball and give them some options. They might pick up something else and love it! I’ve taught badminton, volleyball, and I’ll do baseball and floor hockey. (Brad, Interview #2)

What Brad did not understand, however, was the value that basketball held in urban communities. In many urban communities, students garnered immense status and attention from their peers and families by being on the school basketball team. Family members would make great sacrifices to attend competitions, and the atmosphere at games was extremely festive, with music playing before games, fans cheering loudly in the stands, and boisterous post-game celebrations. Brad witnessed this during his first year as a head basketball coach at Bentley, but did not make the connection that basketball was important to his urban students. He said,

I couldn’t believe the first basketball game I coached – I’d never seen so many parents at school before, and there was this hip-hop music blaring in the gym. The cheerleaders were getting the crowd fired up, and this is middle school! The fans had these chants they were yelling back and forth to one another, parents were yelling for their kids and at the referees if they didn’t like a call. It was unreal. Later that season we won a game on a last-second shot, and the whole stands emptied, even my principal! Here comes this forty-something Black lady in her suit and heels out to center court...it was insane. You’d think we had just won the national championship! (Brad, Interview #3)

By keeping basketball out of his curriculum, Brad unintentionally sent a message to students that he did not value the same activities that they did. This only expanded the cultural distance between Brad's cultural template and the values of his students.

Brad was initially shocked when he began teaching his team sports curriculum at Bentley because his students had very little experience with many of the sports he included. He shared,

When I first started, I realized that a lot of the sports and content that I had included the kids had never seen before. Like hockey, none of the kids even knew how to hold a stick or had seen a hockey game before. Even with the professional team right here in town! I guess it's not the most popular sport in an inner city. (Brad, Interview #6)

Activities that he felt were 'standard' for most PE programs, and that were included in his professional socialization, were very new to his students. He continued, "...even with volleyball, there were lots of kids that were unfamiliar. And badminton, too" (Brad, Interview #6). Although Brad knew that his students did not necessarily have the access to play these types of sports in their communities, he continued to include them in his classes. He was aware of the after-school program at Bentley, especially since at both campus buildings, many after-school programs were housed in his teaching spaces. Students in middle school could participate in a few interscholastic sports teams, such as volleyball, basketball, cheerleading, and track and field. The younger students could participate in martial arts or dance. Brad said,

After school they don't have a lot in the neighborhoods, and it's not the safest. There's a few parks, and I see a few kids riding their bikes, but I don't think they're doing too much after school. The majority of the kids don't, anyway. I guess there's a recreation center in town, too. I've heard the kids talk about it, but I've never been there. (Brad, Interview #5)

Brad's students did not have access to parks and playgrounds like he did as a child, so safe places to play the team sports he included were scarce in this urban community. Additionally, the city recreation programs in this neighborhood were poorly funded, which meant there were even fewer opportunities for students to participate in team sports outside of school. Even though he



could identify that students did not have the wherewithal to participate in team sports outside of school, he continued to include them in his curriculum because his socialization to do so was deeply ingrained. This resulted in Brad's students showing great disinterest in the activities he included because they had no other platforms for participation in their immediate communities.

Another justification that Brad claimed for teaching a team sports curriculum was that students could learn valuable social skills and sportsmanship lessons through team sports. He felt that since his students were highly competitive amongst one another, providing team sports could be an outlet for his students' competitive attitudes. Brad claimed that competition motivated his students to participate, and gave him a chance to reform what he felt were undesirable behaviors. He said, "Competition is so huge, I don't have to really put it to the forefront because they're going to make things competitive anyway. I just try to teach good sportsmanship and not being a sore loser" (Brad, Interview #2). Brad was convinced that the interest in professional sports, especially basketball and football, had an adverse effect on how his students responded in PE. He said,

It's an uphill battle to teach these kids how to be a gracious loser. It's really hard to change their behavior. I think it has a lot to do with the influence of all the pro sports, you know the NBA and the NFL. The examples they show on TV with players arguing with referees when fouls are called, celebrating after a big play or a big score – *those* are great role models for these kids. It's really hard to overcome. (Brad, Interview #8)

Brad felt that his students were constantly trying to out-do one another, so by including competition in his lessons, he was simply building on how his students already behaved. He said, "They always compete – to get in line first, to get equipment first, to answer a question first, to be the funniest during role call – every little thing is a competition, so I just go with it" (Brad, Interview #8). Although using competition was intended to provide an opportunity to teach social skills to his students and bridge the cultural distance between his view of team sports and

his students' view of team sports, the activities he thought would encourage social skills in his students fell short. Since Brad never actually taught the students about sportsmanship, fair play and competition, students did not respond when he corrected their behavior during team sport activities. For example, Brad taught a few basic volleyball skills to a class of sixth graders before putting them into four teams and sending them off to play a game. He reminded the students before their games started to use good sportsmanship, but did not give any indicators as to what he meant by that. Students argued, did not keep the correct score, yelled at one another from across the court, and some left the game altogether out of frustration. Brad finally stopped both games and had students sit on the volleyball court in silence before he lectured them about their lack of sportsmanship for over ten minutes (Brad, Field Note #2). Had students discussed what using good sportsmanship meant prior to their games starting, perhaps Brad would not have had to stop the class.

Overall, Brad's insistence on including team sports in his curriculum did not align with the values, resources, and access that his urban students had within their community. Rather than including activities that students could not play in their neighborhoods because of safety concerns and lack of equipment, Brad could have focused on activities that incorporated just as much vigor but could be done with little or no equipment, could have been done in small spaces, or connected more to the values of the community residents. Fitness activities such as yoga, Pilates, or strength training with common household items, dance activities such as hip hop and stepping, jumping rope activities, and activities incorporating popular music may have engaged Brad's urban students more than team sports. Unfortunately, Brad's curriculum did little to truly 'move' his students.

*Element 4: Lack of coursework in socio-cultural issues.* A fourth element of Brad's professional socialization that demonstrated a White, middle-class bias within his program was the lack of coursework surrounding socio-cultural issues. Throughout Brad's PETE program, there was no specific coursework involving topics such as race, class, gender, or sexuality that have an impact on society-at-large, education, and more specifically, physical education. Although an enormous literature base exists for these topics individually, and the specific implications of these socio-cultural issues in education and physical education have been well-documented, there was no requirement for Brad to take any courses that discussed these issues either within or outside of his department, and he did not have any recollection of these topics being discussed within his PETE coursework. So, throughout Brad's professional socialization, he was never required to examine his own cultural background, consider the privileges he received as a White, middle-class, heterosexual male, to investigate the history of racism and injustice in current society, to analyze current examples of racism and injustice within education and physical education, or to discuss how these socio-cultural issues might have implications for providing an equitable PE experience for all students. When I asked Brad about learning about any of these topics during his professional socialization, he said

We never had to take classes about cultures or anything, and it never really came up in our PE classes, either. Gosh, I guess that probably would have been helpful, especially since I teach here now. We really just learned about what to teach in PE and things like management, and promoting respect for the field of PE. You know, never calling it 'gym class' or whatever. That's really what was stressed in our program. (Brad, Interview #2)

Brad's lack of coursework regarding the socio-cultural issues that occur within institutions such as education translated into many areas of adversity as he began his career as an urban physical educator.

*Struggles resulting from lack of coursework in socio-cultural issues.* Brad's lack of coursework in socio-cultural issues meant that he had little understanding of his students' lives outside of school, which made connecting with students during classes very difficult. Perhaps the biggest area of struggle that resulted from Brad's lack of coursework in socio-cultural issues was the distrust he felt from his students, and also encountered when communicating with parents because he never critically examined the elements of racism and class during his professional socialization. Although Brad identified that his students were very distrustful, he felt that it was mostly because of his inability to establish relationships with students and make meaningful connections while he was teaching. Brad only saw his students once per week for approximately 50 minutes, so he felt that he did not have time to get to know his students. He said,

I wish I had more time to build those relationships like classroom teachers do. I guess I have the advantage of knowing more kids, but I don't have the kids that I build strong relationships with, trust, you know, all of that. It's easier to build trust when you're dealing with smaller groups of kids. (Brad, Interview #1)

Brad could identify that many of his students were distrustful and seemed to have their 'guard up' when interacting with him. He continued,

Some of the kids are cool with me, the ones that have been here a few years. But most don't want anything to do with me. I don't know what it is about this culture or the surrounding area and being in an urban environment. Maybe it's because of how they grow up, but it seems so hard for kids to open up and trust anybody. They're immediately on the defense, they're immediately making excuses, they don't want to listen, and then when you do try to say something or help, they'll say 'you don't know anything about me' or 'you don't understand me, so you don't have a right to tell me what to do.' It's really hard...(Brad, Interview #7)

Brad was extremely accurate in his interpretation of how students felt when he made attempts to get involved with their concerns. By his own admission, Brad did not know much about his students, and he did not understand them, either. Brad's lack of coursework in socio-cultural issues meant that he also had very little frame of reference for the history of this community,

especially as it related to race relations and the injustices and inequalities that still affected many families in this community. Brad never had the opportunity to learn that discrimination which occurred in many urban communities in real estate, employment, lending, and educational practices, meant that many urban residents continued to struggle to gain employment that would provide a living wage and access to healthcare, find housing that was safe and affordable, access to nutritious foods, and enable them to enroll their children in schools that would give them the same education as White, middle-class children. Unfortunately, Brad's professional socialization did not require any such coursework that would expose him to this information. Therefore, Brad did not understand his diverse students' distrust of a White, middle-class male.

Although he did not understand the source of his students' distrust, he realized that the distrust affected his teaching, had an impact on how students interacted with him, and also affected how much students engaged in PE classes. Brad was, however, able to identify several staff members who had earned the trust of the students, and who experienced less cultural distance with the students. He said,

...the few teachers and people that connect so well are the ones from urban settings. It's easier for the kids to connect with them and trust them. Like our Dean of Discipline, he uses the language and the slang and the little things like that. It just seems so overwhelming for me to even try...there's so many kids. (Brad, Interview #8)

Brad identified that several African American teachers were more successful in connecting with many of his students because these teachers used slang that students were familiar with, the same elements of pop culture that many students valued, such as music, movies, and popular television shows. These elements were also things that Brad could have used in his teaching in an effort to make stronger connections with students. However, Brad interpreted this group of teachers' success with his diverse, urban students as a function of race, rather than a result of reducing cultural distance. The extensive cultural distance between Brad and his students was a great

source of frustration for him. Although he blamed most of the cultural distance on his hectic teaching schedule, much of the cultural distance was a product of Brad's lack of knowledge of the community dynamics at play near Bentley International, which he may have understood more had he taken courses in socio-cultural issues throughout his professional socialization.

*Element 5: Negative messages about urban school contexts.* The fifth and final element of Brad's professional socialization that had tremendous amounts of White, middle-class bias was the negative messages about urban school contexts that he heard as a pre-service teacher. Throughout Brad's professional socialization, his professors and instructors conveyed that urban schools were not desirable places to teach. He said,

I don't think any of the professors had any experience in urban schools. The most we would get from them was something like 'You never know what you're going to like...some people might even *like* going to the urban cities and teaching there. Some people really like going to those neighborhoods to teach.' So it was always kind of a negative thing with them. (Brad, Interview #1)

By telling students that they 'might like' urban schools, Brad's professors and instructors revealed their own biases, fears, and prejudices, and passed these on to the pre-service teachers they taught. Brad continued by sharing that the PETE faculty at his university warned students that since jobs were scarce, new graduates might have to take a job in an urban district as a last resort. Brad shared, "...they said there weren't many jobs right now, so we might have to *settle* for an urban school job. I got the feeling that they found it odd that people might actually want to teach in an urban school" (Brad, Interview #1). Regardless of how it was communicated to students, the message sent to Brad and other pre-service teachers in his PETE program was that urban schools were negative places to be employed. A distinct anti-urban message was communicated throughout Brad's professional socialization by the direct statements that PETE faculty made, the lack of urban placements and field experiences, the lack of diversity within the

PETE program, and very little mention of urban schools apart from the negative comments made by faculty members. All of these direct and indirect messages during Brad's professional socialization conveyed that urban schools were not sought-after places to teach, and that students in urban schools did not deserve to have quality physical education programs or well-trained PE teachers. As a result, Brad encountered many struggles during his early career as a PE teacher at Bentley International.

*Struggles resulting from negative discussions of urban school contexts.* Brad's professional socialization did little to make him eager to teach in an urban school setting, and because of this, he encountered many challenges in his early career. Initially, these messages caused Brad to question accepting the position at Bentley International. He said,

When I first got the call for an interview, I was really concerned. I remember thinking that if my advisors and professors don't want to work in a place like this, then maybe I shouldn't even go to the interview or consider the job (Brad, Interview #3).

Since the job market was saturated when Brad graduated from his PETE program, there were very few job opportunities available. Brad had never intended to take a job at an urban school upon graduation; however, the job market he encountered left him very few options. He shared that he had applied for teaching positions in many districts, including the district he attended as a child, but did not get called for interviews in most of these districts. The position at Bentley International was his only job offer, and since he had spent so much time and effort to obtain his teaching certificate, he felt that he owed it to his family to take the position. Brad shared,

I almost started looking into management opportunities with the hardware store because there were barely any teaching jobs, and the ones I did apply to I didn't get calls back. When this job opened up, I was hesitant, but I'd worked so long on getting my degree that I didn't want to disappoint my family. (Brad, Interview #2)

Since Brad reluctantly accepted the position at Bentley, he did not necessarily feel invested in Bentley, and admitted to not giving his job his full effort. During interviews, Brad expressed his

discontent at Bentley, and would often mention that he “needed a change” in his teaching career.

He said,

I’m definitely not giving it [teaching] my all right now. Maybe when I first started I did, but definitely not anymore. I mean, I care about the kids, but I know I’m not being the teacher I should be. It’s so hectic and so many things come up every day. I don’t know...maybe I just need a fresh start somewhere else. I keep my eyes open for other positions, and I’ve got a buddy that’s supposed to be opening another charter school next year, so maybe I’ll work there. I just don’t think I can keep doing this every year. (Brad, Interview #8)

Hearing negative messages about urban schools in his professional socialization seemed like a self-fulfilling prophecy for Brad. The indoctrination he received throughout his professional socialization that some teachers ‘actually like’ the urban school environment planted seeds in Brad that made it easier for him to recognize negative things about Bentley and become disillusioned with teaching there. Despite not feeling prepared for teaching in an urban school and receiving negative messages about urban schools in general, Brad did not have any feelings of resentment or anger about his professional socialization. Brad was not convinced that a PETE program could prepare him for all of the circumstances that he might encounter, including new teaching environments. Brad was also very nonchalant about his lack of preparedness for an urban school because he did not intend teaching in an urban school for very long. He viewed his position at Bentley as a stepping stone to a teaching career in the suburbs or to a position in administration, such as Athletic Director or Assistant Principal (Brad, Field Note #7). Hearing negative messages about urban schools from his PETE program meant that Brad grew frustrated with the school culture and the challenges he faced, almost because he expected these things to happen. This frustration had an impact on Brad’s enthusiasm, effectiveness, and ultimately, the quality of the PE program he provided at Bentley International.



### **Candie's Professional Socialization**

Candie attended large university near a mid-sized city, and was a walk-on member of the women's swim team. This university had a large physical education department within the College of Education, and her PE courses were taught by a variety of individuals, including her swim coach, adjunct faculty in exercise physiology, and tenured professors in the field of PE. Candie's professional socialization, similar to Alexis' and Brad's, also promoted mostly White, middle-class values. However, there were other elements of her professional socialization that were especially beneficial to Candie once she began teaching in an urban school. Two elements of Candie's professional socialization promoted a White, middle-class agenda, and one element of her professional socialization was conducive to her achieving some success during her early career as an urban physical educator.

*Element 1: Traditional sports curriculum.* The first element of Candie's professional socialization that promoted White, middle-class values was the emphasis placed on sport throughout Candie's program. Candie was required to take several introductory courses about PE in the early portion of her professional socialization. These courses included the history of PE, first aid, kinesiology, organization and administration in PE, and motor control. Later in her professional socialization, Candie had one course in rhythmic activities, a course in fitness testing, and a course in elementary and secondary teaching methods. The majority of the content that Candie learned, however, was developed by selecting five "activity" courses. One of the five activity courses had to be some type of aquatic activity, but the other four courses were open to each pre-service teacher's selection. Candie selected lacrosse, basketball, golf, and racquetball. These courses did not teach the pre-service teachers how to instruct the particular activity, rather, the activity courses were designed to provide the pre-service teachers with greater expertise in those content areas. Candie said,

We all had to take five classes in different sports and activities. I chose a few sports that I wanted to learn more about, and a few sports I knew I probably needed to improve in. I thought lacrosse was so cool, so I was excited to take that class. We didn't really learn how to break down the game for students in PE classes, it was more about the rules and just learning to play ourselves. (Candie, Interview #3)

Since most of the students in Candie's professional socialization program were White, (as were the faculty, staff, and professors who instructed them), Candie and the other pre-service teachers selected activity classes based on their interests and values for physical activity. Therefore, Candie selected activity classes based on the White, middle-class values and interests that were developed in her White, middle-class upbringing. Most of the activity classes that Candie selected were activities that she either did or could participate in within her community, in school PE, or in interscholastic competition. Had she been interested as a youth, Candie's family had adequate resources to either purchase the equipment necessary to participate, or could have found local programs, camps, or teams for Candie to join.

Promoting mostly sport content to the pre-service teachers in Candie's professional socialization program sent the message that all students, regardless of their cultural template or the community where they lived, valued sports. Emphasizing sports over other content such as dance, fitness, or adventure activities also suggested that all schools would have adequate resources to promote these activities, and the space necessary to play. Candie's PETE program also demonstrated by focusing so heavily on sport content that they believed all students, regardless of the type of community that they lived, would have the equipment needed to participate in sports such as lacrosse and racquetball and would have safe places to participate in such activities. So, when Candie introduced a curriculum with sport experiences that did not align with the cultural templates of the students she taught, she experienced several challenges in her early career as an urban physical educator.

*Struggles resulting from sport emphasis throughout PETE.* Candie learned a variety of sports and activities during her professional socialization that she was enthusiastic to share with her students at Chestnut Academy. Although Candie had not participated in all of these sports herself as a youth, she felt that introducing students to a variety of sports in school PE was an appropriate method to get students active and engaged in lifelong physical activity. However, Candie discovered early in her career as an urban physical educator that her ideas regarding appropriate outlets for physical activity and her students' cultural template for sports and physical activity were vastly different.

The most poignant example of the cultural clash between Candie's personal biography and the cultural template of her students occurred when she eagerly prepared a lacrosse unit for a class of sixth grade students. After preparing the equipment and explaining the background of the sport to the students, Candie was ready to begin demonstrating some of the skills needed to play the game. Before she could start her instruction, a student raised her hand and told Candie that, "Black kids don't play lacrosse" (Candie, Interview #3). Chalking this student's reaction up to typical sixth grade defiance, Candie continued with her lesson, but was determined to prove this student wrong. After school, Candie spent some time researching African American lacrosse players on the internet, and was shocked to only find a handful of players at the collegiate level. Although Candie's professional socialization program had promoted sports as value-neutral activities, this encounter with her urban sixth graders proved otherwise. Candie said,

I couldn't believe that sixth grader called me out while I was teaching, and I was sure she was just trying to be a little sassy. But then I went home that night and spent hours on the internet, and she was right. Black kids don't play lacrosse! (Candie, Interview #3)

Candie took a specific course on lacrosse throughout her professional socialization experience and had successfully taught a unit on lacrosse during one of her student teaching placements at a

suburban middle school. Based on these previous experiences, Candie was certain that lacrosse was an appropriate sport to teach students in any community.

What Candie – and her professional socialization program – failed to consider, though, was not all students would have the opportunities to participate in activities such as lacrosse within their communities. Most of the students attending Chestnut Academy lived in communities with few parks or green spaces, and without organized recreation programs that could offer sports such as lacrosse for residents. Additionally, most of the students that attended Chestnut came from lower socioeconomic levels, meaning that resources to purchase the specialized equipment necessary to successfully participate in lacrosse were not available in most families. Candie’s upbringing in a middle-class, suburban community where these factors were not necessarily an issue, and her professional socialization in a program that continued to promote a sport emphasis in school PE, did nothing to help her understand the cultural dynamics affecting urban students that might influence their preferences for and access to particular physical activities and sports. This incident and similar reactions that Candie received from students when she introduced other sports that did not align with her students’ cultural templates (i.e., floor hockey, volleyball) caused her to grow frustrated and question her effectiveness as a physical educator. The sports that Candie included during her early career as an urban physical educator did not align with the cultural templates of her students because of their values and the resources available. This initial struggle that Candie encountered led her to re-consider her own ideas regarding school PE, and will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6.

*Element 2: Lack of coursework addressing socio-cultural issues.* A second element of Candie’s professional socialization that expressed the White, middle-class bias of the program was a lack of coursework in socio-cultural issues. Within the required courses that Candie took

in her PETE program, she never had a course that examined the impact of race, class, gender, or sexuality on education, and more specifically, on physical education. Candie never had an assignment or any specific coursework that required her to examine her own cultural background, understand the history of racism within the US, the state, or the immediate community where Candie lived and attended college, or learn about the effects that biases based on race, class, gender, or sexuality had on students' education. Candie was never asked to critically analyze the privileges she enjoyed as a White, middle-class individual, or the discrimination that she may have experienced as a female or as a sexual minority. Although plenty of literature documents the adverse outcomes of racism, classism, and sexism, and sexual discrimination within a community, in a school system, and especially in a physical education setting, these topics were completely ignored during Candie's professional socialization. Overlooking these socio-cultural issues within professional socialization expressed a White, middle-class bias because pre-service teachers were never taught about the experiences of individuals who could not be categorized as White or middle-class, and how individuals who were not White or middle-class experienced education and physical education. Pre-service teachers in Candie's program may have assumed that these socio-cultural issues were unimportant in education, were not going to surface in PE classes, or that acknowledging these issues were not the responsibility of the PE teacher. Candie shared,

None of our PE classes ever really talked about those topics, and it didn't even occur to me to think about those things. I wasn't planning on teaching in an urban school, I'm sure none of my classmates wanted to, either. We were too busy learning how to write lesson plans and creating newsletters to promote our programs. I learned a little bit about gender in some of my liberal arts classes, but I didn't make the connection to the gym. (Candie, Interview #4)

Since Candie did not have any coursework regarding socio-cultural issues during her professional socialization, she encountered challenges in her early career as an urban physical educator.

*Struggles resulting from lack of coursework addressing socio-cultural issues.* Since Candie did not have any coursework which addressed socio-cultural issues throughout her professional socialization, she shared several instances where she encountered struggles in connecting with her students and their families throughout her early career as an urban physical educator. Candie's status as a sexual minority and her previous experiences that promoted inclusive environments (such as Girl Scout camp) meant that she had some sense of understanding of the socio-cultural issues that had an impact on her students' lives. However, her status as a White, middle-class, suburban female without any knowledge of the history of race and class in this urban community made it very difficult for her to understand the initial distrust expressed by the Chestnut community.

A major instance of distrust occurred during Candie's first year at Chestnut. Candie enthusiastically planned extracurricular activities, including a cross-country running program and a class trip to go cross-country skiing, all with the support of her principal. With the best of intentions, Candie even planned the activities so students and their families would not be responsible for any costs. However, according to Candie, families were slow to "buy in" to these activities. She said,

The first year we went skiing, we started advertising in December, but we didn't go until February. My principal trusted me right away and was behind me 100%. Some parents didn't want their kids to go, though, for no real reason. They didn't have to pay a dime, everything was covered! (Candie, Interview #3)

Candie was not used to being viewed as an outsider, or as a person that parents or families could not trust. However, Candie was unaware of the history of the prejudice that many

African American families had experienced in this community at the hands of White, middle-class individuals. Instances of discrimination in areas of employment, lending, real estate, and even educational practices was a reality in this particular community, and the effects of this discrimination still had an impact on the Chestnut community. Therefore, many students attending Chestnut lived in poverty and did not have access to fresh, nutritious food, or easy access to healthcare. Because of the limitations that prevented many urban residents from achieving the same type of lifestyle as many White, middle-class suburban residents, families in the Chestnut community were skeptical of the motivation behind Candie's activities.

Unfortunately, because Candie's professional socialization did not include any coursework in socio-cultural issues that would have enlightened her to these perceptions she did not understand why many Chestnut families were unwilling to trust her with their children on an overnight trip or in an after-school club. This source of cultural distance between Candie's personal biography and the cultural dynamics functioning in the Chestnut community initially created frustration and uncertainty for Candie.

*Element 3: Exposure to urban environments throughout professional socialization.* Of the three teachers I studied, Candie's professional socialization included the most exposure to urban environments throughout her PETE program. During Candie's professional socialization, she was required to complete a pre-student teaching experience for an entire semester, where she acted as a part-time student assistant for a local teacher. Candie was also required to complete an entire semester of student teaching, which consisted of a half-semester placement at an elementary school, and a half-semester placement at a secondary school. At Candie's university, at least one of these three placements had to be completed in an urban school so that pre-service teachers were at least introduced to the unique contexts of urban schools.

The semester that Candie began her pre-student teaching experience was also the same semester that she had signed up to study abroad in South Africa. Rather than completing her pre-student teaching experience across an entire semester like the rest of her classmates (assisting the local teacher twice per week for three or four hours), Candie was trying to fit her required pre-student teaching in a shorter amount of time before she left for South Africa. Candie's pre-student teaching experience began at an inner-city middle school with a diverse student body. Candie recalled being excited to work at this school because of the unique make-up of student cultures, ethnicities, languages, and religions, and since she had worked at a YMCA after-school program in the same neighborhood, she thought she might see some of the same students at this school. During the first week of her pre-student teaching, though, the teacher she was assigned to work with exhibited several unprofessional teaching behaviors, and made demeaning comments to many of the students. She shared,

I was really excited to get placed at this particular school, because it was larger and had a lot of diversity. It was going to be my first experience in an urban school besides some of the observations we had to do for some of our classes before that. The teacher was terrible, and he had just recently been taken off the 'do not place' list with the College of Education. His office was inside the boys' locker room and he just marched me back there one day to help him with his laptop. Then he was yelling at a student that had his pants sagging a little, and told the entire class that in prison, that's how the inmates would let each other know who was looking for a 'favor.' He was absolutely terrible, and after about a week of that and me crying every night when I got home, I called my advisor. (Candie, Interview #3)

Upset by the behaviors of her cooperating teacher, Candie immediately contacted her university supervisor, who arranged to remove Candie from that school. Since she was scheduled to spend six weeks abroad in South Africa, and would be assigned to work with at least one physical education teacher there, Candie's university supervisors were not concerned that she was being removed from her initial urban placement. Candie completed the rest of her pre-student teaching experience in a White, suburban high school. Candie said,



My supervisors said that my study abroad experience could count as my urban placement, but it was going to be in South Africa, so it wasn't totally an 'urban' experience. It was going to be a completely different culture. So really, I only got about two weeks of 'urban' experience, but I guess that's better than nothing. (Candie, Interview #3)

While in South Africa, Candie had two distinctly different experiences. Part of her time studying abroad took place in a university town just outside of Capetown. There, she lived with the family of the Dean of the university and worked with a physical education teacher at an all-girls boarding school. Candie said,

We stayed with a pretty wealthy family. Most of the families still had servants, and it was so uncomfortable and awkward to see that. I worked at a boarding school for girls, but it was pretty mixed as far as the socioeconomics. Some girls were on scholarship, some girls boarded there, and some girls were from the townships. (Candie, Interview #3)

During this part of her experience, Candie had access to ample resources and equipment for teaching physical education. The school even had a pool, so Candie supervised several aquatic activities since she had such a strong swimming background.

Candie's other teaching experience occurred in the "Township" school. Candie explained the townships as, "...the areas that were built by the Blacks who were kicked out of the major cities during Apartheid. The houses were so small and they were built out of whatever materials they could find" (Candie, Interview #3). The school in the Township where Candie worked had only one room, and students of all ages and levels attended. At the Township school, Candie tried to teach the students how to play volleyball, as it was an up-and-coming activity there at the time. She said,

It was definitely a learning and growing experience. I felt really involved and part of the culture since I lived in the communities. I will sometimes pull out the pictures from that trip when things are going rough here at Chestnut. I know that I have it so great compared to what the students in the Townships had – to see what their classrooms were and how modestly they lived. But they did so much with so little! (Candie, Interview #3)

Candie's professional socialization program required that all pre-service teachers spent dedicated time in at least one urban school environment. While this was much more than the professional socialization experiences of the other two teachers in this study, the experiences that Candie had resulted in both success and struggle during her early career as an urban physical educator.

*Struggles and successes resulting from exposure to urban environments.* Candie's exposure to urban environments throughout her professional socialization led to both struggle and success during her early career as an urban physical educator at Chestnut Academy. Although she had more exposure and experience in urban schools than the other two teachers in this study, there were several elements that were missing from her urban experiences in her PETE program.

At Candie's university, at least one of the three school placements that the pre-service teachers had throughout their professional socialization, had to be in an urban school. Despite having exposure to an urban environment, Candie's professional socialization included absolutely no discussion of urban issues and contexts prior to being placed in an urban school. Instructors and professors at Candie's university did not discuss the challenges existing in many urban schools, such as larger class sizes, older buildings that were often in need of repair, and limited budgets. All of these factors were much different than the types of schools that Candie attended in her pre-professional socialization. Candie's professional socialization program also failed to discuss the challenges that students in urban communities face, which in turn had an impact on students' educational pursuits. For example, prior to her placements in urban schools, Candie was unaware that many urban students lived in extreme financial circumstances, lived in extended, non-nuclear, and often single-parent families, and lived in communities where drugs,

violence, and gang culture were constant concerns. Once placed in urban schools, Candie and her fellow pre-service teachers never discussed the challenging contexts of urban schools, and how the pre-service teachers might need to adjust their pedagogies based on the cultural dynamics of the schools where they were teaching. Candie said,

I had been in a few urban environments before my pre-student teaching placement, but it was never in an educational setting. It was just like an after-school program at the YMCA. Now that I think of it, we never really talked about urban schools in our classes or anything. We just kind of went there [to the urban schools] and did what we had been taught to do all along in our classes. (Candie, Interview #7)

Because Candie's PETE program did not make any effort to prepare the pre-service teachers for urban school placements, or provide the teacher candidates with the opportunity to discuss their application of knowledge and skills in the challenging contexts of urban schools, the professors and instructors sent the message that teaching in urban schools was no different than teaching in suburban schools. Candie, however, knew differently. She said,

Things were a lot different in the urban school where I was placed, and even in South Africa, but we never talked about it. I guess they [PETE program] just assumed that by us being in those schools, we'd magically figure it out. (Candie, Interview #7) Candie struggled during her early career as an urban physical educator because she was not completely prepared for the drastic cultural differences between her own White, middle-class background and the cultural dynamics affecting urban schools and students. Differences in language and communication, values, parenting styles, income levels, crime, violence, and drugs were all elements that Candie had to learn about during her early career at Chestnut. She said,

I was so overwhelmed when I first started here. I had just moved to the area, so that was overwhelming in itself, but then I'm teaching kids that I have almost nothing in common with. I can't pronounce all of their names, they don't like the sports I'm teaching them. It was really frustrating my first few weeks, I know that I asked myself like, 'what have I gotten myself into here' before the first month of school was out. But I was a first year

teacher, and this was the first year the school was open, we were all figuring it out together. (Candie, Interview #2)

Although Candie's professional socialization was progressive enough to require an urban placement for their PETE majors, this was not enough to ensure a smooth transition into an urban school upon graduation. The initial exposure to urban communities, however, did provide an initial frame of reference for Candie, and also led to some success during her early career as an urban PE teacher.

Throughout Candie's pre-professional and professional socialization experiences, she encountered diversity gradually. By the time she completed her pre-student teaching and study abroad experiences, Candie had spent enough time in urban areas that she had a surface understanding of the challenges affecting urban communities, schools, and residents. These experiences allowed Candie to build up some stores of knowledge about the possible elements of urban communities that might be different from her own cultural template. This was a source of success because when Candie began her career at Chestnut Academy, she did not respond with shock or judgment when she learned about students' circumstances. For example, Candie knew of at least two students at Chestnut that were homeless, but received transportation between the homeless shelter and school daily. During one observation, one of the homeless students, Raven, was wearing a slip-on shoe that prevented her from participating with the rest of her second grade class. Initially upset that she couldn't participate, Raven started crying, but then was contented when Candie suggested she draw a picture. At the end of the class, Raven was slow to get in line with the rest of her classmates because she wanted to explain her picture to Candie. Raven's classroom teacher yelled at Raven to hurry up and get in line, and then looked at Candie and declared that she was "so done" with Raven's entire family (Candie, Field Note #4). After the class left, Candie shared,

It bothers me when the classroom teachers react like that. The deck is already stacked against Raven and her sister, and that teacher was just a total bitch about her not getting in line fast enough. Is it Raven's fault that she didn't have on the right shoes today? No! She's eight! You know, if your mom is yelling at you to get your shoes on so you don't miss your transportation to school, you're going to listen to her. If anything, Raven needs more support, not someone that is going to be impatient with her. (Candie, Field Note #4)

Candie's frame of reference allowed her to empathize with students' circumstances more readily than if she had never been exposed to urban schools prior to becoming an urban physical educator.

Another area of success stemming from Candie's exposure to urban school environments was her reflective approach to teaching. By seeing some of the challenges that students faced in urban schools, and then being immersed in the South African Townships, Candie learned to begin identifying cultural distances between her own cultural template and the community dynamics that students in urban schools often faced. Learning to be reflective allowed Candie to be successful because she constantly questioned how she could improve her teaching for her students. During observations, I watched Candie's lessons evolve from class period to class period to improve how students learned, interacted, and stayed active. For example, after one particular lesson with first graders, Candie felt that the students were less than attentive during her directions. After the class left, she immediately told me that she could tell the students were "losing it" during the lesson, and that she needed to find a better way to get through the directions faster so that the students could be active earlier in the lesson (Candie, Field Note #6). Candie realized that asking a six-year-old to sit quietly for an extended period of time while she explained every detail of the upcoming activity would be difficult for any student, but might be especially for an at-risk student that doesn't get many opportunities for physical activity throughout the school day.

Her exposure to urban schools during her professional socialization prompted Candie to consider the circumstances of individual students, rather than quickly lashing out and blaming them for being off task. She said,

If a teacher is going to really teach their students, they have to know their backgrounds, where they come from, what they have access to, all of that. I try to really understand what each kid is going through rather than getting pissed about things. What's going on at home...do they go home and the parent is working second shift, so a teenage brother is in charge all night? Or do they go home and the environment is so distracting they can't finish their homework or remember to put their gym shoes in their backpack for the next day? I always want to consider what the kid is experiencing at home before I just assume that they're not being responsible or they don't care (Candie, Interview #8).

By empathizing with students' circumstances and considering the cultural dynamics that students faced outside of school, Candie was able to bridge cultural distance between her own personal biography and that of her students. This may not have been possible had Candie not spent some time in urban schools during her professional socialization.

### **Conclusion**

Alexis, Brad, and Candie had distinctive professional socialization experiences that had definite effects on their early career development as urban physical educators. The teachers all encountered areas of struggle and success that had an influence on their effectiveness with urban students. The similarities and differences between their professional socialization experiences will be analyzed in the discussion chapter, and will also include implications of these findings for future research about developing physical education teachers for urban schools. In the next chapter, I will outline the findings based on the final phase of occupational socialization, the induction experience.

## CHAPTER 6: THE ROLE OF INDUCTION

### Introduction

Alexis, Brad, and Candie arrived at their teaching positions in urban schools by very different means. Alexis applied in a variety of districts, but was very interested in working in an urban school because of her experiences in an inner-city during her professional socialization. Brad applied for several teaching positions in both urban and suburban schools. He was interviewed for a teaching position in a suburban charter school, but because he did not have a health certification, could not be hired there and was referred to Bentley International, which was managed by the same company. Although he did not actively seek employment in an urban school, he was happy to at least have a job. Candie attended a job fair and was interviewed by Chestnut Academy after she learned that the public school where she was working as a temporary employee would not be able to offer her a full time position. These teachers all encountered several challenges and dilemmas in their early induction years in urban schools. In this chapter, I will summarize each teacher's induction experiences via case study and describe the significance of these challenges in their early career development.

### Alexis' Induction

After graduating from her professional development program, Alexis worked for one year in another charter school prior to being hired at Achiever Academy. At the time of the study, Alexis had taught at Achiever for four years and was beginning her fifth. She served as the physical education teacher for approximately 700 students in grades K-8, and also served as the school's Athletic Director. Almost 100% of the students attending Achiever were African American, and 79% of students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Achiever Academy maintained a very stringent academic focus, and administrators encouraged students to apply to some of the most challenging high schools in the city. Classes at Achiever were grouped by

ability level, with classes performing at the lowest level staffed with two certified teachers to provide extra instruction and support. Achiever Academy was very different from the community schools that Alexis attended as a youth, as well as the schools she visited throughout her professional socialization. Alexis encountered four elements throughout her induction years that had an impact on her effectiveness as an urban physical educator.

*Element 1: Lack of administrative support.* The first element of Alexis' induction that had significant bearing on her early career as an urban physical educator was a lack of administrative support. Prior to teaching at Achiever Academy, Alexis taught for a year in another K-8 school in a different urban community, Academy P. Her experiences at this school were very negative, and had a tremendous impact on her induction into urban schools.

During her first year of teaching, Alexis noticed that the administrators in charge of Academy P were somewhat unorganized and possibly inexperienced. She shared, "The principal was never there, and the administrators didn't have degrees or any specialized training for administration" (Alexis, Interview #1). Alexis also felt that the administrators were unsupportive of faculty, and demonstrated this in the way that they interacted with teachers, allowed parents to have more control over what happened within the school than teachers, and used intimidation and fear to try to control teachers. Alexis noticed that the assistant principal at Academy P was especially unsupportive of her because she held a position that used to be his. She said,

When I was hired into the PE position, the new assistant principal was the former PE teacher. He never received his teaching certification, so they moved him to the assistant principal position. I think he really had an issue with me being a White female and taking over his position. He would try to tell me what to do, like putting up a bulletin board, and then try to tell me what content to teach. (Alexis, Interview #1)



Alexis tolerated most of the assistant principal's demands, because she thought they would subside once she proved herself as an effective teacher. However, she was met with even less support when she approached the administration about behavioral issues with students. She said,

A lot of the students were really rough with one another. Hitting and punching each other in my class and just really being malicious. I even had a parent come in once and accuse one of the kids of hitting her on purpose with a beanbag that slid on the gym floor and hit the parent's foot. I really try to teach the kids not to hit one another, but then they respond with, 'my mom says I have to hit someone back if they hit me.' So how do I argue with that? The principals will always take the side of the parents – they say all the time that the kids and parents are the reason we're here. I don't think they've ever suspended anyone, especially if the parent is against it. They [the parents] ran the school, not the administrators. (Alexis, Interview#2)

Another way that Academy P administrators did not demonstrate any support of the faculty was the way they tried to control the staff with fear and intimidation. Alexis shared that teachers had to check in and out daily, even if they left the building for lunch, and even on professional development days. Teachers who were not in their classrooms at designated times were written up (Alexis, Field Note #3). The most obvious example of a lack of administrative support at Academy P occurred when she questioned the actions of another administrator. Alexis' office shared a wall with an administrator in charge of discipline and truancy. The walls were thin, so she could often hear his conversations with students. One afternoon, Alexis heard a loud sound followed by a student crying, and instinctively knew that the administrator had hit a student. She was immediately concerned for the student and confided in another teacher about what she heard. This teacher encouraged her to speak with the principal about the incident, and she arranged to do so during her lunch break. Alexis said,

I was so upset that an adult would hit a child. I told my principal everything, and her response was 'Alexis are you *sure*?' I lost it when she asked me that, I don't cry very often, but I spent the rest of the afternoon in tears. I don't even remember how I taught my classes for the rest of the day. I was so upset that my principal would even question whether I was telling the truth or not. (Alexis, Interview #1)

Alexis' concern over the treatment of a student set in motion a series of meetings and hearings. The administrator in question admitted to using 'intimidation tactics' with students to scare them into behaving in school, and more students came forward to share that this administrator had hit them with books from his office. He was suspended with pay for a short period of time, but kept his job. Alexis had to finish out the remainder of the school year under his watchful eye, and felt very uncomfortable in that school. She said,

It was awful to have to keep going to work every day. I would still see this man almost every day, and I just saw evil in his eyes. He confronted me once and said 'You know you didn't see anything' and I said back, 'Yeah, but I know what I heard.' (Alexis, Interview #2)

The lack of support that the administrators gave their faculty led to several struggles while Alexis navigated through her first year of teaching in an urban school. These challenges continued when she started at Achiever the next fall.

*Struggles related to lack of administrative support.* Alexis' first teaching experience in an urban school resulted in many struggles because of an unsupportive administration. Some of these challenges occurred within the first year of teaching, but many others surfaced over time, even after she had left the negative environment of her first teaching position at Academy P.

The biggest struggle that Alexis faced as a result of an unsupportive administration was the feelings of distrust, caution, and uneasiness in her teaching and in her interactions with other staff and administrators. While still teaching at Academy P, Alexis felt as though she was viewed as an enemy, especially after the incident with the truancy administrator. Alexis did not feel comfortable at Academy P, and was constantly worried about making mistakes, completing procedures incorrectly, or otherwise drawing attention to herself as a teacher. She said, "They [administrators] had us so afraid because they wanted everything done a certain way. They wanted to be in control, and if they didn't like how you did things, they would fire you" (Alexis,

Interview #2). Since Academy P was a public charter school, teachers' jobs were not protected by a teacher's union, and teachers were considered "at-will employees." Under these circumstances, teachers could be let go without formal evaluation or cause. Because of these conditions, Alexis did not feel as though she really taught her first year, but rather tried to manage classes, supervise students, and adhere to the Academy P policies. She continued,

I really struggled with management that year, but I couldn't get any help from the administration, either. So I only did activities that wouldn't cause the students to get upset with one another, and I think we did a lot of the same games over and over. That was a really hard year, it's kind of my 'baggage' – I've really tried to forget a lot of what happened there. (Alexis, Interview #1)

Alexis' feelings of uneasiness did not come without reason. At the end of her first year at Academy P, Alexis' contract was not renewed. She felt it was because she stood up for the rights of the student who was hit by the truancy administrator. She said, "I guess the 'Board' met, a Board I had never seen or heard of before, but they decided not to extend my contract for the next school year" (Alexis, Interview #3). Teaching in a culture of fear and intimidation left Alexis shaken, and these feelings carried over to Achiever Academy as well. She started her new position at Achiever Academy the next fall feeling very distrustful of her colleagues and administrators and unsure about her abilities as an urban PE teacher. She said, "That first job left me scarred. I really walked on eggshells when I first started here. I didn't talk much and I remember feeling very cautious about everything, and that's no way to live" (Alexis, Interview #3).

The struggles that Alexis encountered because of unsupportive administration were also a result of her cultural template being much different than the cultural templates of the administrators at Academy P. Since Alexis grew up in a suburban, middle-class neighborhood, and attended schools in White, middle-class school districts, she had little in common with the

African American administrators in charge of Academy P. When cultural templates of administrators and teachers do not align, struggles can arise, such as Alexis' lack of confidence in her ability to teach in an urban school. Alexis' beliefs about student behavior and expectations were not aligned with the beliefs of the Academy P administrators. To complicate matters, Alexis, a White, middle-class female, questioned the actions of a Black male about what was best for the African American students attending Academy P. Although Alexis was simply looking out for the well-being of the students at Academy P, her conflicting cultural values about how to discipline students were overpowered by the administrators whose cultural templates included the use of power and fear to encourage students to comply with school rules. After Alexis was let go from Academy P, she took the same fears and uncertainties regarding teaching in urban schools with her to Achiever Academy. It took Alexis almost an entire semester to feel comfortable at Achiever, because she was concerned that the Achiever administrators operated in the same way as Academy P administrators. She said,

I really wasn't sure what the principal here was all about at first. We talked at my interview and she seemed really nice, but I got the same feeling from the principal at Academy P. I was just really cautious and tried to do my best. The biggest difference was that Hannah [Achiever principal] was consistent with all of the teachers, she expected us all to use the same management procedures. It took a while, but I figured out that she really did have our backs if anything happened. (Alexis, Interview #3)

The lack of administrator support during Alexis' induction caused her to question her abilities as a physical educator, and made her less effective as a result. Once she was removed from a school with unsupportive administrators, she was able to regain some of the confidence she lost due to operating from a position of fear and intimidation.

*Element 2: Insufficient facilities.* The second element of Alexis' induction that had an impact on her early career development as an urban PE teacher were the insufficient facilities that she encountered at Achiever Academy. Throughout Alexis' pre-professional and

professional socialization, she had experienced school PE in traditional gymnasias, and her PETE coursework prepared her to teach in a gymnasium. However, when Alexis was hired at Achiever Academy, she learned that the school did not have a gymnasium in the school building that was leased by the management company. Achiever Academy occupied the space of a former Catholic school, and the gymnasium was part of the actual church property, rather than at the school. Achiever Academy did not rent any of the church space, so Alexis was left with the challenge of teaching PE without a gymnasium. This left Alexis with the options of teaching in individual classrooms, in the hallways, or outside on the adjacent public playground when weather permitted. Since there was no gymnasium at Achiever, there were also no large spaces to store equipment. Alexis' shared office space also served as her equipment storage area.

In Alexis' second year at Achiever, she worked with the administration and another local church to use their gymnasium facilities. To access this gym, Alexis had to walk with her classes two and a half blocks every class period, carrying whatever equipment they used with her. Alexis was grateful to have a larger teaching space, however, the set-up was not perfect. Alexis had several communication issues with the main campus building due to poor cell phone reception, which meant she missed important information about student dismissals, and on one occasion, was not informed that the school was in a state of lockdown due to an emergency in the neighborhood (Alexis, Field Note #6). On another occasion, an angry motorist drove his car up on the sidewalk where Alexis' class was walking back to the main building, nearly hitting a few students (Alexis, Field Note #6). Alexis decided that having the large gym space available was not worth the risks involved in taking classes there every day. She met with her administrators and they decided together that renting the local church space was not a plausible option.

After her second year, Alexis decided that her PE classes would have to take place somewhere on the Achiever campus. When she taught outside, Alexis shared the playground with other classes outside on recess, and competed with the sounds of traffic, construction equipment, and emergency vehicles (Alexis, Field Note #5). When she taught inside, Alexis had to determine what types of activities that classes of at least 25 students could do in a classroom or hallway. Relieved to have a teaching position in a much friendlier school, Alexis felt that the benefits of teaching in an atmosphere free of intimidation and fear outweighed the lack of designated teaching space for her to conduct PE lessons. However, without a designated teaching space, Alexis encountered several struggles during her induction.

*Struggles related to insufficient facilities.* Alexis encountered several challenges during her induction based on the insufficient facilities at Achiever Academy. These struggles were almost unavoidable since Alexis' professional socialization experiences were all based on instructing in a gymnasium. The specific struggles that Alexis encountered because of her insufficient facilities had to do with safety concerns and ineffective teaching practices.

The first struggle that plagued Alexis' induction because of insufficient facilities was the safety concerns that surfaced when she taught lessons outside. Teaching on the adjacent playground was one of the only solutions to Alexis' space problem; however, it was a public property and was also used by other classes for recess while she taught. The playground was fenced on all four sides, but had open gates, which provided access for community members and stray animals to come in, and for PE equipment to go out. Alexis had to develop protocols for retrieving equipment that rolled outside of the playground during lessons, for getting students' attention while outside, and for keeping other classes at recess away from her class so they would focus on her. The location of the playground within the neighborhood and its proximity to

a main street meant that traffic, construction, and emergency vehicles were all real distractions to her students. She said,

The playground is great because at least the students have space, but there are times that it's not worth it to be out there! Last year a dog wandered in, and I had some kids running around screaming because they were afraid. Another time, a resident was cutting through the playground to get to a house on the next block, and he was doing some work there, so he just walked through the playground carrying an axe. I tried to play it cool and just keep the students in one area of the playground, but that wasn't anything I was really prepared for. We've had helicopters hovering and police cars racing down the street, there was construction on the lot next door with loud backhoes and things. Yeah, there's always a distraction for my students, but I'm glad they at least have the chance to get out here! (Alexis, Interview #5)

These struggles would not be an issue during Alexis' induction if she taught in a school where there was an actual gymnasium. A designated teaching space would not solve all of the issues that Alexis encountered regarding students' safety, however, the struggles would be greatly decreased.

The second struggle that Alexis encountered because of insufficient teaching spaces was the ineffective teaching practices she adopted. Some of Alexis' ineffective teaching practices stemmed from the risks that she was willing to take with her students because they had limited opportunities to be active outside. Alexis admitted to taking more risks with her students when she did have access to the outdoor playground, and I observed several lessons that were developmentally inappropriate during the study (Alexis, Field Note #4, 7, 8, 11), such as lower elementary students playing hockey, and shooting baskets at a full-size basketball hoop. She said,

I'm sure most teachers aren't going to let their kindergarten students use hockey sticks, but I'm really limited to what I can do. I know that I have to be very careful when I do that, and I have to know that they're ready to handle that kind of thing, but it's what we do here. I only have so many opportunities with them. Is it safe? Maybe not, but I think a kid is just as likely to hurt himself messing around with a friend while they're walking up a set of stairs than they are if I give them a hockey stick. I know that what I do isn't typical, but it seems to work for us here. (Alexis, Interview #6)

Alexis realized that her choice of content was not the most appropriate for her students. Yet, she was so desperate for her students to get some sort of physical activity experience that she was willing to teach content that was not matched to students' development.

Conversely, when the weather was not conducive to teaching outside, Alexis taught classes inside in classrooms; these lessons were often very inactive because of space limitations. Many of the lessons that Alexis taught indoors had no relation to any of the activities that she taught outdoors, so the sequence of lessons she taught was unorganized. Many of the activities done during indoor lessons required students to sit and wait for their turn at a skill or activity, such as throwing a ball or beanbag at a target or small net. She said,

My classes are pretty big, so is it safe to have 26 kids in an eight foot wide hallway? Or in a cleared space in their classroom? Probably not – at least not if they're moving very much. I have to spend a lot of time reviewing personal space concepts and boundaries. (Alexis, Interview #2)

Therefore, during indoor lessons, it was not unusual for a student to only have three to five minutes of total movement time over the span of a 50-minute lesson (Alexis, Field Note #10). Alexis was either unaware of how inactive students were during indoor lessons, or simply ignored the inactivity while she managed indoor lessons. Regardless, Alexis did not invest any time in strategizing ways to keep students more active when she was forced to teach indoors, and her teaching, as well as students' learning, suffered as a result.

Alexis' willingness to take risks when teaching outside, and her very inactive lessons when teaching inside meant that her role was more of an entertainer of students rather than a physical educator. She was most concerned with students having fun and getting some physical activity during their PE classes. Alexis did not have any particular scope or sequence for her PE curriculum, and admitted that she planned activities on a week-by-week basis, based mostly on the weather. She said,



I can't really plan much in advance. I might want to do soccer outside with my classes, and then it will start raining, so I can't. And it's not like I can do many soccer activities in a classroom, so I have to have a 'Plan B' if I have to stay inside. I plan when I can, but I really have to make a lot of minute-by-minute decisions. (Alexis, Interview #4)

Overall, Alexis seemed to wrestle with feelings of guilt about her students' PE experience. The insufficient facilities at Achiever meant that the curriculum that Alexis provided for students was developmentally inappropriate, non-sequential, and often inactive. She said,

Yeah, I will feel some 'professional guilt,' especially when I'm talking to people that don't understand all of the circumstances here. Like at seminars and stuff especially, or when a new family comes to the school and I have to explain how we do gym here. You know, am I teaching what I'm 'supposed to' be teaching? I'm not sure, what does that even mean? I think I'm doing my best under the circumstances here. (Alexis, Interview #12)

The guilt and uncertainty that Alexis felt as a result of her hodge-podge curriculum also translated into loose classroom management procedures and habits. Alexis was inconsistent in her expectations of student behavior because she wanted students to get the most out of their time in PE since they only saw her once a week. During some classes, she tolerated students talking with their peers and not paying attention while she gave directions, but during other classes, she reminded students about being respectful (Alexis, Field Notes #3, 7, 8). She frequently wavered about her approach to students. She said,

I'm never sure if I'm being flexible with students when they get a little crazy, or if I'm just being a pushover. I understand, they have a lot of pressure on them, they don't get a real chance to blow off steam, so I want them to have that outlet, but we also have to accomplish some things in my class, too. It's hard to tell. I just want to do what's best for the kids, so I probably tolerate more than I should. (Alexis, Interview #7)

Alexis' encountered several struggles because of inadequate teaching facilities. Access to a gymnasium would not necessarily make her inconsistent management practices, inactive indoor lessons, and developmentally inappropriate content choices disappear. But, with a gymnasium,

Alexis may have had fewer of these struggles and could provide a more cohesive, consistent, and relevant curriculum to her urban students.

*Element 3: Lack of mentoring.* A third element that Alexis encountered during her induction years which affected her early career as an urban physical educator was the lack of meaningful mentoring that she received as a new teacher. At Academy P, Alexis was not assigned to a particular mentor, but the former PE teacher (who had been moved to the assistant principal's position because he did not have a teaching certificate) tried to "help" her determine what to do. As discussed previously, she did not view this as a positive interaction; rather, it was more of a demonstration of power by the former PE teacher. When she started at Achiever, she was not assigned to a specific mentor, either. According to Alexis, the management company that ran Achiever Academy provided all new teachers with a training program that reviewed policies, curricula, and other human resources related topics. The individual who provided the training was available to the new teachers at any time, and could be considered a mentor. However, Alexis did not have an assigned mentor to turn to during her induction within her building or even within her discipline. She said,

I was supposed to have a mentor here. Our company does a new teacher training, so I went to that and was trained in the curriculum we use here, the procedures to follow, stuff like that. Our trainer was actually our mentor, so he's available if I need him. But here, there's not really anyone that I've been assigned to or even anyone that could help me out since I'm not a classroom teacher. (Alexis, Interview #1)

As a new teacher, Alexis did not have a mentor within the schools where she taught to discuss concerns, share ideas, or develop effective management strategies and class policies to help her be as effective as possible. Although in both schools, Alexis knew several teachers with more teaching experience, none of these teachers were specifically certified in PE. Therefore, she did not have anyone to consult with about the unique challenges that PE teachers face, such as how

to organize students, distribute and collect equipment, transition from one activity to the next, and other procedures that are very different from what happens in a classroom. In almost any teaching environment, this might be a frustrating situation. However, because Alexis was a White, middle-class teacher working in an urban school for the first time with students from drastically different cultural backgrounds, the need for a qualified mentor to help her traverse her new endeavors increased exponentially. In addition, working in a school like Achiever without a designated gymnasium or teaching space presented even more new challenges to Alexis that she had not been prepared for during her professional socialization experience. Since Alexis faced so many exceptional circumstances as a new PE teacher in an urban school, the lack of mentoring support she encountered resulted in several struggles throughout her induction.

*Struggles related to lack of mentoring.* The lack of mentoring that Alexis received during her induction led to significant struggles as she attempted to navigate the complex environment of urban schools. In both of the schools that she taught during her induction years, Alexis was the only PE teacher. She was not assigned a mentor at either school, nor was she able to identify any other teachers who would be able to identify with the distinctive circumstances she encountered as a PE teacher.

Without a mentor, Alexis had to learn about the cultural differences between her own White, middle-class values and the values of the mostly African American students that she taught at both Academy P and Achiever on her own. She did not have a mentor to help her examine how students' family dynamics, socioeconomic status, religion, crime and safety concerns all affected how students would interpret their educational pursuits. For example, a mentor who had spent more time in an urban community or had more teaching experience in an urban school may have been able to help Alexis understand why students did not always have the

appropriate PE uniform or shoes on their designated PE days. Alexis mentioned on several occasions that she wanted to understand the reasons behind students' inconsistencies in wearing their PE uniforms. She said,

I want to understand, and there always seems to be a reason. Maybe there's just disorganization at home, I try to be flexible. But there's always a reason...it's in the wash, I stayed at my dad's last night, there's a hole in my sweatpants. OK, but you know you have PE on this day every week, why does it continue to be an issue? (Alexis, Interview #7)

The guidance of an experienced, urban-savvy mentor may have helped Alexis understand the realities of many urban students' living circumstances that prevented them from having their PE uniforms on their designated PE days, such as the absence of laundry facilities in their homes, limited incomes that prevented students from replacing outgrown or torn clothing, or family structures that involved inconsistent work schedules or supervision.

Alexis also had to learn about the communication patterns of urban students and families, without the guidance of a mentor. Entering her early career in urban schools, Alexis had very little exposure to urban students, and had to learn on her own about the ways they communicated with their peers, teachers, and families. For example, Alexis had a difficult time interpreting her students' defensive interactions with one another. She said,

In my classes in college, our instructors always told us that kids might say things to each other that weren't very nice. But when I got here, I was like – whoa! I had no idea the kids would be so hard on each other. I didn't really know what to do about it, because it was something we'd never really prepared for in college. (Alexis, Interview #3)

The harsh words that students often had for one another, the slang they used to indicate their feelings, and the respect and disrespect they had for different teachers were all novel encounters for Alexis since she had done all of her preparation for teaching in suburban and rural schools. If she had had the benefit of a mentor with more teaching experience in an urban school, Alexis may have learned how to incorporate important social skills into lessons, could have discussed

with the mentor why some students were hesitant to automatically respect their teachers, and discussed ways to learn about students' slang terms and use them when appropriate in interacting with students. However, without a mentor, Alexis was left to wade through this completely new teaching environment without much guidance.

Another struggle that Alexis encountered without the guidance of a mentor was determining appropriate content to teach in an urban setting without a gymnasium. Alexis' current curriculum included mostly team sport activities when she had access to the outdoor teaching space on the Achiever campus. These activities, such as softball and floor hockey, required large spaces and specialized equipment, neither of which her students had much access to within the Achiever community. Therefore, the outdoor activities that Alexis included were not culturally relevant, and students had little interest in the activities outside of PE. Students demonstrated their preference for other activities when Alexis allowed students "free choice time" during outdoor lessons. Except for lessons that involved basketball and a few boys who were interested in football, most students chose to participate in other activities when given free choice time, such as jumping rope, playing on the playground equipment, or practicing dances and cheers. Alexis' choice of activities when she taught lessons indoors was even more limited. Classroom-based lessons seldom matched the content that students practiced outdoors, and in such confined spaces, required students to sit and wait their turn for the activity. In several classroom-based lessons, only a few students were active at the same time. Tracking the activity of several sample students during classroom-based lessons resulted in only four minutes of activity time during a fifty-minute class period (Alexis, Field Note #11). An experienced mentor may have been able to point out to Alexis that the activities she taught outdoors were not culturally relevant to the urban students she taught, and also track the activity time of students

during indoor lessons to help Alexis become a more effective teacher. During the time of this study, Alexis was evaluated yearly, but only by her principal, who did not have a background in PE to understand the best practices in the field. She said,

My principal observes me – it’s part of my yearly evaluation. She’ll watch a lesson once in the middle of the year and at the end of the year. She checks to make sure I’m preparing lesson plans with appropriate objectives and that I’m following those plans. (Alexis, Interview #5)

Unfortunately, Alexis functioned without the guidance of a mentor, and as a result, offered content that was not exciting, relevant, or in some cases, active. Since she was the only PE teacher in the building, and she taught without a designated teaching space or gymnasium, most of the other teachers felt that Alexis was an outstanding teacher and did “amazing” things with the students and would make comments to us while we walked from class to class, or when we entered a classroom for Alexis to conduct a lesson (Alexis, Field Notes #4, 7, 9). Since she was respected and valued by the other teaching staff, Alexis did not critically examine her own teaching practices and operated under the assumption that she was connecting with her students. A seasoned mentor with urban teaching experience would have been able to point out the gaps in Alexis’ instruction and suggest areas for improvement in her connections with students and the activities she included in her curriculum. Without this guidance, though, Alexis carried out lessons with a blind eye to what was really happening with her classes.

*Element 4: Voyeuristic teaching experiences.* The fourth and final element of Alexis’ induction experience that had an impact on her early career as PE teacher in an urban school can be best described as voyeuristic teaching experiences. Although Alexis claimed to know almost all of her students and families, and was involved somewhat with the school through athletics, her experiences at Achiever Academy were voyeuristic because she did not have a deep,

personal investment in the school and the community. She demonstrated this by her responses regarding the community and her minimal involvement with the school outside of school hours.

Alexis claimed to know all 700 students at Achiever Academy by name, and knew most of the families of the students as well. Her longevity at Achiever Academy allowed her to learn most of the students' names, and she used names frequently with students during lessons (Alexis, Field Notes #1-15). However, the breadth of the knowledge of her students did not match the depth of her knowledge of students. Beyond athletic events, required as her duty as Athletic Director, and events such as parent-teacher conferences, Alexis spent very little time at Achiever or in the community outside of school hours. Her knowledge of what students did within the community was also limited. She shared, "I think most kids just go home after school. They probably just do their homework and play video games. I don't really know what they do" (Alexis, Interview #4). When questioned again about what was available to the students in the community, she said,

I know there's a skating rink in the immediate neighborhood, and we'll do skating parties a few times a year. I haven't been to one yet – the parties are at 6pm, and I'd have to drive all the way home to let my dogs out and then drive another half an hour back here. I'm kind of bad about going to the school-sponsored activities. I know I need to try and get to one. (Alexis, Interview #7)

Alexis was not convinced that knowing specifics about students' lives outside of school was that important to relating to them and being an effective PE teacher. Her perception was that school, and PE specifically, was an escape from the difficult lives that her students led in their urban communities. Alexis had a general idea that her students encountered some challenges within their homes, because she would hear students talk during classes and at lunch periods, and observed how many students interacted with their families during morning drop-off and afternoon pick-up. She said,

I see a lot during drop-off. I'll hear parents yelling at kids and taking their frustrations out on them when I open up car doors in the morning. I would just hate to be that kid. It doesn't have to be like that everywhere and I try not to let them talk to one another like that in my class. I really try to create an environment that's kind of carefree and where a kid doesn't have to deal with that. (Alexis, Interview #3)

However, her surface-level knowledge of the types of circumstances that students encountered away from school did not influence what she taught or how she taught at Achiever. When I asked Alexis about how students' backgrounds influenced her teaching, she replied,

There's not much background knowledge to build on. I don't really think about home lives when I plan. I guess I try to show them things they could do anywhere, things you can do inside to move around. But, I mean, you're talking about kindergartners who think that your heart beating 'too fast' is a bad thing. The knowledge and the perceptions they have about exercise are crazy! (Alexis, Interview #9)

Therefore, Alexis did not consider many of the cultural elements that influenced students' lives and physical activity choices away from school, such as family dynamics that required older siblings to care for younger siblings; dire financial circumstances that prevented families from purchasing any type of toys or equipment to encourage physical activity; health factors, whether genetic or environmental, that discouraged families from becoming physically active because of the risks involved; or unsafe neighborhoods that made participating in physical activity outdoors nearly impossible.

Another reason that Alexis' teaching could best be described as voyeuristic was her involvement in an animal rescue organization. As one of the founders of this rescue, Alexis often spent prep periods answering emails about potential adoptions, updating the rescue's website, and would get calls from other rescue volunteers with updates about adoptions, owner surrenders, and veterinarian visits. On days that Alexis did not have an athletic event or other school-sponsored event after the school day was over, she usually had some type of rescue-related event going on that required her immediate attention in the afternoons and evenings. Her



involvement with the rescue organization interfered with her ability to become more engaged within the immediate Achiever community. However, she felt that she balanced her time well, and both her teaching and rescue activities were positive ways to prevent getting burned out from either endeavor. She said,

I do rescue to make me not think about some of the negative things that are happening to my students. Rescue and teaching – they are half and half – both things keep me going. I like to think about happy things to a point, although it's not always perfect with rescue. I can try to make a situation better for an animal that we've adopted out, there's more control there. I can't really do that for my students. (Alexis, Interview #9)

Although unintentional, Alexis was an “eight-to-three” teacher at Achiever Academy, and did very little outside of her required duties to become involved with the community. As a result, Alexis' experiences at Achiever were voyeuristic at best, because she was not deeply invested with the students, their families or the community. Her surface-level involvement with students and families led to several struggles because of her voyeuristic teaching experiences.

*Struggles related to voyeuristic teaching experiences.* Since Alexis did not spend much time getting to know about the community and the lives of her students, her voyeuristic teaching approach led to several struggles. These struggles were rooted mostly in cultural difference. Alexis' White, middle-class cultural template was drastically different than the community dynamics that her urban students experienced.

Although she was well-liked by most of her students, and felt respected by her administrators, other teachers, and the families of her students, she was not an insider within the community, and did not truly understand how to connect with her students. She said, “I have a good relationship with the kids, nobody hates me that I know of. I'm respected by everyone that I work with, and I have the freedom to teach what I want to” (Alexis, Interview #4). Yet, Alexis mentioned several times that she felt “fake” when she interacted with the families of her

students, especially in the morning during her drop off duties. She shared, “I don’t like opening the car doors in the morning. I feel a little bit fake. Maybe it’s because it’s early, but I feel like I have to act all happy when I see the families” (Alexis, Interview #10). Alexis’ feelings of “being fake” with the families of her students stemmed from not seeing and interacting with the families in real ways. Most of her interactions with families were brief and limited to when she saw parents and other family members at school sponsored events, such as athletic contests and parent-teacher conferences. Alexis had not invested much time learning about the community or spending time with students and families outside of school hours to have a rich appreciation of the dynamics that had an impact on the Achiever community. Since she did not know much about the lives of her students and their families outside of what she observed and heard at school, Alexis’ interactions with families were not completely genuine. Her feelings of “being fake” were warranted based on the level of understanding she had about her students’ lives.

Alexis struggled to truly connect with and understand her students because of her voyeuristic teaching. Alexis demonstrated her misunderstanding of her students in several ways. The team sport content that she taught in classes, for example, failed to consider her students’ limited access to large, open spaces and specialized equipment required to participate in team sports outside of school. Another example of Alexis’ misunderstanding of her students had to do with students’ PE uniforms. On designated PE days, students were supposed to wear dark pants or shorts and an Achiever Academy t-shirt to school to prevent ruining their Achiever Academy dress uniform clothing. Alexis struggled to understand why so many students did not have their uniforms each week. Had she known more about the community, Alexis may have realized that many students lived in homes without laundry facilities, so clothing did not get washed as often as it might have in Alexis’ suburban home equipped with a washer and dryer. She also did not

realize that financial circumstances in her students' families may have prevented PE uniforms from being replaced when they were outgrown or ruined. Alexis' voyeuristic teaching prevented her from becoming an insider within the Achiever community and being able to connect in meaningful ways with the urban students she taught.

In addition to feeling "fake" when interacting with students' families and being unable to make real connections with the students she taught, Alexis immersed herself in the animal rescue organization to either ignore or deny the realities of the students she taught. During several interviews, Alexis admitted that she had more control and felt she had a broader impact with the animals she rescued than with the students she taught every day. She said,

Rescue is my chance to not dwell on the bad stuff that I hear about at school, and I can control the situation in rescue, too. There's more 'happy endings' in rescue. If I place a pet in a home, I know that I've done enough work to make sure that it will be a positive environment for that animal. I can't guarantee that for my students. (Alexis, Interview #13)

Alexis was more interested in saving her students from their own community dynamics rather than learning enough about the community to provide instruction that was relevant and meaningful to students within those community dynamics. This caused her to avoid learning more about the community, and prevented her from being as effective as she could be. Alexis approached her students without considering their cultural templates; in fact, she seemed to want to ignore the outside influences that culture had on students when teaching. She said,

In rescue, when animals are surrendered, you can't really worry about what they've been through. You have to address their needs or behaviors now so they can find a home. In a kid's case, we want them to find success. But there's so many things that we can't control with the kids we teach, but we try to teach them while they're here how to be successful, and hope they'll take those lessons with them beyond Achiever. There's no guarantee that it will happen, though. (Alexis, Interview #15)

Alexis' comparison of her students' circumstances to the animals that she helped rescue demonstrated her misunderstanding of all of the various factors that had an impact on Achiever

students. Her failure to see how a child's home environment, family dynamics, beliefs, fears, financial circumstances and health issues might have an impact on their educational pursuits made it incredibly difficult for Alexis to be an effective teacher in this environment.

### **Brad's Induction**

At the time of this study, Brad had been teaching at Bentley for four years. This was Brad's first position after graduating from his PETE program. Brad was the only PE teacher for approximately 600 K-7 students at two separate campuses. In the mornings, Brad taught grades 3 through 7 at the East campus, an old Catholic school with a large gymnasium. In the afternoons, Brad taught K-2 students at the West campus, a building that Bentley International had recently acquired and remodeled. When he was first hired, Brad served as the head coach of the middle school boys' basketball team. However, because of scheduling conflicts in his family and his own educational pursuits, he resigned from the position after two seasons. Bentley International boasted a very diverse student body. Over half of the students attending Bentley International identified as African American, approximately 30% of students were White (including Arab Americans and European Immigrants), and the remaining 15% of students were Hispanic, Asian, mixed race, or "Other." At the time of the study, 82% of students qualified for free or reduced-price lunch. Clearly, the student population attending Bentley International was culturally very different than any school Brad had attended throughout his pre-professional and professional socialization experiences. During his induction years, Brad encountered three elements that had a significant impact on his early career as an urban physical educator.

*Element 1: Lack of mentoring at Bentley International.* The first element of Brad's induction that influenced his early career as an urban physical educator was a lack of mentoring at Bentley International. As a first-year teacher when he started at Bentley International, Brad

was never assigned to a mentor that had PE experience, or even a teacher who had taught in urban schools for any length of time. Therefore, Brad entered his very first teaching position as a White, middle-class individual with no prior urban experience, and was asked to teach students who were culturally very different from him. Brad was sent into the gymnasium with a teaching certificate and in possession of some new equipment, but with no one to go to if he had questions about managing students, developing procedures and protocols, and selecting content. Had Brad been hired in a suburban district similar to the schools that he attended as a child, perhaps the lack of mentoring he received would not have been such a struggle since his cultural template would be more aligned with suburban students'. However, Brad was hired in an urban school with a diverse student population, and the cultural templates of the students and community members he encountered at Bentley were drastically different from his own. Every aspect of Brad's life – from socioeconomic status, beliefs and values, opportunities for physical activity, concerns about safety, crime, violence and gangs, and views about education – was drastically different than the students he taught based on their cultural templates and the community dynamics that affected them. Since Brad did not have a mentor with knowledge of urban communities, teaching PE in urban schools, or some of the community dynamics which have an impact on urban students' educational pursuits, he encountered several struggles during his induction at Bentley International.

*Struggles related to lack of mentoring.* The lack of mentoring that Brad received during his induction at Bentley International led to several struggles related to his effectiveness as a teacher. Since he did not have a mentor, Brad did not have any source of expertise about teaching PE in an urban school. He had to learn about the cultural differences between his White, middle-class upbringing and the cultural templates of the diverse students he taught without any

guidance. Brad was not provided with someone with more knowledge of the Bentley community that could help him understand the differences in family dynamics, socioeconomic status, religion, crime and safety concerns, and other beliefs and values that might affect how students interpreted their schooling. The most obvious struggles that Brad encountered had to do with his management practices and his choice of content.

Brad shared (and demonstrated) on many occasions that the amount of time he spent managing his classes was frustrating. Brad required that students sit silently in rows before taking roll call at the beginning of each class. With younger students, he would often reward the “team” who was able to get in their squad row the quickest and with the least amount of talking (Brad, Field Note #6). Brad often grew frustrated with how much his students would talk or fidget before they started an activity. When asked about his focus on order and listening, he said,

If I was a classroom teacher I'd have to have it quiet. I know that in the gym it's going to be a little louder, but I still like to have it a little quiet. That's why I do the teams, and I think everyone likes it to be quiet when they're speaking. I know that my students are really vocal, but there's gotta be some way that they can just be quiet when I'm giving directions before we start a game. I just know they're not going to be quiet. Sometimes they'll get wild when they're waiting for me to do stuff. When they're crawling around on the floor and going nuts, I have to stop them and get them to listen. I guess if they're just sitting still I'll take what I can get. (Brad, Interview #9)

Brad knew that his students' behavior was different than the suburban students he taught while student teaching. However, he was unable to attribute this to cultural distance or community dynamics.

Brad often discussed his frustration with students and his inability to manage their behavior in his classes. Without a mentor with urban school experience, Brad was unable to see that the techniques he used to try to encourage students to comply with his rules were ineffective. His inconsistencies and expectations were not matched to the cultural templates of the students he taught. For example, Brad's management strategies rewarded silence, order, and obedience

(Brad, Field Notes #2, 5, 8), and the students that he served at Bentley International had cultural templates where these types of responses were not the norm.

Ironically, when discussing effective teachers, Brad could identify several traits and habits that effective teachers used, however, he did not include himself in the discussion. He said,

Effective teachers are just consistent and follow through with what they say. They have enthusiasm and can relate to the kids. In this environment, it's so much about classroom management. You have to stay on kids and it's not like when you're in the suburbs you clap your hands once and the kids all straighten up. (Brad, Interview #5)

Brad admitted his inconsistency in classroom management practices. With several classes, Brad would make empty threats with students, telling them that they would have to sit out if they did not stay on task. However, within minutes of these threats, several students were off-task again, yet Brad did not follow through with the consequences (Brad, Field Notes #3, 7, 9). He said, "I know I don't really follow through with what I say I'm going to do, and I know the kids catch on. I'm actually much stricter at home with my own kids than I am with the students" (Brad, Interview #5). Brad identified that his inconsistent management was ineffective, especially because he gave students too many chances regarding their behavior. Brad knew that effective teachers, especially in the urban school environment, were teachers who were consistent with their management strategies. Brad mentioned two enthusiastic but firm teachers that taught at Bentley International that had a handle on managing urban students. He said, "It's just the consistency and the follow-through that they use. Mrs. G. really cares, but she holds the kids to tough standards, and they do great" (Brad, Interview #5). He compared this teacher to his own management style, stating

And then you've got someone like me, I'm laid back and I don't always follow through with what I say I'm going to do. I give too many chances to the kids, but it's because I only see them once a week, I want them to participate and have a chance to have fun. I

feel sorry for the kids. They aren't given a fair shake, they don't really know how to act, so I'm always justifying to myself, 'that kid doesn't mean it, he doesn't realize what he's doing.' And then I get to the point where I'm frustrated because I've lost control of my class. I'm much tougher on my own kids at home than I am on these kids" (Brad, Interview #10).

By pitying his students, though, he created more of a cultural distance, because students were less likely to take him seriously than if he held them to particular behavior standards.

Since Brad did not understand the cultural differences between his own cultural template and how his students experienced life, he did not know what to do to effectively manage his classes, and often grew frustrated with the behavior of his students. Brad approached his students with the notion that their differing cultural templates were a deficit. He said, "I try to give the kids more chances. I feel bad for them, I know they can't control themselves and their behavior" (Brad, Interview #5). Without the guidance of a mentor with extensive knowledge of community dynamics and teaching experience in urban schools to point out that his management strategies could be greatly improved and more culturally relevant, Brad taught in an almost-constant state of frustration with his students.

A second area where Brad struggled due to a lack of mentoring was the activities he chose for his students. Brad's curriculum was almost entirely competitive team sports, because he felt that this provided his students with "real-world" lessons about working together, winning and losing, and other life lessons that he experienced from participating in team sports as a youth. Brad also felt that including competitive activities in his lessons would provide him the opportunity to teach social skills. Brad claimed that competition motivated his students to participate, and gave him an opportunity to reform what he felt were undesirable behaviors. He said, "Competition is so huge, I don't have to really put it to the forefront because they're going to make things competitive anyway. I just try to teach good sportsmanship and not being a sore



loser” (Brad, Interview #2). He thought that students’ interest in professional sports had an adverse effect on how students responded in PE, and lessons about how to win and lose graciously were even more important. Brad would often include competitive activities without teaching any of the social skills necessary to demonstrate good sportsmanship. He assumed that these principles would be learned implicitly within the activity itself, rather than having to teach them explicitly. Therefore, Brad’s efforts to teach sportsmanship fell short, and he grew frustrated with his students’ lack of social skills as a result.

Brad’s misguided attempts to engage his students in team sports that would teach them life lessons and good sportsmanship may have been avoided with the guidance of an experienced and knowledgeable mentor who understood the community dynamics at play in many urban environments. For example, because he was unaware of the tense environments created in many urban communities created by a culture of gangs, violence, and crime, he was also unaware that traditionally competitive activities may not be the best choice for students in urban communities prior to lessons that taught students about constructive competition, teamwork, respect, and communication with peers. Additionally, a mentor with experience in urban PE could have worked with Brad throughout his induction years to develop more consistent and effective management strategies to increase his effectiveness as a teacher and reduce the frustration he experienced.

*Element 2: Voyeuristic teaching practices.* A second element of Brad’s induction years that had a tremendous bearing on his early career development was the voyeuristic teaching practices that he engaged in at Bentley International. Brad shared very regularly that he did not know his students very well because of the limited amount of time that he saw them every week, and this was exacerbated by his lack of investment in the school and community.

Students at Bentley International had PE once per week for a period of 50 minutes. The pace at which students came in and out of Brad's gymnasium was somewhat overwhelming. Often Brad would barely have a class lined up to dismiss them at the end of a lesson before another class was coming in for their class. He said,

I feel like I'm working in a factory. I get the kids in, try to settle them down long enough to do something with them, and then I ship them back out – class after class, all day long. It's so draining. I really don't know if I'm doing them any good or if I'm just giving the classroom teachers a break. (Brad, Interview #7)

During some lessons, it was difficult to identify whether Brad knew all of his students' names, because he provided little specific feedback during activities (Brad, Field Notes #5, 6, 8). At the lower elementary level, Brad had several sets of siblings and twins in his classes. Rather than learning to distinguish between the siblings (who were in different classes), Brad simply called the students by their last name (Brad, Field Note #7). Brad thought this schedule was difficult to maintain. He said, "I feel so rushed all day long, I don't even have a minute to breathe until the school day is over" (Brad, Interview #8). Brad's voyeurism was also demonstrated by his lack of knowledge of the community. When asked about what happened within the community, Brad's responses were vague, and he actually realized during that particular interview that he had very limited knowledge of the community.

Brad had been a teacher at Bentley International for five years at the time of this study. During his first three years, Brad was also the head basketball coach for the middle school boys' team. Brad claimed that his time as the basketball coach allowed him to learn more about the students he taught and the community where they lived, however, he only knew vague demographic information about his students and their families. Brad was aware of the community's diversity, which was a point of pride for Bentley International. Brad said, "I've got kids that are African American, Muslim, Bangladeshi, Polish, Eastern European, you know, from

everywhere. I think there are 15 languages spoken here!” (Brad, Interview #2). Although he knew that students had very diverse backgrounds, he did not know much about the different cultures that were represented at his school. He said, “I don’t know a lot about the other cultures, and I’m so busy with my teaching schedule...but that’s also me not going outside of my little teacher ‘box’ and learning more about students’ cultures” (Brad, Interview #6).

Brad’s knowledge of how students lived was also limited. He had little to share about his students and their families in the community, and what he shared he sounded unsure about. He said,

I know poverty is a big issue here. And I think there are a lot of single moms, or even extended families taking care of the kids. Aunts and uncles maybe, so the students have to deal with that a lot. We have some parents that are heavy into drugs and alcohol; some parents might even be drug dealers. (Brad, Interview #5)

Brad had partial knowledge of what students had available to them outside of school. He was aware of the after-school program at Bentley, especially since many after-school programs were housed in his teaching spaces at both campus buildings. Students in middle school could participate in some interscholastic sports teams, such as volleyball, basketball, cheerleading, and track and field. The younger students could participate in martial arts or dance. Brad said,

After school they don’t have a lot in the neighborhoods, and it’s not the safest. There’s a few parks, and I see a few kids riding their bikes, but I don’t think they’re doing too much after school. The majority of the kids don’t, anyway. I guess there’s a recreation center in town, too. I’ve heard the kids talk about it, but I’ve never been there. (Brad, Interview #5)

Brad also shared that one of his teaching colleagues was a youth pastor at a nearby church, and that many students were involved in the youth group there. He knew this because he ate lunch with this teacher every day, not because he asked students about their after-school pursuits. Realizing that he had very limited knowledge of his students, Brad said, “I don’t really know about the hangouts or anything in the city” (Brad, Interview #3).

Brad was very involved with his family and his own educational pursuits at the time of the study. He was completing a Master's degree in administration, coached several of his sons' athletic teams, and served on the board for at least one of the organizations that sponsored his oldest son's football league. While these were admirable pursuits for his own personal and educational development, it meant that Brad's time at Bentley International seemed to fill the spaces between these activities. Brad rarely spent time in the community outside of required functions such as parent-teacher conferences, and now that he did not coach, he rarely attended any athletic events. He usually left immediately after school to attend a class for his graduate degree or get to a meeting involving one of his children's after school activities. Brad's "eight to three" schedule with Bentley International led to several struggles during his induction years.

*Struggles related to voyeuristic teaching practices.* Brad's limited investment in the students and community of Bentley International resulted in several struggles that had an immediate impact on his teaching. Although Brad tended to blame his hectic teaching schedule on these struggles, his constrained pursuit of knowledge regarding the community was the more likely culprit. The struggles Brad encountered because of his voyeuristic teaching practices had to do with a lack of knowledge about the community, an inability to form meaningful relationships and connections with his students, and an overall sense of distrust from both students and families.

Brad's first struggle related to voyeuristic teaching was the inability to form meaningful relationships with his students because of a hectic teaching schedule and lack of knowledge about the community. Brad made several comments about the lack of time he had with his students. Often, he compared the time he spent with students to the amount of time that classroom teachers spent with their students. He felt this was a barrier to forming meaningful

relationships with students. He shared, “I don’t spend that quality time every day with them like their classroom teacher does, and it’s really hard to establish anything with them. I really don’t know that many of my students very well” (Brad, Interview #4). He felt that it was nearly impossible to know all of his students on a personal level, but seeing them in class once per week was not an effective strategy to build relationships with students. According to Brad, his hectic teaching schedule also prevented him from spending much time with students. Brad taught 50-minute classes in the morning at one campus building for third through eighth graders, and then travelled to the K-2 campus building to teach his afternoon classes. Brad’s lunch, prep period, and travel time were all included in the one-hour break he had in between his last class at one campus and his first class at the other. His prep period was included in the minutes after school was dismissed, from 3:10 to 4:00 every day. He said,

This is the first year I don’t really have a prep. I have that one hour, but that’s travel, lunch and prep all rolled into one. Once my class is gone over at the upper campus, I have to put everything away, which usually takes 15 minutes after my class leaves. Then I drive over to the lower campus, park, eat my lunch, and I have 15 minutes before my next class starts. I can’t set anything up ahead of time because they’re still eating lunch in the cafeteria, so I have to do all of my planning in 15 minutes! (Brad, Interview #8)

Rather than being able to eat lunch with students in order to learn more about them, Brad’s lunch hour, prep period, and travel time allotted to go from one campus to the other was all rolled in to one time slot.

When Brad first started at Bentley International, he served as the boys’ basketball coach. He felt this endeavor allowed him to learn more about these students and the communities from which they came. Unfortunately, his increasingly busy schedule away from school meant that Brad had to resign from this position after only two seasons. Brad said,

When I coached basketball, I was able to learn a lot about the kids. I could connect on a different level with the kids. I used to take one kid home every day after practice, and I even picked him up some mornings before school. In the two years I coached him, he

moved to three different neighborhoods. He doesn't go to this school anymore, but I was really able to see how the kids lived when I coached. (Brad, Interview #3)

Brad felt that his hectic teaching schedule and his inability to participate in extracurricular activities, such as coaching, made it very difficult for him to form relationships with students. He thought he had few meaningful connections with his students. He said, "I wish I had more time to build those relationships like classroom teachers do. I guess I have the advantage of knowing more kids, but I don't have the kids that I build strong relationships with" (Brad, Interview #1).

Brad's inability to form relationships with students was starting to wear on his enthusiasm for teaching. He admitted that he was beginning to feel burned out from teaching in an urban school, and he would welcome an opportunity to teach in another district. He said,

It's really hard to establish relationships when you teach 600 kids. I only see them once a week and I'm so busy outside of school that I've kind of backed off from even trying to understand. I know I haven't put the effort in that I should or have in the past because I know I don't have the time and I can't do it well right now. I hate to say it, but some things have to be cut out, and unfortunately, that's one of the things I've had to cut. (Brad, Interview #8)

Another struggle that Brad encountered because of his voyeuristic teaching practice was a general sense of distrust among his students. Since there were already vast cultural differences between the cultural templates of Brad and the students he served at Bentley International, his lack of knowledge regarding the community only compounded the feelings of distrust. He felt that many students had their "guard up" when interacting with him. However, Brad did not associate this with his lack of knowledge regarding community dynamics. He said,

Some of the kids are cool with me, the ones that have been here a few years. Others don't want anything to do with me. I don't know what it is about this culture or the surrounding area and being in an urban environment. Maybe it's because of how they grow up, but it seems so hard for kids to open up and trust anybody. They're immediately on the defense, they're immediately making excuses, they don't want to listen, and then when you do try to say something or help, they'll say that 'you don't know anything about me' or 'you don't understand me, so you don't have a right to tell me what to do.' It's really hard. (Brad, Interview #7)

Brad's ignorance regarding the factors that had an impact on the Bentley students and families (such as a history of injustice toward minority residents by White, middle-class individuals, and disbelief in the value of education because of residents' previous experiences) made it impossible for him to understand why students would react to him in the ways they did. The extensive cultural distance between Brad and his students was a great source of frustration for him. Brad realized that his students' distrust affected his teaching, had an impact on how students interacted with him, and also affected how much they engaged in PE classes. He said,

My kids aren't stupid. They know they're only going to see me once a week for less than an hour, so why should they take me seriously? Why should they listen to what I've got to say? There are times when I'm talking to students and I can tell that they could care less what I'm saying, and that they think I don't know anything about them. I don't think that would be the case if I could build some trust with them. (Brad, Interview #6)

Because Brad had so little knowledge and understanding of the community in which he taught, he frequently encountered frustration and disappointment in his ability to establish trust with his students.

Both his lack of meaningful relationships with students and the sense that students did not trust him as a result of his voyeuristic teaching practices led Brad to feel increasingly more burned out. Brad's burnout was contributing to the amount of effort he put into his teaching and lesson planning. Although all teachers were required to submit weekly lesson plans to a school-wide server, Brad admitted that he had not done so since his first year as a teacher at Bentley, and did not intend to unless he was specifically approached by an administrator. The struggles he faced as a result of his voyeurism started showing during interviews. When I pressed about this topic, Brad almost appeared sad and regretful about the state of his teaching career. He shared,

I know that I'm not giving my teaching 100% right now, but it's hard to put so much work into things when there's no buy-in from the students. Maybe that's an easy cop-out, but it's been so draining this year. I'm dealing with the same problems over and over

again, the administration doesn't care, as long as I'm giving the teachers the prep they need. Maybe I need a change, I don't know, maybe I'm not cut out to be a teacher forever. (Brad, Interview #9)

*Element 3: Teaching in a culture of testing.* A third element of Brad's early career as an urban physical educator that had an impact on his development was teaching within a culture of constant testing. Recent legislation surrounding the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) act created a climate of extreme pressure to perform and meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) at Bentley International. The administration had a very narrow focus on maintaining academic achievement, and as a result, made several school-wide decisions to try to improve test scores. Students at Bentley International took at least three large-scale standardized tests throughout the school year, and Brad shared that administrators constantly expected teachers to make sure that students were prepared for these tests by any means necessary. Historically, the majority of schools penalized for not making AYP are located in urban areas, and their enrollments include mostly poor, minority children. Schools penalized can be put on probation, lose state funding, or in the most extreme cases, be completely shut down. Therefore, many schools, including Bentley, institute policies and practices to immediately boost test scores and improve academic achievement.

While students at Bentley International were required to undergo constant standardized testing to gauge their academic ability, teachers, too, underwent several evaluations per year to make sure that they were doing everything they could to improve student achievement. During the time of the study, Brad had already been observed by one of the assistant principals, and was preparing to be observed by another administrator. Brad shared that at a recent staff meeting, the teachers were informed that they would be observed by all six of the administrators at Bentley International, as well as the office manager (who did not have a teaching certificate), to ensure that teachers were covering the appropriate lesson objectives, and in the case of non-academic



teachers such as Brad (and music and art teachers), to check that their lessons incorporated cross-curricular content such as math, science, and language arts into. Brad said,

I've only had one of the six observations so far. I think the Principal is coming in next week, but that might change. It's pretty ridiculous – six observations? And one is our office manager? She doesn't even have a teaching certificate...what is she going to observe me for? (Brad, Interview #8)

The demands placed on Brad and his students at Bentley International due to the narrow focus on standardized testing and academic achievement, created several struggles for Brad during his induction.

*Struggles related to teaching in a culture of testing.* Since Bentley International was under such immense pressure to ensure student achievement, Brad encountered many challenges during his induction. These struggles involved Brad's teaching schedule, and his concern for students' well-being, and the evaluation that teachers underwent as a result of the accountability measures fostered by NCLB.

The first struggle Brad encountered as a result of teaching in a climate of constant testing was his altered teaching schedule. In addition to teaching PE classes to all grade levels at Bentley International, Brad also met with several small groups of students during second period on Monday through Thursday, to provide additional tutoring in reading and mathematics. On Fridays, Brad taught his morning classes at the East campus, and then spent his afternoons at the West campus meeting with students one-on-one to improve their academic skills. The need to involve Brad (and other non-academic subject teachers) in the tutoring and interventions of students who under-performed at Bentley meant that his daily schedule of teaching, tutoring, and traveling between both campuses was especially tight. During the study, Brad taught four classes in the morning at the East campus, and had his prep period, lunch period, and travel time to get to the West campus combined into one hour. This hectic schedule left Brad exhausted and

feeling disrespected. Brad knew that his schedule was arranged this way by the administration to try to help students, however, he still felt that it limited his ability to be an effective teacher. He said,

I know the administration really wants the students to reach their academic goals so they don't lose state funding, but at what cost? I've got a group of kids that I'm supposed to tutor every day, and they want us to incorporate math and science and reading into all of the 'specials' classes, too. When do the kids get a break? When are they just allowed to have a little fun? (Brad, Interview #8)

Brad's frustration with his schedule dissuaded him from writing and planning lessons and sequential units, and his teaching seemed only a few steps away from "rolling out the ball." He said, "I barely get any time to plan, so I just kind of think about what skills the kids should probably work on and I pick a game or two for them to play" (Brad, Interview #6). His focus on motor skills, especially with the younger elementary students at the lower campus, was not sequential.

Brad also grew frustrated with the amount of evaluation that he was subjected to as a teacher. As mentioned previously, Brad was to undergo six observations during the school year to determine how he was promoting student learning. He said,

I guess they're [the administrators] going to meet with all of us individually to tell us where we need to improve our teaching so that we're including more content to help kids do better on their tests. It makes me want to pull my hair out sometimes! I see the kids once a week, most of the classes don't get recess, and I'm supposed to cram math and science facts in my lessons too? It's just too much! (Brad, Interview #8)

Brad wanted to provide his students with an opportunity to be physically active, but the administration was pushing for teachers to fulfill several roles as teachers. Brad struggled to consider how to meet the needs of his students while also meeting the expectations of his administrators. This resulted in the frustration he expressed as well as feelings of being burned out.

Finally, the climate created by NCLB at Bentley International made Brad concerned for the well-being of his students. Brad felt that his students deserved PE more often than once a week, especially since most classes did not get recess or any other opportunities to enjoy free time. However, Brad was also frustrated that the focus on academia and improving test scores meant that students' time in non-academic subjects was limited. For example, many students at Bentley International received additional services, apart from extra tutoring help from non-classroom teachers. During many of Brad's classes, ESL specialists, speech and language pathologists, and resource room teachers showed up in the gymnasium to withdraw students for these additional services. Since academic learning time in the classroom was so highly valued at Bentley International, students could not be removed from the classroom to receive these services. Brad commented that it was unfair for students to have to lose out on their only PE time for the week for these services. He said,

I get upset when the ESL specialist or the speech and language teacher come to my door. I know it means that they are taking a kid out, and I only get to see the kids once a week. It seems like they're penalizing the kid and taking them away from something they may really enjoy. I know there's just no time in the school day to fit everything in, but why does it always affect their time in PE? (Brad, Interview #9)

Although the policies enacted by the Bentley International administrators were installed with the intention of improving students' test scores and achieving AYP, Brad struggled to see how these measures benefitted his urban students in the long run.

### **Candie's Induction**

Candie was hired as the only PE teacher at Chestnut Academy when the school initially opened. At the time of the study, Candie had been teaching at Chestnut for five years. Chestnut Academy had an enrollment of approximately 375 students in grades K-6, 99% of whom were African American. Throughout Candie's tenure at Chestnut, the administration experienced tremendous turnover, and the current principal was the seventh to be in charge at Chestnut since

Candie had started. Candie shared that the faculty turnover was almost as dramatic as the principal turnover, and only a handful of teachers remained on staff since Chestnut opened. Candie's school was extremely different from the schools she had attended for her own K-12 education, and these differences were noticeable immediately. Despite the differences, Candie shared three elements of her induction that had significant bearing on her early career as an urban physical educator. These elements included the discovery of her "Whiteness," the desire to obtain insider status, and urban-specific professional development.

*Element 1: Discovery of "Whiteness."* The first element of Candie's induction that influenced her early career as an urban physical educator was the discovery of her own Whiteness. Candie's experiences throughout her pre-professional and professional socialization did not provide many opportunities for her to examine her own cultural template, the privileges she received as a White, middle-class female, or to consider the experiences of individuals who were not White or middle-class. Therefore, when Candie began teaching students who were culturally very different, she was astonished to realize how much her Whiteness influenced her ability to connect with her students and her ability to create meaningful physical activity opportunities for her urban students.

Candie's realization of her Whiteness emerged when she began interacting with her students, and identified that their lives were drastically different from hers. To begin with, Candie realized how different students' names were. She reported that she had to ask other teachers for help in some of the pronunciations of students' names, and names she thought might be popular for a particular generation were difficult to find. She said,

I know that my name isn't very popular anymore, but it was in the '70s when I was born. I thought I'd run into a bunch of kids with popular names like 'Taylor' and 'Emma,' but my class lists had names like 'Destiny,' 'RaQuan' and 'Lexus.' One kid brought in a family tree poster that he was working on for a class project, and one of the branches said

‘my cousin Tequila.’ Every year we get the class rosters, and I’ll usually have one of the fifth grade teachers help me with learning how to pronounce the names. I remember saying something to her about more ‘car names’ last year – like Mercedes or whatever. I don’t mean it in a mean or racist way; it’s just different than what I’m used to. I guess names like ‘Candie’ or ‘Sara’ aren’t as popular in the African American community. (Candie, Interview #7)

Candie’s assumption, that students in an urban school would have names similar to students in a suburban community or school, demonstrated that her cultural template was completely skewed toward White, middle-class norms. Realizing this cultural difference made Candie more aware of how unprepared she was to teach in an urban school.

Candie’s Whiteness also affected her expectations and assumptions about the experiences of her students, as well as the types of living circumstances they encountered. For example, Candie shared how many of her students were initially afraid of the wooded area behind the school field because they did not live in areas with largely wooded parks or landscapes. Additionally, she shared an anecdote about one class’ encounter with a raccoon. She said, “We were out here, and the kids were silent for over ten minutes because they were just watching a raccoon walk across the fence. The kids had never seen anything like that, and they were just in awe” (Candie, Interview #6). For Candie, these types of experiences were ‘normal’ because of her White, middle-class upbringing. Prior to her employment at Chestnut Academy, Candie took for granted that many students lived in neighborhoods without parks and green spaces, or had opportunities to see nature ‘in action.’ Candie’s Whiteness also surfaced when her students shared information about their home lives that were beyond the experiences that she had in her White, middle-class upbringing. Often the information that students shared with Candie made her very upset, and she was not sure at first how to react to students when they shared these issues with her. She said,

I was getting after a kid once about leaving some equipment out. I said, ‘you’re not going to leave stuff out like this your bedroom, are you?’ and he said, ‘I don’t have a room, I sleep on my Auntie’s couch.’ I just melted, I cried in my office after that class because I felt so bad for the student, and I felt bad for just assuming that every one of my kids had a bedroom, or even a house that they lived in. So I started listening and asking around, and I hear of all sorts of circumstances where kids might live with their mom in the grandparent’s basement. Some parents go to school in the evening, so the parents never see the kids and they won’t have forms filled out or homework finished. I’ll ask kids where their gym shoes are, and they’ll tell me they stayed at their dad’s this weekend. I just really had no idea when I started working here, and it just made me realize how different my life was compared to theirs. (Candie, Interview #7)

Candie’s realization of the cultural distance between her students’ cultural templates and her own came largely by surprise. Candie was blind-sided by these cultural differences and had to evaluate how she would approach the cultural differences she encountered at Chestnut Academy.

A final way that Candie’s Whiteness surfaced during her induction at Chestnut Academy was in the content she included in her curriculum. Since Candie was the first PE teacher hired for Chestnut, she was allowed to create her own curriculum and could order whatever equipment that she felt was appropriate for teaching the curriculum. Candie experienced great success teaching a lacrosse unit during her student teaching, so she felt that this would be an excellent activity to introduce to her older students, and included lacrosse sticks in her initial equipment order. Candie enthusiastically set out to teach her students about lacrosse, and was shocked when one of her students declared that “...Black kids don’t play lacrosse” (Candie, Interview #?). After completing the lesson, Candie began thinking about what the student had said during class, and went home to conduct her own investigation. She hoped to prove this student wrong, but was surprised at the results she encountered. She said,

I really went home and tried to look up Black lacrosse players so I could show my students that lacrosse wasn’t just a White sport. But then when I only found two Black players, I kind of let it go. I think that’s when I started realizing how “White” I really was, and that not all sports are ‘universal’ like I had thought before. (Candie, Interview #3)

Candie encountered similar resistance within the school when she wanted to start a cross-country running program after school, and started planning a ski trip for the fifth grade classes. After seeing a woman running a road race with a young African American student, Candie was inspired to start a running group of her own at Chestnut. When she approached her principal and administrators from the management company about permission to advertise her program, she was told that “African American children don’t typically run long distance” (Candie, Interview #3). Her initial attempts to take the fifth grade classes on a weekend skiing trip were also met with opposition by many parents, many of whom probably had little to no experience skiing, and did not necessarily value the activity or see how it might fit into their children’s future cultural templates for physical activity. Candie was somewhat discouraged when she planned the first ski trip and had only a few students attend the trip. Candie’s Whiteness limited her from understanding how cultural templates for physical activity might develop in urban students, based on their access to safe spaces and equipment, the activities that students might participate in with family members, and the value students and families placed on certain activities. The cultural distance between Candie and her urban students created both sources of struggle and success during her early career as an urban physical educator.

*Struggles and successes resulting from the discovery of “Whiteness.”* Candie’s realization of her Whiteness led to both struggles and successes during her early career as an urban physical educator at Chestnut Academy. Her struggle surfaced when she realized how much her cultural template clashed with the students that she taught, and initially resulted in frustration and misunderstandings. Candie’s main struggle was that she could not understand why her urban students did not respond to her content as enthusiastically as she had hoped they would. Candie had nothing but positive feedback from the students and teachers she had worked

with during her student teaching experience at a suburban middle school. At this placement, she taught activities such as orienteering, lacrosse, as well as more traditional sports like volleyball and basketball (Candie, Field Note #3). She felt that these same activities would be suitable for the students she taught at Chestnut Academy. Candie said,

You know, I never even considered that the students I would teach here would be any different than the students I taught during my internship. My job was to get the kids moving in some physical activities and improve their skills when they come to my gym, and I figured that since the suburban kids loved the activities I did with them, then why wouldn't the kids at an urban school? I had a lot of opportunities to play and experience different stuff as a kid, so that's the attitude I brought to my teaching...let's just do it all, you know? I didn't really think about what the kids might be able to do outside of school, or what they were used to doing. (Candie, Interview #3)

Unfortunately, Candie was not prepared for the resistance she encountered from her urban students when she tried to teach content that did not align with their cultural templates. She did not understand why her students would not value an exciting new activity such as lacrosse, and felt defeated when students suggested that lacrosse was not a game designed for African American students. Based on her own pre-professional and professional socialization experiences, Candie entered her induction with the assumption that students' cultural templates had no bearing on their preferences for physical activity, and that all sports and physical activities were "universal." However, the struggle Candie encountered was that quite the opposite was true. Sports were not universal, and students' cultural templates did matter when it came down to selecting content that would engage students. Candie's success at her suburban middle school internship placement did not translate into success with the same content at an urban school. Although Candie had all of the necessary equipment to play lacrosse at Chestnut Academy, her students did not have either the required equipment or the resources to purchase it, in their neighborhoods. Her students did not have large parks or open spaces to play lacrosse near their homes, and the communities where Candie's students lived did not offer recreational



opportunities for students to participate in lacrosse outside of school. All of these factors contributed to students' resistance to playing lacrosse in school PE, and caused Candie to reconsider what her Whiteness meant for teaching PE at an urban school.

Candie's realization of her Whiteness also resulted in some success during her early career as an urban physical educator, because this realization prompted Candie to become even more reflective in her teaching, to learn about the community dynamics affecting students, and to consider what would be most relevant to her students. Candie shared that after she realized how culturally different she and her students were, she had to work harder to understand their perspectives in order to be a more effective teacher. She said,

To overcome cultural differences, teachers have to know a lot about their students. In order to teach them, they have to know their backgrounds, where they come from, and from a PE setting, what they're going to have access to. A classroom teacher might have to figure out a little more – like turning in homework packets – understanding the circumstances rather than getting pissed if the kid never hands them in. Like, what's going on at home? Do they go home and the parent is working second shift, so a teenage brother is in charge all night? Or does the student go home and there are so many things going on that they can't get their homework done? Or in some cases, some of the parents may not be able to even do the homework themselves because of their own educational background. So just family life, family situations, things like that, you really have to think about those things before you start getting upset about what kids do, or don't do. (Candie, Interview #8)

After realizing that her own Whiteness had limited her from connecting with her students in meaningful ways, Candie did her best to learn about the dynamics of the surrounding Chestnut community. She started just by communicating with her students as much as possible – during classes, in the hallways, and at after-school events. During my observations, Candie constantly talked with students during her lessons, and any time we spent in the hallways or outdoor spaces, she discussed school events with students. For example, Candie knew about several after-school programs that had upcoming events, and would ask students about their preparations. During my

observations, many students were excited about the Green Club's "Trash-ion Show" – where students created clothing and accessories out of recyclable materials, and the Drama Club was holding auditions for a spring performance. These seemingly trivial interactions actually led to students being more willing to share other parts of their lives with Candie, so she viewed this as a critical step in getting to know community dynamics. She said, "It might seem silly to talk to the students about Drama Club, but if they know that I care about that little stuff, then maybe they'll know that I care on a larger scale, too" (Candie, Interview #5). Candie also listened carefully to the things that students shared with her during classes to get a better sense of what their lives outside of school were like. Candie shared,

My students are pretty open, especially the younger ones. I think some kids will tell me things that maybe they wouldn't in the suburbs. A second grader was excited the other day because her dad might be out of jail in time for her birthday. Maybe that's not socially acceptable in the suburbs, but I think it's healthy and important for them to share those kinds of things and to talk about it, because it's hard. (Candie, Interview #2)

Candie also modified how she got to know her students through activities, because her original activities were designed more for White, middle-class students. For example, Candie shared an example of an activity that she used as a means of getting to know about students, which backfired the first time she incorporated it into her classes at Chestnut. She said,

I'll do a warm-up game where I'll have the kids run or skip from the baseline based on certain things. Like I'll say 'run if you have a cat or a dog' or 'skip if you like pepperoni on your pizza.' I've consciously thought about that because I tried something like 'run if you live in a house' or 'run if you have a swing set in your backyard' when I first started, and only two kids ran. I felt bad, I really learned from that. I just took for granted that my students lived in neighborhoods like I did. So I'm much more general about it when I do that activity. (Candie, Interview #5)

Instead of including activities such as these, Candie tried to include more one-on-one time with students during her classes. If students were practicing a particular skill in small groups or

independently, she used this time to visit with students and get to know more about them. She said,

Early in the year when we're practicing a lot of skills, like dribbling for instance, I'll move around the class and talk with kids and give them feedback. Really, I'm more interested in how they're doing and learning about what's going on in their lives that might affect their school experience. That really comes in handy when I get information from a teacher about a kid having a tough day in class – maybe their behavior has something to do with what's going on at home. (Candie, Interview #6)

Another element of success that Candie encountered because of the early realization of her own Whiteness was her consideration of what type of content would be most relevant to her students' cultural templates for physical activity. After learning that "Black kids don't play lacrosse," Candie consciously attempted to include more activities in her curriculum that her students participated in outside of school. Candie tried to include more basketball in her curriculum, because students often requested the activity, and she knew that many students played after school or with their families. She said, "Our gym isn't really ideal for playing basketball games, but I'll do different skills and incorporate basketball into stations so that the kids are at least getting more opportunities to participate" (Candie, Interview #7). Additionally, Candie contacted a bowling company who promoted an in-school bowling program, and included this in her curriculum as well. After learning that many students went with their families and some students had parents who bowled in weekly leagues, Candie took the bowling unit one step further and created an after-school bowling club. She coordinated with the bowling alley in the Chestnut community and arranged for students and their families (if they were able to attend) to bowl twice a week from January to March (Candie, Field Note #4). The response to this opportunity was tremendous, and allowed Candie to see the importance of including culturally relevant activities in her curriculum.

Candie admitted that not all of the content she included was directly aligned with what her urban students may have immediate access to in their communities. However, she did not avoid content because the students had never experienced it, either. She said,

I try not to shy away from any content, and I would never *not* include something because the kids had never done it before. But if it's not something that they'll do outside of school, then I won't spend a lot of time on it. I don't expect the kids to change or act a certain way, but how will they know if they don't like something if they've never tried it? So with the ski trip, I realize now that maybe that's not something that students will do a lot locally, but the program has grown since my first year, and maybe if I advertise the free ski weekends at the state parks, kids might ask their parents to go. I make sure that I balance those kinds of activities with plenty of content that I know is relevant, things they might already do with their families. You should always consider the kids' interests, not always work from your own agenda. I'm all for introducing new things, but if you're not including what they like, too, then you won't have much success. (Candie, Interview #8)

One such example of content that she was unsure about was a rock climbing demonstration from the same company that promoted the in-school bowling program. She agreed to have a company representative come in and talk to students about rock climbing, show the students the different equipment needed for belaying (such as ropes and carabineers), and learn how to tie some of the different knots used in rock climbing. After the demonstration, Candie had mixed feelings about the value of this type of content at Chestnut. She said,

The rock climbing stuff we did this morning was fun, but is it really a lifetime activity for the students I serve? It could be if I keep going with it and plan a trip to the one of the rock climbing gyms nearby, or hosted a family night there to get parents involved. But if I never mention it again, it's probably not likely that any of my students will ever go rock climbing on their own time. (Candie, Interview #9)

Candie's realization of her own Whiteness was a catalyst to her critically examining her previous teaching practices. She identified that her own cultural template was very different from the cultural template of her students, and the community dynamics the students encountered had significant bearing on the types of physical activity they enjoyed. By working to understand community dynamics affecting her students and reflecting on the content she included in her

curriculum, Candie decreased the cultural distance between her personal biography and the cultural templates of her students.

*Element 2: Desire to become an insider.* A second element that had an impact on Candie's early career as an urban physical educator was her desire to become an insider within the Chestnut community. As an insider, Candie would have detailed knowledge of students' cultural contexts, have an established rapport with students and their families, and establish a level of trust with Chestnut community members. Within her first few months as a teacher at Chestnut Academy, Candie started to realize the distrusting attitudes that many students and families exhibited towards her because of differing cultural contexts. Candie also identified that the transience of both students and teachers in this urban community where she taught led to feelings of distrust and slower "buy-in" from students and their families at Chestnut Academy. Determined to connect with her students in a meaningful way, Candie decided to work toward becoming an insider with her students, their families, and the other faculty members at Chestnut Academy. She accomplished this by establishing relationships with students, families, and other teachers, and getting involved with after-school programs.

As discussed previously, Candie was surprised to learn how different she was from her students, and worked to learn about the community dynamics within the Chestnut community. Along with learning about the community dynamics from her students, Candie also began forming relationships with students, families, and teachers to obtain insider status. Candie shared that one of the parent volunteers who worked in the lunchroom was vital to her gaining an understanding of community dynamics in the Chestnut community, and this relationship helped Candie start to achieve insider status. Candie shared,

One of the parents was just so helpful to me. She had two girls that went here, and I'd talk to her almost every day during lunch. We really got close, and we started spending

time together away from school, too. The family would come out to my house and cat-sit for me when I was out of town, and I would leave gifts for the girls and then leave a little bit of gas money for them, too. I helped the girls apply for scholarships for Girl Scout camp a few summers. We went my parents' house to swim after they had taken swim lessons, and we took them out on my brother-in-law's boat to go tubing one summer, too. I just tried to get to know them and it really helped me in my understanding of the girls and my other students. (Candie, Interview #2)

Candie realized that getting to know her students and their families was a powerful strategy for earning the trust of the Chestnut community and also learning about how she could connect with students in more meaningful ways. She said,

I just opened myself up to the families and the students right away; I never really tried to put up any boundaries between us. I respect them, and now they respect me, and I think that's just the way my personality is...I'm just open, I'm not afraid. I'm sure a lot of teachers are just afraid, and just don't know. (Candie, Interview #6)

Chestnut Academy did not offer bus transportation to students, so parents and other caregivers had to come into the school to pick up their students at the end of the day. Rather than staying in her office to wrap up her day's activities, Candie chose to stand near the main hallway to greet parents and caregivers during dismissal, and to get to know the families during this part of the day (Candie, Field Note #2). By greeting parents and families this way, she demonstrated that she was eager to be a part of the school community, and even met some of her "future students" (younger siblings of her current students) prior to their formal enrollment at Chestnut.

Candie also learned about the community dynamics by asking questions and forming relationships with other staff members who had more knowledge of the urban community. When she was first hired, the teaching staff at Chestnut was made up of mostly White, middle-class individuals with backgrounds closer to Candie's than the urban students that attended Chestnut (Candie, Field Note #3). After that first year, however, the administration at Chestnut Academy put forth great effort to hire more African American teachers, since the majority of the student population was also African American. Candie forged a friendship with a younger, African

American kindergarten teacher, Mrs. D., who was hired during Candie's second year. Candie claimed that she and Mrs. D. grew very close over the years. The two often ate lunch together, sat together at staff meetings, and tried to get together outside of school at least once a month (Candie, Field Note #7). This friendship also allowed Candie to obtain insider status, because she was able to talk with Mrs. D. about her concerns, when she needed advice about how to deal with particular student behavioral problems, or about other school-related issues. She said,

I'm really comfortable with Mrs. D., I'll ask her questions if I'm unsure about things, whether I'm joking around or if I really need to understand something. Her mom is a paraprofessional in another classroom, too. I'll always talk to her when she brings a class out to me, and she brings me little treats all the time. I can always ask her questions if I have them, too. (Candie, Interview #2)

Candie was also cognizant of where she sat during staff meetings and other school-wide functions. She noted that at most meetings, White staff members all sat together, and likewise, all of the African American staff members sat together. Candie purposely sat with Mrs. D. or other African American teachers she was close with to demonstrate that she was invested in the school. She said,

It used to be pretty bad, the segregation of the staff. I'm very precise about where I sit at staff meetings, because the segregation can create some tension among staff members. I've even had teachers comment and say to me, you know, 'thanks for diversifying our table' or whatever. I mean, we all work together for the kids, and we can all learn from one another, there's no need for me to sit just with the White teachers, and I think that shows the Black teachers that I'm not taking sides and I'm not closed-minded. (Candie, Interview #4)

Getting to know several teachers on the staff and spending time with other teachers helped Candie to gain a better understanding of the cultural templates of some of the African American community members. Having allies within the teaching staff to whom she could turn with concerns and questions also allowed Candie to gain a better understanding of the community dynamics affecting Chestnut Academy students. Candie realized that obtaining insider status was

an important step to take in an urban school, especially since her students had drastically different cultural templates than her own. She said,

If you're going to succeed in an urban school, you can't think of yourself as an outsider. You have to dive in and think of yourself as part of the community, the school community. You have to learn as much as you can and ask questions, but understand that things are going to be different – it's not different bad, it's just different. (Candie, Interview #8)

A third way that Candie established insider status with the Chestnut community was by immediately getting involved in after-school activities and finding ways to get to know students and families outside of school time. During her first two years at Chestnut, Candie implemented several after-school activities, organized the ski trip for the fifth grade class, ordered and sold Chestnut Academy “spirit wear” (t-shirts and sweatshirts with the Chestnut Academy logo on them), started a recycling initiative at the school, wrote a grant for a nature trail behind the school that could serve as an outdoor learning resource, organized a community health fair for families, and launched several fundraisers for community service projects, after-school programs, and school improvement initiatives (Candie, Field Note #3). All of this extra-curricular involvement made Candie extremely visible to both the students and the families of the Chestnut community, and created opportunities to get to know students, siblings, parents and caregivers outside of regular school hours. During the extracurricular activities, Candie was able to learn more about students and families because she was not as concerned with her instructional duties that occupied her time during PE classes. She invested her own time into learning about Chestnut students and families after school, and as a result, obtained insider status with the Chestnut community.

Prompted by feeling that her students and their families had completely different cultural templates and harbored feelings of distrust, Candie worked to obtain insider status by building



relationships and staying involved beyond the school day with teachers, students, and families of Chestnut. These methods of obtaining insider status with the urban students and families of Chestnut Academy led to many successes during Candie's induction years.

*Successes resulting from the desire to become an insider.* Candie's efforts to become an insider with the students and families in the Chestnut community resulted in several successes that improved the relationships she had with her students and their families, and ultimately improved her effectiveness as an urban physical educator.

By getting to know students and families, Candie started to earn the trust of parents and other caregivers. This proved to be a success because of the buy-in that parents demonstrated when Candie promoted programs. For example, although her first attempt at taking the fifth grade classes on a cross-country skiing trip was poorly attended, by the third or fourth year of continuing to organize the trip, all of the students attended because the parents and other caregivers knew that Candie was a trusted teacher (Candie, Field Note #5). Participation in her after-school cross-country program also improved over the years as students and families started getting to know Candie and considered her as a part of the school community. Additionally, Candie's efforts meant that the parent-teacher association (PTA) was more likely to grant Candie's requests for additional funding for field trips or equipment because of her investment in the school (Candie, Field Note #7). Finally, because Candie got to know so many students and families at Chestnut, she never had any trouble securing parent volunteers for field trips, after-school activities, or other events requiring adult supervision. Candie reflected,

I get such a reward from being in the school in general, sharing experiences with kids and seeing them grow. Like, a huge reward was having 52 kids come down to the Turkey Trot this year, and having parents come out on Wednesdays to run with their kids. Or kids coming to the New Year's Eve run on their own time and signing up on their own. Those are the rewards I feel – those are the extras that keep me coming back, even when the administration turns over like it has, the relationships I've built mean more to me than

the frustration that the school sometimes causes. Being a teacher gives me the chance to be here and get to know the kids, and the relationships that I build are my reward. I've built trust with this community, the parents trust me, and that's huge. I've had parents trust me to take their kids up to Girl Scout camp, and the next year, I gave them the information to get them scholarships to go again, but the parents only want them to go with me. That means something to me. Having parents trust me to take the kids skiing, that's come from years of being here and talking to parents and investing in the school and the community. (Candie, Interview #9)

Candie's status as an insider with the Chestnut community meant that she was able to see beyond the cultural differences between her students and her own cultural template. Since Candie had invested so much time in getting to know students and families, she often forgot that there were any cultural differences between herself and her students. For example, Candie shared an instance where she realized she was the only White person at a school function. She said,

It's funny, sometimes it will just hit me that I'm literally the *only* White person around. You know, for bowling club, we go to a local bowling alley with some parent volunteers, Since we're not using the entire bowling alley, there are several lanes with open community bowling going on at the same time. I was just looking around one afternoon and noticed that I was the only White person in the entire building. It's just funny because I don't even realize it. I'm just with my students and we're just doing a fun activity. I know it sounds cheesy, but I don't even realize that I'm White and my students are Black, because I just know them and understand them. I've accepted them, they've accepted me. And there are so many cases where I'll see that now, at school fundraisers or other community events. (Candie, Interview #11)

Candie's position within the Chestnut community was not something that was automatically granted when she began teaching. The time spent to develop relationships and get to know her students took several years of involvement both during school hours and at after school events. However, securing herself as a member of the community made students and families trust her more than they would have if she simply left school after her last class.

Candie's status as an insider at Chestnut Academy also meant that she was a more effective teacher because she appreciated and respected the cultural differences she encountered with her students. By truly understanding her students – something that could only be achieved

by becoming an insider within the community – she was empathetic towards students’ circumstances and could make better teaching decisions based on what she knew about them. For example, Candie did her best to make sure that students could participate in PE classes, regardless of the type of shoes they wore to school. She said, “I know that some kids can’t afford gym shoes, so I really don’t push it. As long as they’re not wearing something that could slip off, then they can play” (Candie, Interview #3). Candie’s insider status meant that she knew whether students did not have gym shoes to wear because the family could not afford them, or if the student had simply forgotten their shoes at home. Rather than making a student feel bad about their circumstances, Candie did not have a steadfast policy about participating in gym shoes. Candie kept a few pairs of shoes that students could borrow during class if their shoes were not safe for participation (Candie, Field Note #7). Candie felt that it was more important to understand a student’s individual circumstances than to punish that student for something they had little control over by having them sit out of class. Additionally, not having a strict gym shoe policy meant that in most classes, all students were participating in the activity that Candie had planned, which then decreased the amount of time she had to spend monitoring students sitting out.

Candie’s genuine willingness to get to know her students and their families, to obtain insider status in the community where she taught, and to establish trust with parents and families were very powerful strategies which allowed her to overcome the cultural distance created by differing cultural templates, the transience of students and teachers in urban communities and schools, and the distrust that resulted from this transience.

*Element 3: Urban-specific professional development.* A third element of Candie’s induction that affected her early career as an urban physical educator was the professional

development opportunities provided by Chestnut Academy. When she was first hired, Candie shared that almost all of the teachers were young, newly certified, White females who were unfamiliar with the context of urban schools. Candie's principal at the time, a middle-aged African American woman, considered how her new teaching force may be unprepared for teaching students who were culturally very different. Therefore, the principal started incorporating guest speakers and presentations into staff meetings to help the young teachers learn more about urban school contexts. This trend continued, despite the frequent turnover of school principals. Each administrator implemented specific professional development opportunities for the teachers depending on what the current needs of the school seemed to be. Candie recalled several helpful professional development sessions throughout her tenure as a teacher at Chestnut Academy. Topics included child abuse, homelessness, parenting styles in urban communities, teaching children who live in poverty, behavior management with students in urban schools, and other academic topics that applied specifically to the urban students Candie taught. She said,

We had Child Protective Services come in and talk to us, and they gear it towards the kids that we're serving. Like when they came in, they talked to us about discipline and knowing what was child abuse and what wasn't. A kid getting hit with a 'switch' might be considered child abuse, but it's not necessarily. So they talk to us about what to look for and when to draw the line. And that's happened in my class before, where a parent might come in and need to see one of my students, and they take them to the restroom to give them a 'whoopin' because of their behavior or something. (Candie, Interview #4)

During the time of this study, this particular community was experiencing extreme economic hardships, and the unemployment rate in this state and metropolitan area was one of the highest in the entire country. Professional development regarding children living in poverty was also a very timely topic. Candie shared,

We had some presenters from the county homeless liaison recently. We have a few kids that are living in shelters, and we hired drivers to pick them up and bring them to school.

We provide breakfast and snack for them, and they qualify for free lunch, and I'm sure the students we know of right now won't be the only ones that use this service, especially in this economy. (Candie, Interview #2)

Since the majority of the teachers at Chestnut Academy came from very similar backgrounds to Candie, especially when the school first opened, teachers were grateful and eager to learn about the diverse cultural contexts where the students lived. As a member of the School Improvement Plan Committee, Candie was involved in evaluating the progress of the school in meeting the needs of the students. She shared that each year the committee felt that the staff could improve in their understanding of diversity. She said,

We rate ourselves every year, and we still mark ourselves as 'needs improvement' in the diversity area, because there are still things that we can improve on when it comes to working with our students. Teachers are always talking about what they can do to relate better with students, and how different they are from most of the teaching staff. (Candie, Interview #2)

The Chestnut Academy administration was unique in their recognition of the cultural disconnect between a majority of the teaching staff and the population of students they served. By providing professional development specific to the needs of urban students, Candie (and the rest of the teaching staff) had the opportunity to encounter several successes during the early years of her career as an urban physical educator.

*Successes resulting from urban-specific professional development.* Candie was adamant that the urban-specific professional development that she received as a young teacher at Chestnut Academy was an enormous factor in her success as an early career teacher without any rich understanding of urban environments and students. These professional development sessions provided a more informal education about the realities that urban students face outside of school, and were provided by staff members and community partners with more experience in urban communities than Candie and other novice teachers. Candie felt that the professional

development provided at Chestnut allowed her to obtain a realistic understanding of her students. She said,

That first year I was here, our principal was just very honest with us [White teachers] about things. She would tell us that students were going to come in with all sorts of issues, but we had to still have high expectations for our students. I remember her telling us not to feel sorry for the kids, but just to be empathetic about what was going on. She told us about not saying ‘those kids’ or ‘those people’ when we referred to our students and families because it was really offensive. She was just really up front with us about what we were going to run in to. She was the best ‘education’ I could have received as a new teacher. Because it was real – we were already here in the school, teaching the kids, trying to figure out what worked. (Candie, Interview #4)

The professional development that Candie received as part of her induction at Chestnut Academy led her to understand many of the community dynamics that had an impact on students’ educational pursuits that she may not have learned on her own. This new knowledge allowed her to bridge the cultural distance between her personal biography and the cultural templates of the students she taught.

One of the successes that resulted from Candie’s urban-specific professional development was her appreciation and respect for urban communication and slang. Prior to her employment at Chestnut Academy, Candie had limited exposure to urban students and schools, and was unaware of the slang and pop culture references that were a major part of urban communication. Candie shared,

I had a lot to learn when I first started here. Kids were using slang terms and reacting to me in weird ways when I would say certain things. During one of our staff meetings, our principal talked a little bit about slang and how a lot of urban parents talk to their kids – you know, they’re very firm. But with the slang, I had a kid fall down outside and scrape up his knee. If that happened in my family, we would call that a ‘boo-boo.’ Well, a lot of my students say ‘boo-boo’ when they have to, you know, go ‘number two.’ My students all reacted like I had said a swear word when I said that. And thank goodness one of the other teachers told me what having to ‘use it’ meant – that’s slang for having to use the bathroom. (Candie, Interview #4)

However, after learning from other teachers and her principal more about the cultural differences in how her urban students communicated, Candie was able to avoid terms that caused students to react in classes, and learned more effective ways to give directions in her classes. This informal education about the ways that students communicated with their peers and their families was a small amount of information that had a large impact on Candie's ability to connect with her students.

Another success that resulted from the urban-specific professional development that Candie received as a new teacher was her knowledge of students' lives outside of school. By learning about the stresses and challenges that many students faced outside of the school day (poverty and homelessness, crime and safety concerns in this urban neighborhood, and the lure of drugs and gang culture), Candie decided to eliminate certain elements of her curriculum to improve the overall health and well-being of her students. For example, after learning of the stressful lives that many students had outside of school, she decided that competition had no place in her curriculum. She said,

I want the kids to experience some success here, so much is thrown at them everywhere else, this doesn't need to be another source of stress. If that means I alter the activities we do to make that happen, like not keeping score or whatever, then I'm okay with that. (Candie, Interview #6)

Candie chose to promote an inclusive environment and avoided most competitive activities in her classes. She adamantly believed in avoiding activities where students were put on display, could possibly experience domination or humiliation, and have other negative experiences that might cause the student to feel additional stress or want to avoid the activity altogether in the future. She commented,

I think at this age, if a kid wants to be involved in competitive sports, they can do that outside of school, and I usually pass along that information to the kids when I get it. The local Police Athletic League has a few programs that they advertise with us that are pretty

inexpensive, if not free for the kids, so I'll make sure that information is available for the kids that *want* that type of opportunity. I just don't think the competition is necessary at this level. The kids have plenty of opportunities to participate, and I'll tell them they don't have to keep score, or they'll ask me to keep score and it will always end in a tie! The kids shouldn't have to feel bad about themselves in here – there's plenty of places that it can happen in their lives. There's already so much pressure on my kids to perform on all of these standardized tests they take, and they've already got them switching classes in third grade. So my gym needs to just be a place where those pressures and things don't interfere. (Candie, Interview #3)

Eliminating competition in Candie's classes translated into success because most students participated in classes with vigor and enthusiasm, rather than being concerned about the comments of their peers or the threat of losing (Candie, Field Note #4, 7, 8). Additionally, Candie's classroom management improved because she did not have to diffuse arguments and outbursts from students who were upset about losing a game or frustrated about not having the skills to be competitive with classmates. Candie said,

I used to include more competition, but so many of my kids react in such negative ways, I just don't see the need to have competitive activities any more. Without the competition when we're playing games or whatever, I don't have nearly as many arguments or management issues. It's given me a chance to really teach sportsmanship, and the kids take their own initiative to give each other a high five after an activity or whatever. I really think it's made a difference. (Candie, Interview #11)

The urban-specific professional development that Candie received during her induction allowed her to identify specific areas of cultural distance between her own cultural template and the community dynamics that had an impact on her students. Identifying these areas of cultural distance allowed Candie to develop specific strategies to bridge the distance, and be a more effective teacher at Chestnut Academy.

## **Conclusion**

Alexis, Brad and Candie encountered varying elements within their induction years that had direct effects on their teaching and development as urban physical educators. Each of the teachers encountered elements that created struggles at their respective schools; however, Candie



was the only teacher who encountered success based on her induction experiences. The similarities and differences in the teachers' induction years will be analyzed in the discussion chapter, where I will also convey what these differences in induction experiences mean in terms of future research regarding teacher education and preparation for urban schools.

## **CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to examine early career physical educators' perspectives on learning to teach in urban schools. Occupational socialization (Lawson, 1983a, 1983b) and culturally relevant physical education (CRPE; Flory & McCaughtry, 2011) were the main theoretical frameworks guiding this research. In this chapter, I will discuss how the findings from the current study connect with the existing research within both of these theories. Additionally, I will provide recommendations for what teacher education programs and school districts can do to better prepare and support PE teachers based on the findings of the study. Finally, I will discuss future directions for research.

### **Connecting the Findings to Relevant Literature**

In this section, I will discuss how the findings from the study connect with literature from occupational socialization research. All three teachers in this study had unique experiences in each phase of their occupational socialization (pre-professional socialization, professional socialization, and induction) that had an impact on their success or struggle as urban physical educators. This section is organized by the three phases of occupational socialization, and I will connect each of the findings from the study to relevant literature.

### **Findings from Pre-Professional Socialization**

Each teacher in this study had distinct pre-professional socialization experiences that later had an impact on their early careers as physical educators in urban schools. By study design, all three teachers grew up in mostly White, middle-class communities; therefore, all three teachers had extremely different backgrounds, and thus, cultural templates, than most of their urban

students. In this section, I will discuss the major findings of the participants' pre-professional socialization experiences as they relate to the literature.

*The influence of a middle-class upbringing.* As outlined in Chapter 4, growing up in a middle-class community provided both Brad and Alexis with many opportunities to enjoy organized and unorganized sports. Alexis recalled days spent playing with her brother and friends in the safety of her neighborhood, and enjoyed playing soccer and basketball and riding her bike in her suburban community. Brad shared that he spent most of his time after school playing in a local park across the street from his house, and was a member of several teams within community recreation programs and interscholastic athletics. Both of these teachers grew up in communities where they had regular, safe access to large spaces to participate in team sports, had families who could afford the additional expenses incurred by the equipment and registration fees necessary to participate in team sports, and lived in areas where community recreation programs were sustained and supported by local residents. Alexis and Brad also attended schools where they had many options for participating in organized team sports. These participants described their middle-class upbringing as "typical" and influenced them to eventually pursue a career in physical education.

Alexis and Brad's enjoyment of and participation in team sports throughout their upbringing resulted in them implementing a team sports curriculum for their students as new physical educators. However, teaching mainly team sports in these urban schools resulted in several struggles because the urban students that Alexis and Brad taught did not live in communities with well-funded recreation programs, in neighborhoods where playing outside was safe, or in families with ample resources to pay for extracurricular activities such as sports. Alexis' students demonstrated their rejection of her team sports curriculum by choosing other

activities (such as jumping rope and playing on the playground equipment) during free choice time, while Brad's students demonstrated their rejection of team sports by frequently getting off task and complaining that they did not enjoy the particular sport during lessons.

This finding supports prior research in both occupational socialization research as well as cultural relevance literature. First, Brad and Alexis' insistence on teaching a team sports curriculum despite their students' outright rejection of such activities affirms the dominance of the subjective warrant found in previous research. Lawson and colleagues (1983a; Dewar & Lawson, 1984) identified that the years prospective teachers spent playing sports and in PE classes have a tremendous influence on how physical educators eventually teach. Templin, Woodford, and Mulling (1982) noted the attachment to sport and physical activity of most PE teachers. Rovegno (1993) pointed out that teachers' personal histories are deep and meaningful to the individual, and that teachers will often reject ideas (i.e., curricular approaches, content, etc.) that contradict a teacher's personal history. In later research, Rovegno (1994) described the "zone of curricular safety" that limits the ways that teachers are willing to teach. This zone exists in all contexts because the culture of the school, community, administrators, and students influences how teachers teach. She also described the ways that one teacher's conception of pedagogical content knowledge (i.e., his own experiences with sport and coaching) allowed him to justify his curricular decisions (such as 12-on-12 games of volleyball for a class of third graders), regardless of how off-target these curricular decisions seemed (Rovegno, 1995). Finally, Lortie (1975) found that teachers' biographies and experiences prior to formal teacher education were more important and influential than teacher education programs. Brad and Alexis' determination to teach team sports to their students only authenticates the notion that

newer PE teachers teach what they know (Rovegno, 1993b), and in this case, what Brad and Alexis knew was team sport content.

Second, Brad and Alexis' decision to teach team sports in light of their students' rejection of these activities confirms research in cultural relevance literature that maintains the cultural value of all content. Flory and McCaughtry (2011) found that students in urban communities were overwhelmingly uninterested in many of the activities their PE teachers taught because they had very little access to these sports outside of school or in their neighborhoods. McCaughtry et al. (2006) suggested that many urban teachers felt conflicted about providing locally relevant activities for students in urban neighborhoods. The teachers in that study, however, were more diverse and much more experienced than the teachers in the current study, and therefore more aware and understanding of the challenges their students faced outside of school. Ennis' (1995, 1996, 2000) extensive research on contemporary, sport-based PE outlined that many students across the U.S. do not find sports interesting or meaningful because of the negative impact they have on girls' identity development and the aggression and violence that often results when boys are allowed to dominate games. In urban environments especially, Cothran and Ennis (1999) found that students regularly disengaged from content that they did not believe was relevant to their life experiences. Rovegno (1998) noted the importance of including content that was meaningful and had a purpose, rather than just filling lessons with activities. Alexis and Brad's assumption that teaching physical education meant teaching sports was linked more to their previous experiences with and enjoyment of sports, rather than understanding the interests of their students and identification of the access they had to particular activities outside of school.

*Negative PE experiences.* Alexis shared that she had extremely negative experiences in school PE due to a teacher who made her very uncomfortable. Unlike most of the girls in her

classes, Alexis was athletic and enjoyed participating in class activities. Conversely, the other girls in Alexis' classes preferred to watch the activities and get approval from the PE teacher by being docile and passive. Alexis' PE teacher encouraged this type of behavior among the female students, so when Alexis participated in class activities, the teacher would point out Alexis' mistakes and make an example out of her to other students. Alexis did not enjoy school PE, and wanted to pursue a career as a PE teacher so that other students would not feel the same way.

These harmful experiences as a student meant that Alexis did not have a strong teacher role model for herself subsequently when she became a physical educator. Since her own youth PE teacher did not have a very caring demeanor, Alexis did not know how to demonstrate caring behaviors in her own PE classes. Instead, Alexis' desire to teach in ways that were opposite of the methods her youth PE teacher used meant that she became very lenient with students. Alexis allowed students to opt out of activities, especially if the student was concerned about being ridiculed by peers. Rather than creating a caring classroom climate that prevented students from feeling uncomfortable, she simply allowed students to monitor their own participation. Alexis never questioned students' reasons for not participating in certain activities, because she felt that students would participate when they felt confident enough to do so. As a result, she missed several opportunities to get to know her students on a deeper level. Alexis' leniency prevented her from developing meaningful relationships with students, and her effectiveness as a teacher suffered.

Alexis' difficulty in relating to her students as a consequence of negative experiences in PE supports earlier occupational socialization research identifying the importance of the apprenticeship of observation. Schempp and colleagues (Schempp, 1989; Schempp & Graber, 1992) noted that the experiences of students in their own school experiences have the most

profound effect on learning to teach. These experiences exert a continual influence over how new teachers eventually teach. Therefore, Alexis' reflections on her own PE experiences manipulated her current teaching practices some twenty years after they occurred. Additionally, Alexis' desire to improve PE because of her negative experiences confirms Dewar and Lawson's (1984) work that found when the influence of a teacher or coach is negative, PE recruits often enter the field to foster change.

Alexis' negative experiences in PE substantiate research regarding the importance of meaningful relationships, especially when teaching in urban contexts. Lee and Ravizza (2008) found that having a caring role model facilitated teachers enacting caring behaviors in PE. Additionally, these researchers identified that student teachers struggled to maintain a balance between providing both care and discipline while teaching PE. Alexis interpreted her lenient classroom management as a way of demonstrating to her students that she cared about their well-being. However, Ware (2006) described "warm demander" pedagogy, which was especially successful with students of color. Warm demanders express high expectations, establish caring and personal relationships with students, and demonstrate caring by maintaining consistent discipline. Furthermore, warm demanders can teach the whole child successfully through their meaningful relationships with students. Therefore, Alexis' wavering in class policies and lenient expectations did not promote students to succeed in her class.

*Exposure to diversity.* Two of the teachers in this study had some exposure to diverse cultures throughout their pre-professional socialization. These early experiences shaped how the teachers struggled or succeeded as early career teachers in urban schools. Alexis had early exposure to other cultures through her involvement in a travel basketball league. While playing in other parts of the state and across the country, Alexis began to learn about the cultural

differences existing outside of her suburban community. Additionally, Alexis had an African American teammate who provided first-hand examples of the cultural differences that existed between their cultural templates. Candie had considerably more experiences with individuals from diverse backgrounds, ranging from an after-school program for urban middle school students, serving as a camp counselor with individuals from all over the world, and studying abroad in South Africa.

As a result of their early experiences with diverse populations, both Alexis and Candie had some knowledge of urban contexts and the potential cultural differences they eventually encountered as new teachers in urban schools. Alexis' experiences with the travel basketball league allowed her to start observing the conditions in many urban locations, and she also learned about slang and musical styles (i.e., hip hop and rap) valued in many urban communities. However, Alexis' knowledge of urban contexts from her pre-professional experiences was not rich enough to make immediate or in-depth connections with the students she encountered at Achiever. Since Alexis' experiences with diverse populations were voyeuristic in nature, she was unable to uncover the complex dynamics of urban contexts. Even though Alexis had some experience in urban environments, she never spent much time immersed in the environment or as a member of an urban community. So, when Alexis began teaching at Achiever, she experienced culture shock because she was unfamiliar with many aspects of urban communities, such as communication patterns, living conditions, family dynamics, and even students' names. The extensive differences in cultural templates between Alexis and her students created great cultural distance. Her limited understanding of what it was like to be a resident in a diverse, urban community made it extremely difficult for Alexis to make genuine connections with students and be as effective as she would have desired. For Candie, her experience in gradually more diverse



contexts prior to becoming a teacher decreased the culture shock that she encountered at Chestnut Academy. Candie was empathetic towards students' community dynamics and the challenges they faced outside of school with the help of her experiences with diversity. However, Candie did not consider these cultural differences when selecting content for her urban students. Rather, she selected content based on her own cultural values and experiences, and was surprised when she discovered that her students rejected the activities she chose.

The teachers' struggles to effectively connect with their students, despite having some exposure to diversity before entering teacher education programs relates to prior research by Flory and McCaughtry (2011) who determined that providing effective, culturally relevant instruction in PE required teachers to deeply understand community dynamics, know how community dynamics affected educational processes, and then implement strategies to reflect that cultural knowledge. Similarly, Marquez-Zenkov, Harmon, van Lier and Marquez-Zenkov (2007) called for teachers to understand more about the out-of-school lives of urban students in order to increase students' commitment to school. They wrote,

We also cannot start to engage youths with school until teachers *see* and have a legitimate understanding of the conditions of these students' lives, how these relate to formal education, and students' perspectives on school, its purposes, and teachers' efforts. (p. 414)

Howard (2001) also made reference to the need for teachers to understand community dynamics, but came to this conclusion via research with students. Students in this study preferred teachers who made school seem comfortable and more like their home contexts, suggesting the importance of teachers' immersion in the "various facets of the day-to-day environment that students experience" (Howard, 2001, p. 147). Alexis' and Candie's limited knowledge of the community dynamics functioning in these urban school communities curbed their effectiveness with students as early career physical educators.

*Family views of culture.* Alexis' and Brad's pre-professional socialization experiences included the influence of their respective family values regarding culture. In Alexis' case, her family was somewhat progressive, in the sense that her parents and grandparents promoted acceptance of individuals regardless of difference, and had a 'color blind' approach to diversity. On the other hand, Brad grew up in a family with little understanding or tolerance for cultural differences. Therefore, Brad was surrounded by racist behaviors and statements within his community as a youth. These family influences had profound effects on the teachers' pedagogies in urban schools. Since Alexis' upbringing encouraged her to learn more about an individual before making a character judgment, she was able to obtain partial insider status among the students and families of the Achiever community when she applied this philosophy to her teaching. In Brad's case, although he eventually recognized his parents' racist views as wrong, he did not believe that he could be successful teaching diverse students in urban schools because of the vast cultural differences, and felt there was no time to even get to know students beyond the time he saw them every week. Therefore, Brad's interactions with students were not genuine, and he did not invest much time in trying to develop meaningful relationships with them.

Alexis' and Brad's family values regarding culture and cultural difference had specific implications for their teaching practices in urban schools, but in very different ways. Both teachers' practices, however, highlighted previous work by researchers who found that successful teachers of urban students build meaningful relationships with students and understand the multifaceted dimensions of a student's life. For example, Ennis and McCauley (2002) worked with several successful urban teachers to determine the strategies used to establish caring and trusting relationships with students who were disengaged from school. One of these strategies was to interact one-on-one with students who needed the most support.

Similarly, other research with “accomplished” urban teachers revealed how personal relationships with students in urban schools allows marginalized students to be more successful in the classroom and encourages teachers to use teaching methods that are more culturally congruent (Abbate-Vaughn, Frechon & Wright, 2010). Other research in both general education (Bondy et al., 2007; Gay, 2000; Ware, 2006) and PE (Ennis, 1999; Flory & McCaughtry, 2011) draws attention to the need to develop relationships with students in order to be most effective. Alexis was able to develop somewhat trivial relationships with her students based on her color blind approach to cultural difference. Brad put very little effort into developing relationships with his students because he found the task overwhelming.

*Appreciation of cooperative activities.* Candie’s experiences as a camp counselor throughout her pre-professional socialization allowed her to participate in and garner an appreciation of cooperative activities over more competitive activities. She shared that watching campers thrive in an environment where they could enjoy inclusive participation in physical activity rather than be excluded from competitive activities encouraged her to implement this type of curriculum in her gym at Chestnut Academy. Candie said that she would have implemented this type of curriculum regardless of where she taught, however, she felt that the additional stresses that her urban students faced outside of school (i.e., poverty, crime, safety concerns) made a peaceful and cooperative environment in the gym a necessity.

There have been several studies that outline the positive effects of adventure education, cooperative learning, and other team building activities when incorporated in PE, such as increased self-esteem, self-efficacy, and self-confidence (Dyson, 1996, 2001, 2002; Dyson, Griffin & Hastie, 2004; McKenzie, 2003; Priest, 1996). Other research has emphasized the social, emotional, intellectual and physical development of students after participating in

adventure education and cooperative activities (Dyson & O'Sullivan, 1998; Grenier, Dyson & Yeaton, 2005). Adventure education and experiential learning opportunities have been shown to be especially effective in improving the self-concept of inmates and those in rehabilitation programs (Gillis, Gass & Russell, 2008; Leberman, 2007; Scholte & van der Ploeg, 2006). Despite the positive outcomes in the general PE literature and in other specific populations, no research has specifically addressed the effects of using an adventure-based curriculum in urban school contexts.

### **Findings from Professional Socialization**

Alexis, Brad, and Candie attended universities with different missions, values, and philosophies regarding PETE. The coursework and field experiences which the study participants encountered at their respective universities also had an influence on how they were prepared as teachers. Their professional socialization experiences all led to various successes and struggles when Alexis, Brad, and Candie began teaching PE in urban schools. In this section, I will discuss the major findings from the professional socialization phase of occupational socialization and relate it to significant research.

*Lack of diversity in PETE programs.* Two of the three teachers in this study expressed that their PETE experience lacked diversity in several facets of the program. This was noticeable in the enrollment of the programs, the management strategies taught, the coursework required of students, and the distinct absence of specific discussions, examples, or coursework related to working in urban and diverse schools. Alexis shared that all of the students in her PETE program, as well as all of the instructors, professors, and adjunct faculty who taught PETE courses were White. Brad said that most of the students in his PETE program were White, and he only recalled one professor who was African American. In both of their PETE programs, none of

the students or faculty members had spent any significant time in urban schools, so they could not share these experiences or discuss what students might encounter in urban schools during their professional socialization.

By enrolling in a PETE program with very little diversity, the White, middle-class values that Alexis learned and enacted during her pre-professional socialization experiences were not challenged, they were only reinforced. Therefore, when Alexis began teaching in a diverse, urban school, she encountered several struggles based on the clash in cultural templates between her own values and those of her students. For Brad, the lack of diversity in his PETE program caused him to confront difficulties in his management style, because the order and obedience that he expected and experienced in suburban schools did not match the values and behaviors of his diverse students in an urban school.

This finding reiterates literature in occupational socialization research that teachers often teach in the same ways that they were taught, especially if their own values and frames of reference were never challenged throughout teacher education (Lawson, 1983a, 1983b; Schempp & Graber, 1992). Since Alexis and Brad's professional socialization programs were mostly taught by White, middle-class faculty and professors, and the majority of enrollments in the programs were White, middle-class students, the values about teaching that were promoted during teacher education did not sway very far from the White, middle-class values that Alexis and Brad practiced and learned during their upbringing. Professional socialization is a period of time in which individuals develop their notions about what constitutes good teaching. According to Schempp and Graber (1992), students begin negotiating their beliefs about teaching based on what teacher educators present to them. However, the amount of negotiation that pre-service teachers encounter is "dependent upon the congruency of the aspiring teacher's a priori beliefs

and knowledge and those promoted by the education program” (Schempp & Graber, 1992, p. 331).

*Learning a sport-based curriculum.* All three teachers in the study were indoctrinated with a traditional, sport-based curriculum during their professional socialization, which they gladly absorbed with the help of their positive experiences with sport prior to entering a PETE program. Alexis and Brad both had several courses in team sports and individual sports, with only one course in either fitness, rhythmic, or dance activities. Candie was able to select specific activity courses throughout her PETE program, but these courses only taught students how to participate in the activity (i.e., lacrosse, racquetball, golf), rather than learning how to *teach* these activities in a PE setting.

These professional socialization experiences in sport-based curriculum caused several struggles for the teachers during their early careers as urban physical educators. In Alexis’ case, the sport-based curriculum she learned in her PETE program continued to reinforce White, middle-class values as she tried to teach team sports requiring large spaces and specialized equipment at a school with no gymnasium, no storage space for the equipment required and students who did not have access to these sport opportunities in their neighborhoods or communities. Therefore, Alexis’ lessons were often inactive and were not sequential across the school year. Brad thought emphasizing team sports would provide students an opportunity to learn social skills such as teamwork, cooperation, and respect, because he believed he had learned these principles by participating in team sports in his youth. Unfortunately, Brad never taught these social skills to his students, and grew frustrated when students did not pick up on these skills just by participating in the activities. Brad’s students also rejected many of the team sports that he taught because they did not have opportunities to play volleyball and floor hockey

in their communities. Candie quickly recognized the clash between the sport curriculum she planned and the cultural templates of the urban students she taught. This caused Candie to be more reflective and observant of the dynamics of the Chestnut community and to try to consider the activities her urban students could access.

These findings have connections to previous literature which states that traditional, sport-based curriculum may not be meaningful to all students (Cothran & Ennis, 1997; Ennis, 1995; Graham, 1995). Many researchers have cited that students, especially in urban schools, find sport content boring, irrelevant, inaccessible outside of school, and sometimes embarrassing (Bauer, Yang & Austin, 2004; Ennis et al., 1997; Flory & McCaughtry, 2011). Other research critiques Brad's notion that sport content was 'good' for urban students who may not learn how to act in appropriate ways otherwise. O'Flynn (2010) compared the approaches to teaching sport in two Australian high schools and differences in the way sport was justified based on the social class of the students. At a private, all-girls school, sport in PE was meant to help students manage the stress they may eventually encounter as successful career women. However, at a co-ed school in an urban area, sport was included as a means to save students from themselves and to prevent them from getting involved in drugs and gang culture. Approaching sport from either of these perspectives was problematic for the students.

Rovegno (1993b) found that teachers became more effective when they were able to overcome their cultural templates for sport and could consider teaching content from the perspective of the student. Finally, Baldwin, Buchanan and Rudisill (2007) wrote that most modern PE curriculum focus on games and sports with a distinct European-American flavor, and most PE teachers teach this content because it falls within their comfort zones. Amidst all of the research finding the negative implications of sport in PE, several studies have exposed the value,

enjoyment, and benefits of students participating in more diverse content outside of sport-related activities in school PE (Cowan & Foster, 2009; Ennis, 2008; D. Mears, 2008; O'Neill, 2009).

*Lack of coursework in sociocultural issues.* Another common finding throughout this study involved the lack of coursework in sociocultural issues (either required or chosen as an elective) for all three of the participants. Neither Alexis, Brad, nor Candie had any discussion about the effects of gender, race, sexuality, religion, ability, or other contextual factors that play a role in students' general education, and what these factors meant for both teachers and students in physical education classes. Without any significant study of the sociocultural issues that may influence students' educational experiences, all three teachers encountered a range of struggles and dilemmas throughout their early careers as urban physical educators. Without any sociocultural coursework, Alexis continued to teach under the assumptions of her White, middle-class values, and struggled to understand some of the challenges that her students faced outside of school, such as her understanding of students' reasons for not wearing the appropriate gym uniform for class. Brad had little knowledge of his students' lives outside of school, and did not understand the reason that many of his students (and their families) exhibited distrust. He attributed the distrust to a racial characteristic rather than as a result of historically negative interactions in public schools and with White individuals. Candie also encountered distrust from the families of the students she taught at Chestnut Academy, and was initially shocked and discouraged that families were so hesitant to let their children attend any out of school functions with Candie. Candie was the only teacher reflective enough to consider the reasons behind the distrust she encountered, and worked to gain insider status within the Chestnut community as a result.



The lack of coursework that Alexis, Brad and Candie had regarding sociocultural issues is not an uncommon phenomenon. Although standards in most states and in three national organizations governing teacher certification mention a need for understanding diversity and learning to teach diverse populations, the ambiguity in how teacher education programs can fulfill these standards translates into only six states requiring coursework in diverse topics throughout their professional socialization (Akiba, Cockrell, Simmons, Hans & Agarwal, 2010). Most states met the standards for diversity by asking their teacher candidates to demonstrate their understanding of diversity, incorporating diverse and global perspectives within the curriculum, and requiring a diverse field placement (Akiba et al., 2010). Unfortunately, many of these approaches to fulfilling diversity requirements come with a deficit perspective, such as offering additional academic help to poor students, or trying to mainstream students with disabilities into general education courses (Akiba et al., 2010). Cruz-Jansen and Taylor (2004) also noted that most teacher candidates were not adequately prepared for teaching diverse students, but found that most teacher candidates were “more positive about the importance of multicultural education” at the end of a multicultural course than at the beginning of the course. Similarly, Baldwin, Buchanan, and Rudisill (2007) found that a service learning experience with culturally diverse students increased the teacher candidates’ understanding of diversity, social justice, and their beliefs about teaching. Although these findings sound overwhelmingly positive, it should be noted that most research regarding White teachers’ experiences in sociocultural courses report that White teacher candidates often react with denial, resistance, and proclaim one of many colorblind ideologies when they are faced with principles of White privilege, institutional racism, the history of race and education in the U.S., and being more sensitive to the experiences of non-White students (E. Brown, 2004; Choi, 2008; Picower, 2009; Solomon, Portelli, Daniel &

Campbell, 2005). How the content about race, gender, and other sociocultural issues is delivered to students is important because of the emotional responses that can result in courses like these (E. Brown, 2004).

*Experiences in urban schools.* When asked about their experiences in urban schools during their professional socialization experiences, two teachers shared that they had none, and one teacher's experiences were quite limited. Both Alexis and Brad had never set foot in an urban school prior to being hired as a teacher at an urban school. Alexis' professional socialization took place in suburban schools near her university campus, and there was no requirement for any urban field placements or observations throughout her PETE program. Brad recalled "loose" requirements for urban experiences during his professional socialization – that is, he was supposed to complete at least one observation and reflection in an urban school, but because he did not know any teachers in urban schools, he was allowed to complete the assignment in a suburban school. Additionally, Brad completed both of his student teaching placements in suburban schools near his hometown, and there was no requirement for an urban placement through his PETE program. In fact, Brad received mostly negative messages about urban schools during his professional socialization. Candie's PETE program required the most exposure to urban schools. Students in Candie's program completed a pre-student teaching experience and two student teaching placements in both an elementary and secondary school. One of these three was supposed to be in an urban location, and Candie was looking forward to the opportunity as a result of her previous work with diverse populations. However, during her first urban placement, an issue with an ineffective PE teacher caused her to be re-assigned to another school in the suburbs, and she was able to use her study abroad experience in South Africa as her "urban" school placement. While the PETE program attempted to at least expose

the pre-service teachers to urban and diverse schools, there was never any discussion about the differences and challenges that came along with teaching in an urban school.

Since none of the teachers had any significant experiences in urban schools during their PETE programs, naturally they encountered several struggles during their early careers. Alexis and Brad had no frame of reference for the culture of urban schools, and the cultural differences she encountered with her students when they first started teaching. The messages that Brad received throughout his professional socialization made him concerned about even accepting a position in an urban school, and the constant struggles he faced due to the cultural clashes was causing him to start feeling burned out from teaching. For Candie, although she had some sensitivity to the differences she encountered through some previous work in diverse and urban schools, she was still highly unprepared for the drastic cultural differences that she came across at Chestnut.

The struggles that Brad and Alexis encountered through their lack of experiences in urban schools can be partially explained by the literature regarding teacher education in urban schools. In order to meet state and national standards regarding diversity, some teacher education institutions offer urban field placements to their teacher candidates; however, they do not make urban field placements a requirement (Akiba et al., 2010). Alexis' PETE program did not offer any urban placements, and Brad had to organize at least one of his field experiences himself, so securing an urban placement was not necessarily a priority when Brad arranged his placement. Studies have documented that field experiences in urban settings help teacher candidates develop positive attitudes about working in urban schools, and helps them to develop acceptance of and commitment toward cultural competencies (Wiggins, Follo, & Eberly, 2007; Zygmunt-Fillwalk, et al., 2005). However, urban field placements may not be enough to adequately prepare teacher

candidates to teach in urban schools (McKinney, Haberman, Stafford-Johnson, & Robinson, 2008). In fact, one group of researchers suggested that to become an accomplished urban teacher, individuals must gain as much familiarity with urban challenges as possible, whether “attained by teachers’ own upbringing in similar settings or intentional, systematic cultural immersion” (Abbate-Vaughn, Frechon, & Wright, 2010).

*Lack of interpersonal skill development.* During the study, Alexis frequently referenced that her professional socialization experience did not completely prepare her for teaching in urban schools. One of the biggest reasons for this, she felt, was that her PETE program did not emphasize the importance of relating to students prior to teaching them. Alexis shared that she did not learn much about developing her interpersonal skills as a pre-service teacher, and she entered her student teaching experience, as well as her new position as an urban physical educator at Academy P and Achiever Academy, with much anxiety. Since her PETE program stressed content and management over the importance of meaningful social relationships with students, Alexis struggled to connect with her students, especially because the cultural templates of her students were so dissimilar to her own.

Alexis’ feelings about missing out on learning how to relate to students during her professional socialization confirms other research suggesting that the development of interpersonal skills in professional socialization is lacking (Stemler, Elliott, Grigorenko, & Sternberg, 2006). Similarly, Crippen (2010) described several characteristics that teachers should learn during their professional socialization experiences, including how to be an effective listener, how to demonstrate empathy, and developing awareness of student behaviors. Flory and McCaughtry (2011) also found that students in urban communities appreciated teachers who demonstrated care and respect toward students, and interacted with them in genuine ways.

## Findings from Induction

After graduating from their respective PETE programs, Alexis, Brad, and Candie took distinctive paths to teaching in urban schools. All three teachers encountered various challenges, dilemmas, and experienced some successes in their everyday tasks as physical educators in urban schools. In this section, I will discuss the major findings regarding the teachers' induction experiences, and relate it to the literature and research in this area.

*School support mechanisms.* Alexis, Brad and Candie encountered varying levels of school support during their induction years. Alexis and Brad did not have any structured mentoring programs at their urban schools, so they did not have much support in their first years' teaching in an unfamiliar context. Alexis and Brad struggled to navigate through urban school culture replete with environments influenced by high stakes testing, financial and budget constraints, and teacher turnover. In the absence of mentoring, Brad and Alexis had to learn about the characteristics of their urban students and their indigenous communities on their own. Therefore, their teaching methods also suffered because they were teaching in ways that did not connect with the cultural realities of their urban students. In contrast, although Candie did not have a formal mentor at Chestnut Academy, she did participate in several professional development sessions that were specific to urban contexts and the community of students and families she served. These sessions were tailored to benefit many newer White teachers at Chestnut when Candie first began teaching. Over the years, the administrators continued to present these sessions even though the teaching population had diversified since Candie's first year. These professional development sessions provided Candie with a more realistic understanding of urban contexts that may have taken years of involvement in the school community to learn on her own.

The differing experiences of Brad, Alexis, and Candie are implicit in literature regarding mentoring and professional development in urban schools and in physical education settings. The challenges that new teachers encounter in schools are well documented in both the general education and PE literature (McCaughtry, Cothran, Kulinna, Martin, & Faust, 2005; Mohr & Townsend, 2001; Rikard & Banville, 2010; Stroot & Whipple, 2003; Watzke, 2007). However, an effective mentor during the induction years can assist a new teacher in understanding the new school environment, provide feedback about teaching strategies, and improve the new teacher's perceptions of their teaching (McCaughtry et al., 2005; Rikard & Banville, 2010). In urban contexts, the need for a strong mentor may be increased as a result of the additional challenges that urban schools present, especially if the new teacher's cultural template varies greatly from the students served.

Much research indicates that professional development is effective in increasing teachers' self-efficacy, perceived behavioral control, and their perceptions of the support they receive from the school environment (i.e., other teachers and principals), and these initiatives were especially effective when novice teachers were paired with more experienced teachers (Deglau & O'Sullivan, 2006; Kulinna, McCaughtry, Martin, Cothran, & Faust, 2008; Martin, McCaughtry, Kulinna, & Cothran, 2008; 2009). Anderson and Olsen (2006) found that early career urban teachers' perspectives on professional development were shaped by their developmental level, the school context, their desire to collaborate with others, and their interest in taking on new roles and responsibilities within the school. Yost and Vogel (2007) found that extended professional development with urban middle school teachers had positive effects on students' test scores and improved teachers' implementation of best practices. Candie's success in relation to the urban-specific professional development she received during her induction seems to be

best explained by research identifying that professional development is most effective when the intervention considers the contextual variables of teachers' schools (Cothran, McCaughtry, Kulinna, & Martin, 2006).

*Lack of administrator support.* Alexis' initial position as a teacher in an urban school was at Academy P. At this school, Alexis was often told what to do by the assistant principal (the former PE teacher) and the atmosphere was very authoritarian. Teachers were required to sign in and out daily, and were only allotted a certain amount of time to be away from school on teacher work days. After a particular incident where Alexis overheard another staff member harming a student, her word was questioned by the principal about the veracity of what happened. This instilled a sense of distrust and uneasiness in Alexis that also caused her to lose confidence in her ability to be an effective teacher in an urban school.

Alexis' experiences at Academy P, support prior research stating that teachers who believe their principal provides strong leadership, display higher levels of expectancy, or the ability to attain educational goals (Finnigan, 2010). Other research notes that principals who demonstrate respect, competence, personal regard and integrity can reduce uncertainty and feelings of vulnerability (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Finnigan (2010) and Haberman (2005) connected the role of principals and teacher attrition, especially in urban schools, noting that strong principals have the influence to reverse current trends in teachers' rates of leaving urban schools for suburban school opportunities. Milanowski et al. (2009) found that principal support had the greatest influence on recruiting teachers to urban schools, which reflects why Alexis felt more at ease at Achiever Academy than at Academy P. Similarly, other researchers identified the importance of supportive administrators in retaining teachers, and claimed that more successful principals established safe environments, set high expectations for learning, and held the entire

school community accountable for meeting learning expectations (Blankenship & Coleman, 2009; Brown & Wynn, 2007; Jacobson, Brooks, Giles, Johnson, & Ylimaki, 2007).

*Insufficient facilities.* Alexis encountered a distinct challenge in that her school did not have an actual gymnasium. Achiever Academy occupied a former Catholic school, and the gymnasium was part of the church edifice, which the management company did not lease. Alexis had no choice but to teach outside on the public playground when the weather was suitable for outdoor lessons, but more often she taught either in a classroom or in hallways. This challenge resulted in Alexis adopting several ineffective teaching behaviors such as teaching developmentally inappropriate content when outside and conducting very inactive lessons when teaching inside. In addition, Alexis had to consider several safety concerns regardless of where she taught due to the risks of teaching outside on a public playground and the hazards encountered when she taught up to thirty students in a relatively small space when teaching inside.

Bevans, Fitzpatrick, Sanchez, Riley and Forrest (2010) indicate that access to adequate facilities and equipment in PE classes has a positive association with students' activity levels. In any setting, implementing a quality PE program without adequate equipment or facilities is challenging (Fraser-Thomas & Beaudoin, 2002; Hill & Brodin, 2004) and can contribute to the wash-out of principles learned during professional socialization (Blankenship & Coleman, 2009). However, many urban teachers report that they often teach in facilities that are either too small, have unsafe flooring, or have very small budgets for obtaining instructional resources (Kulinna, McCaughtry, Cothran, & Martin, 2006). Implementing active lessons despite space and equipment restraints is possible. Kulinna et al. (2006) found that over 75% of the urban teachers studied, often rearranged their teaching schedules and plans for other school activities such as



assemblies and lunch periods. Additionally, teacher resources specific to those without gymnasias are becoming available (e.g., Sutherland, 2005). Sutherland's (2005) text is widely available and provides lessons that connect to state and national standards for PE, and is designed for the PE teacher that does not have a gymnasium and may have to teach in a classroom or other teaching space.

*Levels of involvement within school.* Alexis, Brad and Candie discussed how involved they were at their respective schools throughout the study. Brad had been more involved with the school when he was first hired, but recent commitments to his education and his family prevented him from doing much outside of school hours. Alexis served as Achiever's athletic director, so she frequently stayed after school hours to coordinate athletic schedules, transportation, and set up for athletic contests off campus. However, beyond these duties for which she was compensated, Alexis did not spend much time with Achiever students and their families at other events such as skating parties, game nights, and other functions within the community. Candie's involvement with Chestnut Academy was quite opposite from Brad's level of involvement. Candie pioneered the after-school program for Chestnut students in her first year as a teacher, and organized several other initiatives for students, including a cross-country ski trip for fifth graders, a cross-country team that ran in the city's annual Turkey Trot, a recycling initiative that raised money for a nature trail behind the school, and several other fundraisers and activities that benefitted Chestnut students and families.

The teachers' involvements with their schools related to the struggle and success they encountered. In Brad's case, his lack of involvement with the school meant that he had very few meaningful relationships with students, so he was met with distrust when he taught them. Brad knew only minimal information regarding his students, and he was unable to connect their

circumstances to broader implications for their school experiences. Brad admitted that he did not know much about his students outside of the demographic information provided to him by the school. His “eight-to-three” teaching schedule did not provide him with many opportunities to learn about his students, so he was unable to relate with his students. Of more concern than his lack of knowledge of community dynamics, though, was Brad’s admission that getting to know his students and their community, was not a priority. Brad admitted that his hectic teaching schedule, his family commitments, extracurricular involvement with his sons’ athletic teams, and personal academic pursuits prevented him from doing anything to understand his students and the community. He felt the extra time needed to get to know his students was the most logical sacrifice, given his schedule. As a result, Brad’s ability to enact elements of the cultural relevance process was limited. Accordingly, Brad’s teaching techniques and strategies did not connect to the cultural templates of his urban students, and he was starting to feel burnt out from the struggles and frustrations of teaching in an urban school.

Alexis felt that she had some connection with students and their families at Achiever Academy, however, the relationships were not genuine or deeply meaningful. Alexis was not necessarily an insider within the Achiever community because she did not spend as much time getting to know her students outside of teaching. Consequently, she still faced some distrust from students and their families, and her incomplete understanding of students’ community dynamics meant that she often used ineffective teaching strategies.

Candie had the most genuine relationships and interactions with students and their families at Chestnut Academy. Spending time in the community after school hours allowed her to get to know students and understand the community dynamics which affected students’ educational pursuits. Candie was empathetic to students’ concerns and the challenges they

encountered. Students and family members trusted Candie, and she was definitely an insider within the Chestnut community. By truly knowing her students, their community, and how the community dynamics they encountered had an impact on education, Candie was able to be a more effective teacher because she could adjust her teaching to the needs of her students.

Brad and Alexis' inability to make genuine connections with their students and Candie's success in forming relationships with students reflects research about the importance of being a culturally relevant teacher. Several studies report that students feel most connected to teachers who demonstrate care, respect, and appreciate language diversity (Flory & McCaughtry, 2011; Howard, 2001). Additionally, students want teachers who understand their community dynamics, and are willing to alter how they teach in order to meet the needs of students in urban communities (Marquez-Zenkov et al., 2007). However, teachers cannot care for, respect, or alter their pedagogies without enacting the cultural relevance cycle of understanding community dynamics, identifying how community dynamics affect educational pursuits, and implementing strategies to reflect cultural knowledge (Flory & McCaughtry, 2011). Bergeron (2008) found that creating a classroom community had the potential to negate the effects of cultural distance between teachers and students. Abbate-Vaughn et al. (2010) summarized the importance of knowing students in profound ways. They wrote:

...master urban teachers typically display a deep awareness of their students' individual living arrangements and family circumstances, and are open about risk factors. Rather than using poverty and the limited social capital of their students' families as an excuse for low performance, they concentrate their efforts on facilitating solutions. (p. 190)

The investment in their respective school communities had direct implications for the teachers' success in connecting with students whose cultural templates were different than their own.

*Teaching in a culture of testing.* Although all three teachers spoke of standardized testing as an inconvenient event that took valuable PE time away from students, the environment at

Bentley International had a direct impact on Brad's teaching. Bentley International had performed poorly on standardized tests in years prior to this study, so administrators reacted with quick-fix strategies to produce immediate improvement in students' test scores. Brad's teaching schedule was altered so that he could tutor small groups of students in reading and math daily, and he spent one entire afternoon per week in more intensive tutoring and enrichment with a larger group of second graders. Administrators at Bentley also implemented a new evaluation system for teachers to ensure they were meeting objectives, resulting in Brad being scheduled for observation at least six times during one semester. All of these changes and programs focused on improving test scores meant that Brad had a very hectic and pressure-filled schedule. Students attended one 50-minute period of PE per week, and Brad did not have a prep period until the end of the school day. This hectic atmosphere made Brad more likely to "roll out the ball" because he did not have adequate time to plan and was exhausted from shuffling students in and out of his gym all day. Mechanisms established to improve students' test scores frustrated Brad and contributed to his feelings of burnout.

Brad's experiences at Bentley International support emerging research in light of new accountability mandates to improve students' performance in core subject tests. According to the Center on Education Policy (2008), since the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act in the 2001-2002 school year, over 60% of school districts have increased the amount of time spent teaching English/Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics, and have decreased instructional time in other areas such as science, social studies, art, music, physical education and recess at the elementary level. Specific to physical education, students in elementary schools across the nation have decreased instructional time in physical education on average by 40 minutes per week and cut time spent in recess by 50 minutes per week. This illustrates a 35% reduction in time spent in

physical education for students in elementary school (Center on Education Policy). Accountability regimes such as NCLB enact disciplinary measures on schools that do not perform well on standardized tests, and these schools are usually high poverty schools in urban areas. These are the same schools where students are at highest risk for being obese or overweight, where students have the least access to nutrient dense foods, and where students are most likely to suffer from conditions related to their living environments, such as asthma. Cutting valuable physical activity time in the form of PE and recess in order to promote additional learning in ELA and mathematics only robs students of opportunities to remain healthy. Teaching in schools under disciplinary measures from NCLB also has extremely negative effects on teacher morale (Byrd-Blake et al., 2010; Olsen & Sexton, 2009). Olsen and Sexton (2009) identified that teaching in schools that are undergoing reform has several negative effects on teaching and learning, including tensions between administrators and teachers, increased pressure to conform to an administrator's reform vision, and feelings of being controlled and being under surveillance. Teachers and students alike suffer when accountability schemes such as NCLB threaten schools in poor urban neighborhoods.

*Discovery of Whiteness.* During Candie's induction years, she came to the shocking realization that her Whiteness had limited her perspective on effectively teaching urban students. Candie's enthusiasm for teaching was extinguished quickly when she realized that the activities she planned to teach were rejected by her urban students. Candie had never considered the cultural value of specific content, so she was not prepared for the reactions that she received from students when she attempted to teach a traditionally White, middle-class sport. This incident caused Candie to become much more reflective about how she taught students with drastically different cultural templates. Candie also committed to learning more about the

community where she taught and became more involved after school hours in order to learn about students, their families, and the community dynamics they encountered.

Candie's realization of her own Whiteness and the path she took to become more sensitive to the cultural templates of her students speaks to many issues in teacher education. Much research identifies that schools are not traditionally places where children of color experience success because institutions of education were designed by Whites and favor their cultural templates (Banks, 1993; Cabello & Burstein, 1995; Cochran-Smith, 1995; 2000; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995). However, most White teacher candidates, who become the majority of the teaching force across the nation, approach teaching diverse students in color blind ways (Cabello & Burstein, 1995; Cochran-Smith, 1995; Delpit, 2006). Teacher candidates react with shock and disbelief when they learn how idealistic their ideas are about a democratic society, equal access, and the possibility that education can empower and equalize all students (Cochran-Smith, 2000). Many teacher candidates believe these messages because they are unaware of the benefits of their White privilege, an invisible set of special provisions and unearned freedoms (McIntosh, 1989). Additionally, many Whites do not see "Whiteness" as a kind of racial identity, so White teachers believe that their pedagogies are value-free, even though teaching practices reflect experiences and backgrounds (Cabello & Burstein, 1995; McIntosh, 1989). In Candie's circumstance, she attempted to teach an activity which students had never played before, had never seen before, and in Cochran and Ennis' (1999) words, "focused on traditional games of 'American' culture, games based on a White, male, Christian tradition – a tradition that many of these urban students did not share" (p. 245). Candie's realization of her own Whiteness was a fortunate event, and she worked harder to learn more about how her own cultural template varied from the community dynamics of her students.

However, many teachers never come to this realization, and react with frustration when students do not conform to their White cultural values (Cabello & Burstein, 1995; Cochran-Smith, 1995, 2000; Graybill, 1997).

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The findings of the current study provide several key contributions to both occupational socialization theory and cultural relevance theory. In this section, I will discuss these key findings from the study, and then suggest future research that can promote further understanding of urban teacher development through occupational socialization and cultural relevance theories.

*Key contributions to the occupational socialization theory.* The findings of this study make several contributions to the occupational socialization research. In this section, I will outline three key findings related to occupational socialization theory.

First, the findings suggest that the power of a prospective teacher's subjective warrant and apprenticeship of observation reach beyond the content they choose and the teaching practices they employ, and include their cultural templates, biases, and values. Much research in occupational socialization cites that how PE teachers teach is largely based on their positive experiences with sport and physical activity prior to entering a formal teaching program (Lawson, 1983a, 1983b; Schempp & Graber, 1991). The eighteen or so years that prospective teachers have to observe and learn the "accepted" practices in PE is a powerful influence that is not easily undone by the years spent learning how to teach in a PETE program. However, this study demonstrates that the apprenticeship of observation also includes the formation of a cultural template. For example, Alexis and Candie both had some exposure to diverse contexts and urban schools prior to teaching in an urban school, yet they still struggled to understand their students using their White, middle-class values. One example of their narrow view of teaching

was the assumption that the team sports that Alexis and Candie enjoyed as children would be widely accepted by the African American children they taught in urban schools. Brad's pre-professional socialization involved learning about the racist values and the cultural biases and that his parents and other community members had towards African Americans. Once he began teaching in a diverse urban context, Brad felt powerless to overcome the cultural differences between himself and his students. All three teachers in this study had cultural templates that were anchored in their White, middle-class values, which made it impossible to see teaching from any other perspective. This finding suggests that PETE programs must include experiences that challenge White, middle-class values that are well planned and meaningful to pre-service teachers. These experiences must go beyond observations and voyeuristic visits to urban communities or schools. To be an effective teacher in any community, pre-service teachers need to learn about the community, its history, and the historical, political, and economic forces that affect residents. Later in this section, I will suggest future areas of research that might examine what these well-planned and meaningful experiences may look like for PETE programs and school districts.

The second key finding of this study that contributes to the theory of occupational socialization focuses on the experiences of Alexis, Brad, and Candie during their professional socialization. Across three different PETE programs, all three teachers identified various areas where they were unprepared for teaching in diverse urban schools. All three teachers went through their professional socialization without any type of coursework in sociocultural issues, and none of the teachers experienced much curricular diversity during their PETE programs. Brad and Alexis did not have any type of urban field placements, while Candie's experiences in urban schools were not enough to make her feel effective in her first job at an urban school.



Additionally, Alexis did not feel prepared by her PETE program to approach students and form personal relationships with students, which greatly affected her teaching. These findings suggest that PETE programs are not meeting the needs of pre-service teachers who eventually teach in urban schools, despite national standards that clearly suggest that PETE programs should prepare teachers to encounter students of diverse backgrounds (NASPE, 2008). Furthermore, these findings suggest that many PETE programs do not challenge White, middle-class values in the courses, philosophies, and values they promote, but simply strengthen the White, middle-class notions with which most of our teacher candidates enter professional socialization programs. In the next section, I will discuss future research that can be conducted to further explore what PETE programs are teaching our future teachers.

A third key finding related to occupational socialization theory concerns the struggles these teachers encountered during their induction. All three teachers, who were the sole PE teachers at their respective schools, encountered unique circumstances and challenges in their urban schools. While the research on induction of PE teachers describes common challenges that most new PE teachers face (i.e., learning new school policies, understanding levels of administrator support, implementing new curricula, etc.) (Stroot et al., 1993; Stroot, Collier, O'Sullivan & England, 1994; Stroot & Whipple, 2003), the extraordinary conditions encountered in urban schools (i.e., few instructional resources, limited budgets for equipment, hyper-focus on academic performance and standardized test scores) bring additional pressures and struggles to new White, middle-class teachers who are unfamiliar with the contexts of urban schools. Furthermore, these teachers all navigated their new urban teaching environments without the guidance of an experienced mentor, which much research has suggested highly increases new teachers' self-efficacy and effectiveness (Cothran et al., 2009; Martin et al., 2008, McCaughy et

al., 2005). Later in this chapter I will suggest directions for future research that will explore effective mentoring programs specific to urban teaching contexts.

*Key contributions to the cultural relevance theory.* This study also highlighted significant findings related to cultural relevance theory. In this section, I will describe these two key findings. Following this section, I will discuss implications for future research to further expand cultural relevance theory.

First, the experiences of all three teachers in this study made clear that the encounters with urban students (or lack thereof) that pre-service teachers have throughout their PETE programs do not prepare them to recognize or understand the community dynamics which have an impact on students' educational pursuits. For example, all three teachers taught a traditional, sport-based curriculum to their urban students because they did not consider the necessary spaces and equipment the students would need outside of school to participate in these activities. Alexis frequently grew frustrated that her students did not wear the appropriate "gym uniform" and did not relate this to the limited access that her students had to laundry facilities in many of their homes. Brad struggled to identify the source of his students' distrust, unable to cite the historical views that his students and their families may have held about White individuals. These findings suggest that the urban experiences that pre-service teachers have throughout their professional socialization experiences do not include learning about community dynamics, and considering how these dynamics may affect students' educational processes. A consideration of community dynamics while teaching in urban school does not appear to be an often-used technique or strategy for most White, middle-class pre-service or in-service teachers. Prospective teachers are not learning about these skills throughout their professional socialization programs, either, and as a result struggle to make meaningful connections with their students in urban schools. Since

being an effective teacher requires individual teachers to recognize the dynamics of the community where they teach, it is especially important for pre-service teachers to learn about this during professional socialization due to the likelihood that they will encounter students from diverse cultures and backgrounds throughout their teaching career. Later in this section, I will discuss implications for future research based on these teachers' inability to recognize community dynamics and how these affected students' educational pursuits.

The second key finding of this study contributing to cultural relevance theory is that many teachers may not know how to accurately and critically reflect on their own teaching practices to realize that they are not connecting with students. In other words, many teachers may not know how to identify cultural distance, understand how the cultural distance has an impact on teaching and learning, and therefore cannot enact strategies that may reduce the cultural distance between their own personal biographies and that of their students. Two of the teachers in this study struggled to make sense of why they did not have truly meaningful connections with their students. Brad attributed the distant relationship with his students as a function of students' race, when in fact his own inability to identify differences in his cultural template and how he taught his students was a more likely cause. Alexis felt that she had a decent relationship with most of her students, but her constant mention of feeling "fake" when she interacted with parents and other family members during morning drop-off and afternoon dismissal spoke to the vast differences in cultural templates. Only Candie successfully identified that the enormous cultural distance between her own personal biography and the cultural templates of her students sometimes prevented her from being as effective as she would have liked. Following the realization of her White, middle-class assumptions and teaching values (which stemmed from a student's comment about participating in a lacrosse unit), Candie worked to incorporate more

culturally relevant activities and teaching practices into her pedagogies. However, the inclusion of urban-specific professional development was what allowed Candie to be most successful, because she was able to reflect on her own experiences and compare them to the information she was learning about students in an urban community. Later in this section, I will provide recommendations for future research related to this key finding to expand the theory of cultural relevance even further.

*Recommendations for future research.* In this section, I will discuss recommendations for future research based on the key findings of this study. These recommendations may lead to more intricate understandings of urban teacher development using both occupational socialization theory and cultural relevance theory.

The findings of this study suggest prospective teachers also develop their cultural templates during their pre-professional socialization, not just their dispositions toward physical activity, sport, and physical education. For the teachers in this study, there were no activities during their professional socialization that encouraged them to analyze, critique, or question their cultural templates, or to even understand how they formed their cultural templates. Because the teachers in this study were unaware of their own cultural templates, they were unprepared to identify cultural distance between their own templates and those of their students in urban school settings. Therefore, future research using occupational socialization theory could examine how prospective teachers learn about their cultural templates during their PETE experiences, how PETE programs either encourage or discourage understanding pre-service teachers' understanding of their cultural templates, and perform an in-depth case study of PETE programs that do provide pre-service teachers with opportunities to consider their cultural templates.

Another finding of this study was that many PE teachers complete their professional socialization programs without any coursework in sociocultural issues, therefore the White, middle-class values of many teacher candidates are reinforced during teacher education. Since the NASPE standards (2008) suggest that PETE programs should prepare beginning PE teachers to reach students of diverse backgrounds, future research should examine how the coursework and experiences of PETE programs across the nation provide for students in relation to meeting this standard. Studying how different PETE programs interpret this standard in relation to the coursework and field experiences they provide their teacher candidates may reveal important information about the practicality of this national standard. Additionally, in-depth research about PETE programs that do provide students with coursework specific to the sociocultural issues in PE or meaningful field experiences in urban schools may provide guideposts for other PETE programs that would like to offer these opportunities.

The third major finding related to occupational socialization theory in this study concerned the induction experiences of the teachers in urban schools. None of the teachers in this study benefitted from the guidance of an experienced mentor as they navigated through their first years of teaching. Based on this finding, future research could examine non-traditional approaches to mentoring teachers in financially burdened districts and how more experienced teachers in urban schools can assist newer teachers in these districts. Another key finding related to the induction phase of occupational socialization pertained to the current climate of PE using frequent standardized testing and accountability measures that promote a culture of panic and fear about test scores, especially in low-income, urban schools. Future research should explore the real “cost” of standardized testing on urban students’ physical activity and health, and

consider how PE teachers in school districts most affected by these policies adjust their teaching practices.

The findings related to cultural relevance theory also lead to several recommendations for future research. First, two of the teachers in this study were unable to identify the community dynamics affecting their students, and subsequently could not relate how these community dynamics affected students' educational endeavors. Future research could explore how successful urban teachers learn about community dynamics, especially when their cultural templates are vastly different to the students and residents with whom they interact. Future research could also examine how teachers become 'insiders' within their school communities, and how they determine what activities students find most meaningful and culturally relevant. Understanding the processes and steps that effective teachers take to become invested in their school communities may provide insights to how PETE programs can promote these types of behaviors during professional socialization experiences.

A second finding in relation to cultural relevance theory in this study, highlighted teachers' inability to critically reflect on their teaching practices. Only one of the teachers examined her own teaching practices when students did not respond favorably to her pedagogies, and was then able to enact the cycle of cultural relevance. Therefore, future research should consider how teachers come to be reflective and analytical of their own teaching practices, and explore how PETE programs encourage reflective teaching practices during professional socialization experiences. Answering these questions may provide teacher educators with the types of experiences that pre-service teachers need to enact effective teaching practices once they enter the field.

Although studying all of these potential areas of inquiry will not automatically reduce the cultural distance between White teachers and diverse students, exploring these questions may provide valuable insights about better preparing PE teachers for a variety of school contexts. In the meantime, I will outline specific recommendations for both teacher education programs and school districts.

### **Recommendations for Teacher Education Programs and School Districts**

The findings of the current study and the research regarding occupational socialization and culturally relevant teaching suggest that there are still many ways to improve both teacher education programs and the experiences of early career teachers in urban schools. In this section, I will outline these recommendations for teacher education programs to prepare more culturally sensitive and culturally aware teachers, as well as outlining ways that school districts, especially districts in urban communities, can support newer teachers.

*Recommendations for teacher education programs.* The findings from the current research study suggest that many early career physical educators are woefully unprepared to teach in urban schools. Based on these findings, I recommend three strategies for improving teacher education so teacher candidates are prepared for a wide range of potential school contexts, but specifically, more prepared for urban teaching placements.

First, teacher education programs must provide more exposure to urban environments for teacher candidates throughout their professional socialization experiences. These experiences must be well-planned and meaningful, and must provide pre-service teachers the opportunity to understand their own cultural templates, as well as recognize the cultural templates of the community members in urban areas. Two of the three teachers in this study never set foot in an urban school until the day they interviewed for a job in one. Since we know that the majority of

the teaching force is White, yet the highest turnover for teaching positions is in large, urban districts where the student population is largely African American and Hispanic (Akiba et al., 2010; Villegas & Lucas, 2003), it is unacceptable for teacher education programs to ignore these realities. Teacher candidates should have ample experiences to observe, interact, and teach alongside urban students and experienced urban teachers.

However, it is not enough just to provide teacher candidates with these experiences. Simply allowing pre-service teachers to observe in urban schools is dangerously voyeuristic. Teacher candidates should learn about the community first, including the historical, political, and economical forces that have an impact on the residents of the community. Beginning in a broad sense and learning about the factors in the community that might affect a student's education (i.e., language, religion, socioeconomic status, immigration status, etc.), then focusing in on schools and students, may allow teacher candidates to grasp more about the contexts of the schools where they teach. Teacher education faculty need to have meaningful discussions with pre-service teachers about what students see and experience in urban schools, how the community dynamics in urban areas may be different than the community dynamics in suburban or rural areas, and what these differences might mean for teaching in an urban community. These discussions and assignments should elicit critical analysis of their own cultural templates as they learn to be more sensitive to the cultural templates of the students they may eventually teach. Exposure to urban areas alone will not 'magically' teach pre-service teachers everything they need to know about teaching in urban areas, however, meaningful experiences will combine the personal and the political, allowing pre-service teachers to be better equipped for urban schools once they leave the safety net of their PETE programs.



Second, teacher education programs must include coursework in sociocultural issues specific to physical education. As our society continues to diversify, most teachers will be responsible for teaching students who view the world differently based on their values and experiences. Additionally, since we know that most PETE majors had positive experiences with sport, physical activity, and physical education throughout their pre-professional socialization experiences (Templin, Woodford & Mulling, 1982), their perspectives about what is appropriate and enjoyable may be immensely different from those of the students they will eventually teach. Pre-service teachers should learn how to teach in ways that are sensitive to the needs of all students, regardless of their race, gender, sexuality, ability, religion, socioeconomic status, or language. Learning does not take place in a vacuum, therefore all of these factors will have an influence on how students interpret the messages of their teachers. Since most pre-service teachers come from White, middle-class backgrounds, it will be necessary for teacher education programs to address how family views of culture, the influence of a middle-class upbringing, and the privileges associated with being White, influence pre-service teachers' views of teaching. As Cochran-Smith (1995) wrote, teacher education students must "explore and reconsider their own assumptions, understand the values and practices of families and cultures that are different from their own, and construct pedagogy that takes these into account in locally appropriate and culturally sensitive ways" (p. 495). Without this type of coursework, PETE programs may unintentionally perpetuate White, middle-class assumptions and values, which will continue to drive a wedge between the cultural templates of most teacher candidates and students in diverse and urban schools and communities.

Third, PETE programs should consider broadening the scope of what they teach to pre-service teachers. The findings of this study suggest that teachers who were considered 'insiders'

within their schools and communities were more effective and successful, while teachers who did not know their students in meaningful ways struggled to connect during lessons. Therefore, PETE programs should provide pre-service teachers with strategies for connecting with students and learning about the community, and have discussions about how to become invested in the school and community. These strategies may be more valuable than management strategies and content courses because they allow teachers to connect with students first. Additionally, in light of current testing mandates and accountability measures threatening to close schools that do not perform well, pre-service teachers need to be informed about advocating for school PE and considering what challenges they may face in schools that are most often affected by these accountability regimes. Understanding what PE teachers are actually “up against” once they enter the field may provide insights about how they can manage the additional pressures they may face in urban schools. Finally, PETE programs need to move beyond teaching only sports as they prepare pre-service teachers. With research spanning several decades that highlights students’ dissatisfaction with sport content in PE classes, there is no reason that pre-service teachers, most of whom already have strong sport backgrounds, should not expand their curricular content knowledge during professional socialization experiences. Options for physical activity are almost limitless, and include a myriad of fitness activities, dance, outdoor pursuits, adventure education, active gaming, and many others. Yet, PE teachers continue to bore students with some variation of the same rotation of sports year after year. This recommendation is especially important for pre-service teachers who will teach in urban communities, where access to large spaces and specialized equipment necessary for many team sports is limited, and this content is often rejected. By providing pre-service teachers with the tools necessary to learn about their school communities and with a diverse array of activities to present to students,

providing all students with a culturally relevant, meaningful PE curriculum can become the standard, rather than the exception.

*Recommendations for school districts.* This study also emphasized the role that school districts play in early career physical educators' experiences in urban schools. Based on these findings, the following are recommendations for school districts, especially in urban communities, to increase the support they provide to newer PE teachers.

First, school districts must work harder to provide qualified mentors to early career PE teachers, especially when the new teachers have had few experiences in urban schools. While access to an in-school mentor may be difficult by the nature of school PE programs, especially at the elementary level, having supports somewhere within the district can be an invaluable tool to new teachers needing guidance about navigating the complexities of their new position. School districts could investigate more non-traditional means of providing mentoring services to their new teacher, such as the investigation into e-mentoring by Cothran and her colleagues (2009). Quality teachers are a valuable resource to all schools, so districts, especially in urban communities, should work to develop effective novice teachers, who can transform later into more seasoned, experienced teachers that can assist future generations of novice teachers. This may require school districts to invest more time and resources into preparing experienced teachers to become mentors to newer teachers, however, these investments will have long term returns if their pursuits improve teacher retention rates. School districts may also consider forming partnerships with local universities for support in implementing mentoring programs and for becoming involved in teacher education programs specific to the needs for urban schools.

Second, school districts could consider the actions of Chestnut Academy administrators and provide professional development opportunities for all teachers, but especially newer

teachers, that are specific to urban issues. Unfortunately, urban districts often hire the most inexperienced teachers as a result of teacher turnover and budget constraints, and the demographics of the profession suggest that most teachers do not have experiences in urban communities. Therefore, it is in the best interest of school districts to help new teachers understand the community dynamics that affect students and their families by providing learning communities for new teachers unfamiliar with urban schools. Since community dynamics also change, it will be important for school districts to re-evaluate the issues that have the greatest impact on students' learning and provide insights to newer teachers about how they can address the community dynamics in their pedagogies.

Third, school districts should consider strategies that provide more agreeable working environments for PE teachers that would encourage them to stay in urban schools, rather than perpetuating the mechanisms that further marginalize PE teachers. For example, PE teachers in urban schools can grow frustrated with their working environments and be tempted to leave such teaching positions when faced with insufficient budgets for instructional resources, have schedules that are overloaded with both classes and additional academic responsibilities such as tutoring, and whose teaching facilities are either non-existent or are often used for other school activities such as assemblies and lunch. Working to improve these conditions (such as staying abreast about grant opportunities for equipment and instructional resources, creating teaching schedules that do not over-burden non-academic subject teachers, and respect for teaching facilities) may improve the morale of PE teachers, translate into greater job satisfaction, and play a role in decreasing the teacher attrition rates in urban schools.

## Limitations

It is important to note the limitations of this study and to caution the reader against generalizing the findings of this study to all urban PE teachers who have a White, middle-class background. First, this study involved three teachers employed at charter schools. Every attempt was made to locate early career PE teachers in regional urban public schools; however, economic conditions in the area of the study meant that most early career PE teachers in the public schools had been laid off. The “newest” PE teachers in the nearby public schools had been teaching for over eight years. I chose to study the newer teachers in charter schools so that they would have a fresher recollection of their induction experiences.

Second, the dynamics of charter schools may have played a larger role in the induction phase of these teachers’ early career experiences than they would have if the study occurred in public schools. Since many charter schools are run like a business, the school culture can be chaotic and tumultuous. Many charter schools rent their facilities, rather than having established buildings. Therefore, gym space and instructional resources are often less than ideal. The lack of gymnasium space which Alexis encountered at Achiever Academy, and the lack of storage space that Brad struggled with at Bentley International may be more common in charter schools than in public schools.

Finally, it is important to note that the purpose of this study was to examine one particular phenomenon: how early career teachers from mostly White, middle class communities navigated the unfamiliar terrain of teaching poor, minority students in urban schools. It should be noted that not all White teachers come from mostly White neighborhoods, and not all students attending schools in urban communities live in impoverished conditions. Therefore, the findings

of this study should not be generalized to the sub-populations of White teachers, urban students, or urban schools.

### **Conclusion**

The findings of this study made several important contributions to the existing literature in both occupational socialization research and cultural relevance research. These findings translated into several areas for further inquiry as well as many recommendations for teacher education programs and school districts alike. Although these suggestions for future research and current practice will not dissolve the cultural distance often found between White, middle-class teachers and diverse urban students, coming to a deeper understanding of how to prepare teachers for a variety of teaching contexts and implementing strategies to support novice PE teachers in urban schools is certainly a step towards greater cultural understanding.

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**ABSTRACT****EARLY CAREER PHYSICAL EDUCATORS' PERSPECTIVES ON  
LEARNING TO TEACH IN URBAN SCHOOLS**

by

**SARA BARNARD FLORY****May 2011****Advisor:** Dr. Nate McCaughtry**Major:** Kinesiology, Physical Education Pedagogy**Degree:** Doctor of Philosophy

The purpose of the study was to examine early career physical educators' perspectives on learning to teach in urban schools. Using occupational socialization theory (Lawson, 1983a, 1983b; Lortie, 1975) and cultural relevance theory (Flory & McCaughtry, 2011), I studied three early-career physical education teachers who taught in urban schools but did not grow up in urban communities. Data collection occurred for approximately six weeks with each teacher via lesson observation and in-depth interviews. Data were analyzed using constant comparison. The findings of this study outlined the particular elements from each teachers' experience during their pre-professional socialization, professional socialization, and induction that played a role in their success and struggle as a newer teacher in an urban school. During pre-professional socialization, the influence of middle-class upbringing, negative experiences in school PE, varying amounts of exposure to diversity, family views of culture, and appreciation of cooperative activities had an impact on the teachers' ability to make meaningful connections with their diverse students. Professional socialization experiences which affected teachers'

success and struggle as an early career physical educator included lack of diversity within PETE programs, sport-based curriculum, lack of coursework in sociocultural issues, experiences in urban schools, and lack of interpersonal skill development. During the induction phase, school support mechanisms, levels of administrator support, insufficient facilities, levels of involvement within school, teaching in a culture of testing, and discovery of Whiteness were all elements that contributed to these teachers' successes and struggles. Based on these findings, I recommend further research focused on learning more about developing teachers to be prepared for more diverse school contexts. First, I suggest further research examining how PETE programs prepare White, middle-class teaching candidates for diverse school contexts. Second, I recommend inquiry related to what effective sociocultural coursework might entail specific to PETE majors. Third, I recommend questioning the effects of standardized testing on urban students' physical activity and health, and how PE teachers in these schools are affected by accountability practices. Fourth, I recommend research related to how successful urban teachers learn about the community dynamics in their particular schools. Finally, I suggest studying the process that teachers go through to become reflective and analytical of their own teaching practices. In addition to these recommendations for future research, I recommend that teacher education programs provide more meaningful experiences in urban school contexts during professional socialization, and include coursework in sociocultural issues to better prepare their teacher candidates. Finally, I suggest that school districts work to provide more mentoring programs for newer teachers, especially those who do not come from urban backgrounds or experiences, provide professional development opportunities specific to urban schools, and work to create more agreeable conditions for PE teachers.



## **AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT**

Sara Barnard Flory earned her B.S. in Movement Science and Athletic Training from the University of Michigan and her M.A.T. in Secondary Education with an emphasis on physical education and health from Wayne State University. Prior to pursuing her Ph.D., Sara taught K-8 physical education and health at an urban charter school. During her graduate studies, Sara worked as a graduate research assistant for two large-scale grant programs, the Detroit Healthy Youth Initiative, and Generation With Promise. Both of these programs focused on improving health and physical education programs in urban public schools. Her research interests have to do with the role of culture in physical education and physical activity. Specifically, Sara is interested in evaluating and developing culturally competent curriculum models, school-based health initiatives, and preparing teachers for culturally diverse school settings.