

Role socialization theory: The sociopolitical realities of teaching physical education

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Abstract

Much has been learned about the socialization of physical education (PE) teachers using occupational socialization theory (OST). However, important to understanding any socialization process is explaining how the roles that individuals play are socially constructed and contextually bound. OST falls short of providing a comprehensive overview of how the role of the PE teacher is defined and negotiated within schools. The purpose of this paper is to present role socialization theory as a new approach to understanding teacher socialization that integrates elements of OST and role theory. Role socialization seeks to explore: (a) the ways in which the occupational role of the PE teacher is socially constructed and contextually bound in a school setting; (b) how individuals are attracted to, prepared for, and socialized into PE teaching and coaching roles; and (c) how socialization influences the ways in which role-sets view the role of the PE teacher as a member of the school community.

Keywords

Physical education, occupational socialization theory, role theory, workplace culture

Introduction

Over the past 40 years, physical education (PE) scholars have studied the lives and careers of teachers through occupational socialization theory (OST; Templin and Schempp, 1989a; Richards et al., 2014d). While scholars around the world have employed OST (e.g. O'Connor and Macdonald, 2002; O'Leary et al., 2014; Dowling, 2011), the theoretical framework was

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constructed largely based on the US context, and most of the research to date has been conducted with US teachers. OST has proved to be an effective lens through which to view the socialization process; however, to understand best the ways in which teachers are socialized, one must also acknowledge socially constructed and contextually bound definitions of the teacher role. This is particularly important when it comes to the role of the PE teacher, which is often marginalized in the context of schools (Lux and McCullick, 2011; O'Sullivan, 1989).

Socially constructed definitions of PE and the role of the PE teacher are negotiated among individuals within a particular social setting and have implications for the way in which teachers experience the socialization process (Richards et al., 2013). Children, for example, often have different expectations for PE than do teachers or administrators (Curtner-Smith, 1997; Stroot and Ko, 2006). These conflicting expectations, along with how they emerge, have implications for the ways in which physical educators navigate their careers and experience job-related stress. While OST captures some of the consequences of these negotiated definitions (e.g. marginalization, isolation), it fails to account for the dynamic, interactive process through which role definitions are developed collectively by individuals within the social setting of a school. OST likewise fails to provide an in-depth explanation of how PE teachers respond to negotiated definitions, especially when they result in conflicting expectations for performance.

To accommodate the limitations of OST, Richards and colleagues have concurrently adopted the sociological perspective of role theory to explore the way in which physical educators are prepared for and socialized into their roles (Richards et al., 2013, 2014d). This same approach has also been used to understand how physical educators navigate expectations related to concurrent performance in teaching and extracurricular athletic coaching roles (Richards and Templin, 2012). The purpose of the current paper is to formalize the amalgamation of OST and role theory and to illustrate some of the ways through which the combined perspective can help to advance research and theory related to the study of teachers' lives and careers. To distinguish this combined perspective from both OST and role theory, I have chosen to refer to it as role socialization theory. My arguments begin by briefly reviewing some of the illustrative elements of both of the parent perspectives in order to situate role socialization theory within the larger body of literature. In developing my arguments I acknowledge that the PE teacher socialization process differs across political, geographical and sociocultural boundaries. Given that the majority of the scholarship related to OST and role theory has been conducted in the USA, I acknowledge that many of the arguments that follow primarily reflect the US context. Nevertheless, this work has international relevance, as evidenced by the application of OST across countries.

Teacher socialization

Broadly defined, socialization is a lifelong process in which individuals, through interactions with one another and social institutions, learn the norms, customs and ideologies deemed important within a particular social context (Billingham, 2007; Clausen, 1968). Onboarding, or organizational socialization, is a branch of socialization theory that seeks to explain the ways in which new employees acquire the skills, knowledge and dispositions required to become effective members of a workplace environment (Bauer and Erdogan, 2011). In education, the study of teacher socialization dates back to the works of scholars such as Waller (1932), Lortie (1975) and Lacey (1977). Traditionally, the teacher socialization process was viewed from a functionalist perspective, which assumed that individuals would passively adopt the views and perspectives of the social institutions that sought to influence them (e.g. Merton et al., 1957). Traditional approaches to teacher

socialization also posited that socializing processes did not begin to influence teacher identity development until formal teacher training, thereby neglecting the influence of pretraining socialization factors (O'Leary et al., 2014).

In contrast to functionalist models of socialization, dialectical approaches recognize that individuals have the capacity both to covertly and overtly resist the influence of socializing agents (Zeichner and Gore, 1990). As a result, individuals both shape and are shaped by the social institutions involved in their development and training (Schempp and Graber, 1992). Dewar explained that 'becoming socialized involves . . . an active process whereby individuals negotiate not only what they learn, but how they interpret what is necessary to be a successfully socialized teacher' (cited in Templin and Schempp, 1989b: 3). Dialectical approaches to socialization also recognize pretraining socialization as influential in understanding the perspectives and ideologies of teachers (Zeichner and Gore, 1990). It is now widely recognized that individuals' experiences in school as children play an important role in recruiting them into the teaching profession (Curtner-Smith et al., 2008; Lortie, 1975). Childhood experiences also help to inform the development of one's approach to teaching. In fact, some evidence indicates that what recruits learn about teaching as children in schools has a stronger influence on their approach to teaching than formal teacher education programming (Zeichner and Gore, 1990).

Drawing from teacher socialization theory more broadly, Lawson (1983a; 1983b) and Templin and Schempp (1989a) developed OST as a way to describe the socialization experiences of PE teachers and teacher/coaches. OST adopts a dialectical approach to understanding socialization across three temporally oriented phases: acculturation, professional socialization and organizational socialization. These phases are experienced by most PE teachers and recognize the impact of pretraining, preservice education in physical education teacher education (PETE) programmes, and on-the-job socialization in the context of schools (Richards et al., 2014a). More recently, a fourth phase, secondary professional socialization, has been used to describe graduate education as preparation for a career in academia as a PETE faculty member (Casey and Fletcher, 2012; Lee and Curtner-Smith, 2011).

Comprehensive reviews of OST and related scholarship are available in the literature (see Richards et al., 2014d; Templin and Richards, 2014; Pike and Fletcher, 2014; Stroot and Ko, 2006). Generally, research has found that recruits enter PETE programmes with stable beliefs about what it means to be an effective PE teacher. PETE has been found to fall short in bringing about significant changes to these beliefs (Curtner-Smith, 2009). However, not all teacher education programmes are ineffective and some evidence indicates that, under the right set of circumstances, PETE can successfully challenge erroneous beliefs about teaching PE (Graber, 1996). Workplace socialization has been found to be potent in terms of shaping teachers' beliefs and practices. While some neophytes experience smooth transitions into their first teaching positions, a lack of preparation for life in schools can lead to reality shock (Richards et al., 2014d). When practices do transfer from PETE, they can be 'washed out' by custodial colleagues concerned with maintaining the status quo and traditional approaches to teaching (Blankenship and Coleman, 2009).

Guiding tenets of role theory

While OST can be used to examine the ways in which PE teachers are prepared for and socialized into the occupational role, it lacks a clear articulation how the role is socially constructed in the context of schools. Such an approach is limited in that it fails to account for how social actors in a particular setting and at a particular time define the role of physical educator. This is critical given

PE teachers working in different schools are likely to experience workplace cultures and support for PE in different ways. Failure to account for these differences presents an overly simplistic view of the social experiences involved in teaching PE. To account for these limitations, I have turned to role theory (Merton et al., 1957; Parsons, 1951). Evolving from symbolic interactionist traditions (Stryker, 1980), and sharing the same theoretical roots as identity theory (Mead, 1934; Stryker, 2001), role theory seeks to explain the ways in which individuals are expected to act and how they expect others to act in reference to particular positions they occupy within the social milieu. The two primary strands of role theory articulated in the literature are structural and interactionist. Structural role theory is closely tied to structural-functionalist traditions and presents a one-sided view of role performance that fails to account for the dynamic nature of role development and negotiation (Stryker, 2001). For the purposes of this paper, I have adopted the interactionist strand of role theory, which is closely aligned to identity theory and views social roles as changing and negotiable (Turner, 2001).

In accord with the view of Goffman (1959) on the presentation of the self in everyday life, role theory adopts a theatre metaphor to explain the social construction of roles and (in)congruencies related to expectations for role-related behavior (Turner, 2001). Stryker (2001) explained that 'the vision is of actors playing parts in scripts written by culture and shaped by evolutionary adaptation' (p. 217). Within role theory, a social status is conceptualized as a pattern of behavior or a position within the social structure (e.g. school teacher, fire fighter, accountant). A role is the dynamic aspect of a particular status and designates the way in which the status should be performed (Merton, 1957; Turner, 2001). Roles, therefore, act as the mechanisms that link individuals to social structures by providing a script for the parts they place in society. Central to the interactionist strand of role theory construction of role expectations is viewed as a dynamic process that is shaped and reshaped over time (Turner, 2001). As such, temporal and contextual characteristics of a particular setting are required to understand how a role is constructed and how individuals are socialized into that role.

Role-sets, or classes of individuals who are important for defining a social actor's work within a particular context, are critical in creating socially constructed definitions and (in)congruencies related to expectations for role behavior (Richards et al., 2013). Interactions with role-sets help social actors understand and define the parameters of their work, as well as the extent to which they are meeting expectations for role performance (Turner, 2001). When it is perceived that status incumbent and role-sets agree on the way in which the role should be enacted, referred to as role consensus, the role can be performed with minimal tension (Biddle, 1986). In such circumstances, everyone in the social setting is striving for and expecting the same role performance. While role consensus may be more likely when individuals have been socialized to view role performance in a similar manner, evidence indicates that it represents more of an ideal-case situation than a reflection of reality (Hindin, 2007). Different socialization experiences often lead role-sets to hold varying expectations for performance that may be contradictory or incompatible.

Occupational role stressors

In the absence of mutually agreed upon social norms and expectations that provide reliable guidelines for behavior, individuals are likely to experience interpersonal stress related to the work role (Richards et al., 2013). Three stressors that have been discussed in both the organizational psychology and educational research literatures include role ambiguity, role overload and role conflict. Role ambiguity is reflected in status-incumbents' uncertainty related to how the work role

is to be performed in the particular social context (Conley and You, 2009). Feelings of role ambiguity are high when role-sets fail to articulate expectations for performance, or the criteria that will be used to evaluate performance. Role overload occurs when the responsibilities associated with a role are too multifaceted for an individual to perform effectively in the amount of time that is allocated (Hindin, 2007). Finally, role conflict relates to situations in which the individual experiences conflicting or incompatible expectations for behavior to the extent that adequately meeting all expectations is perceived to be impossible (Richards and Templin, 2012). Role conflict can be exacerbated when the element of conflict is present within the contextual definition of the role (Parsons, 1966). That is, when expectations for role performance within a social context inherently promote conflict.

Role stressors can occur within a single role or across multiple roles. Intrarole stress refers to stress that occurs within a single social role. When the number of varied responsibilities within a role increases, so does the likelihood of stress. Limited time and resources often preclude equal attention being given to all of the role functions (Turner, 2001). Intrarole stress also occurs when expectations for role performance are contradictory or incompletely articulated (Richards and Templin, 2012). Interrole stress, by contrast, occurs across multiple roles that are played by the same individual. For example, there is a large body of literature related to work–family stress, which documents the challenges individuals have when attempting to balance their role as a spouse with that of a professional in the workforce (e.g. Kopelman et al., 1983).

In examining how social actors prioritize role performance when playing multiple roles, Stryker (1968) hypothesized that individuals rank order their roles in salience hierarchies. Roles that are most central to the actor's identity and for which they are most likely to be evaluated receive higher priority in the hierarchy (Parsons, 1966; Stryker, 2001). Social actors are more likely to act in accordance with the roles toward the top of their salience hierarchy, and de-emphasizing performance in those lower on the list. While acknowledging that salience hierarchies exist, Marks and MacDermid (1996) advocated that developing a sense of role balance was a more effective solution to handling the stressors associated with performing multiple roles. Role balance occurs when individuals are able to manage the performance of multiple roles through adaptive strategies, such as prioritizing tasks based on temporal salience. Thus, in certain circumstances, individuals can play multiple, varied roles without experiencing substantial role stress and salience prioritization.

Toward role socialization theory

Role theory and OST have much to offer in understanding and explaining the work lives of PE teachers. However, both perspectives have key limitations. OST examines factors that socialize PE teachers into work roles, but fails to explain adequately how work roles are socially constructed and contextually bound. Role theory, on the other hand, provides insight into the social construction of the role of teacher and stressors resulting from incongruences in expectations for role performance, but fails to account adequately for the way in which the socialization process contributes to these definitions. Nevertheless, it has been suggested that social role performance and expectations for performance of others are learned through socialization (Conrad, 2004; Hindin, 2007). This socialization includes training for the technical aspects of role performance, as well as preparation for the more informal, sociopolitical realities associated with navigating the social milieu of the workplace (Richards et al., 2013; Schempp et al., 1993). OST presents a well-established approach to conceptualizing how acculturation, professional socialization and organizational socialization underlie PE teachers' identity development, and accounts for their actions

and behaviors in the context of schools (Curtner-Smith, 2009; Lawson, 1986; Templin and Schempp, 1989a). It therefore provides an appropriate framework through which to understand socialization that informs the way in which social actors construct the role of PE teacher in school settings.

Recognizing that the assertions of OST and role theory are complementary, I propose that combining the theoretical traditions could provide a more in-depth, holistic understanding of the lives and careers of physical educators. A blended theory also provides greater insight into the ways in which socialization experiences inform negotiations relative to social role performance in the context of schools. I have chosen to refer to this blended theoretical perspective as role socialization theory. Drawing from elements of each of its parent perspectives, role socialization seeks to explore: (a) the ways in which the occupational role of the PE teacher is socially constructed and contextually bound in a school setting; (b) how individuals are attracted to, prepared for, and socialized into PE teaching and coaching roles; and (c) how socialization influences the ways in which role-sets view the role of the PE teacher as a member of the school community. The following sections examine a series of argument forwarded by role socialization theory. These arguments include (a) subjective theories and recruitment into and preparation for the teaching profession; (b) negotiated definitions of the PE teacher role; and (c) role stressors and teacher/coach role conflict.

Subjective theories and recruitment into and preparation for the teaching profession

Socially constructed definitions of PE not only inform the experiences of in-service teachers, but they also have implications for the children with whom those teachers work. While spending nearly 13,000 hours in schools throughout primary and secondary education, children engage in an apprenticeship of observation whereby they observe their PE teachers and the way in which PE is perceived in the school environment (Lortie, 1975). During this time, the type of PE to which children are exposed leads to the construction of subjective theories related to what it means to be a PE teacher (Richards et al., 2013). Grotjahn (1991) defined subjective theories as 'complex cognitive structures that are highly individual, relatively stable, and relatively enduring, and that fulfill the tasks for explaining and predicting such human behaviors as action, reaction, thinking, emotion, and perception' (p. 188).

Subjective theories have two important implications for the PE profession. First, they inform how individuals view the field of PE. Children exposed to ineffective PE and those that attend schools in which PE is not valued are likely to view the subject as less important than other subjects in the school. Given that subjective theories tend to persist over time (Green, 2002), these children often grow into adults who do not value PE and who perpetuate stereotypes that marginalize the discipline. Second, children's PE experiences impact the degree to which they grow to see PE as a viable career option. Although parents, siblings, counselors and others have all been cited as important agents of socialization in facilitating one's decision to pursue a career in PE (Dewar, 1989; Spittle et al., 2009), PE teachers and teacher/coaches are likely to have the most direct impact (Curtner-Smith et al., 2008).

While the marginal status of PE in schools is related to a variety of factors, many of which are outside of the direct control of PE teachers, members of the PE profession can take small steps to advance the discipline through the way that they teach (Lux and McCullick, 2011). By challenging misconceptions and developing high quality, engaging PE experiences, teachers can both instill positive perceptions related to physically active lifestyles and the role of PE in the school

curriculum. This could, over time, challenge stereotypes and misconceptions as individuals' perceptions of PE shift. In this way, PE teachers and teacher/coaches are uniquely positioned to act as stewards of the discipline by teaching high quality PE that shows children to value physical activity, and by actively recruiting students who show an interest in sport and physical activity into PETE programmes. In the absence of attempts to shape children's perceptions of PE actively, the profession will be likely to perpetuate the same outdated practices that have been popular in schools for decades (Sirna et al., 2010).

Based in part on their experiences in PE and athletics, some children go on to enroll in PETE programmes with the goal of becoming a PE teacher. Richards and colleagues (2013) theorized that, as institutions of professional socialization, PETE programmes should serve two primary functions: to provoke recruits to question their assumptions related to teaching PE developed during acculturation, and to prepare them for careers as PE teachers. This preparation refers to both equipping preservice teachers with the knowledge and skills required to teach PE effectively, as well as preparation for navigating relationships with role-sets and working in the sociopolitical contexts of schools. Importantly, the second function of PETE can only be addressed after accounting for the first. Since recruits' subjective theories typically embrace the traditional practices that were often part of their childhood PE experiences (Richards et al., 2014d), training in innovative pedagogies, such as model-based instruction (e.g. Metzler, 2005), cannot be realized without first encouraging recruits to incorporate these approaches within their subjective theories. PETE faculties are, in a sense, combatting the manifestations PE recruits came to embrace through their experiences as pupils in the school setting (Sirna et al., 2010). Recruits' subjective theories can be strong and resistant to change, which led Curtner-Smith and colleagues to characterize acculturation as 'the most potent type of socialization experience by PE teachers' (Curtner-Smith et al., 2008: 99). This is especially true in reference to coaching-oriented recruits who view teaching as a secondary role (Curtner-Smith, 2009).

An intricate component of both missions of PETE advanced by Richards and colleagues (2013) is the need to help students understand the ways in which PE is socially constructed and contextually bound within a school environment. This involves critiquing the role of PE teacher in the schools recruits attended, as well as developing a broader understanding of how role-sets influence the daily work of PE teachers. Students should also be equipped with skills needed to navigate relationships with role-sets while remaining faithful to the quality practices instilled during teacher training. Toward this end, Richards and colleagues (2014a) describe a seminar series focused on early induction in the teaching profession, and Lux and colleagues (Lux, 2011; Lux and McCullick, 2011) discuss research-based strategies for combatting marginalization that could be integrated into teacher education programmes. Engaging in these educational experiences as preservice teachers could help recruits develop a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges they will face in interacting with role-sets and navigating micropolitics as they begin their teaching career. This could help in more fully equipping them to assert their beliefs and values as physical educators, which would in the long run have implications for how they teach their children to value PE. Advancing the discipline through advocacy must, therefore, begin during teacher training.

Socially negotiated definitions of the PE teacher role

As discussed in the preceding section, through socialization, individuals develop expectations for what it means to perform the role of PE teacher (Conrad, 2004; Hindin, 2007). These expectations manifest in the way in which individuals behave in accordance with their beliefs about how

physical educators should perform their roles in the context of schools (Biddle, 1986; Turner, 2001). The expectations of key stakeholders in one's social role performance (i.e. role-sets) exert pressure to guide the manifestation of the social role (Merton, 1957; Richards et al., 2013). Role performance is, therefore, negotiated between the status incumbent and role-sets. Research related to OST has documented that key role-sets for PE teachers include colleagues (both inside and outside of the PE department), administrators, children and parents (Richards et al., 2014d). While PE teachers may believe that their subject is important to the central function of schooling, certain role-sets may view it as having lesser import than traditional academic subjects such as numeracy and literacy (Lux and McCullick, 2011; Schempp et al., 1993). Children, for example, may view PE as an opportunity to play, while classroom teachers see it as their break in the school day and an opportunity for planning time. Role-sets can be quite explicit in articulating their views of the PE profession. Parents in the study by O'Sullivan (1989) told PE teachers that failing 'gym class' is tantamount to failing lunch or recess. Contexts that endorse a conceptualization of PE as a lesser subject are likely to cause role stress when encountered by a PE teacher who believes that the subject is important to the overall mission of schooling (Blankenship and Coleman, 2009; Lux and McCullick, 2011; Wilson, 1962).

When negotiating conflicting expectations for role performance status incumbents are likely to prioritize the perspectives of role-sets viewed as most salient in their work (Merton, 1957). The extent to which role performance is visible to role-sets also impacts adherence to expectations. Since teachers spend most of their time interacting with children in the cellular organization of schools (Lortie, 1975), and PE teachers in particular tend to be physically isolated from teaching colleagues (Curtner-Smith, 2001; Stroot and Ko, 2006), this helps to explain why children play such an important role as socializing agents (Richards et al., 2014d). Pupils' expectations can have a significant impact on teachers' role performance, and may predict behavior better than expectations of the administrators who have formal oversight over PE teachers' work (Curtner-Smith, 1997). Children may actively attempt to negotiate the manifestation of the PE teacher role, which can result in teachers compromising their initial pedagogical approaches in favor of those that align more with students' expectations (Wahl-Alexander and Curtner-Smith, 2013).

While children represent an important role-set in the work of PE teachers, colleagues – both inside and outside of PE – also play a critical socializing function. The influence of colleague expectations for role performance has been referred to as the institutional press (Zeichner and Tabachnick, 1983), which reflects custodial pressure to maintain the status quo within the context of schools. These pressures are directed toward promoting conformity to the socially constructed definition of the PE teacher role currently operating within the school context (Richards et al., 2014d). In response to the institutional press, teachers can adopt different social strategies ranging from internalized adjustment to strategic redefinition. On one end of the spectrum, teachers can completely comply with the context-specific definition of the teacher role promoted within the school (internalized adjustment). At the other end, they may completely reject the status quo in an attempt to redefine the way in which the role is socially constructed (strategic redefinition). True strategic redefinition is rare because it involves actively reshaping the way in which role-sets view one's function as a PE teacher. This can be difficult for new members of school environments that prioritize seniority over the novelty of ideas (Richards et al., 2014d). As a compromise, strategic compliance reflects a covert rejection of norms as the teacher projects the outward appearance of compliance, while maintaining allegiances to practices and behaviors that run counter to the status quo. This allows the teacher to exercise their sense of agency while avoiding the social sanctions that would accompany outright rejection of normalized practices (Williams and Williamson, 1998).

Role stressors and teacher/coach role conflict

Negotiating expectations from various role-sets through the ongoing process of organizational socialization has been found to cause role stress among teachers (Conley and You, 2009; Schempp et al., 1993). PE teachers may be more susceptible to this role stress because of issues stemming from marginalization, isolation and insufficient support from role-sets (Blankenship and Coleman, 2009; Lux and McCullick, 2011; Wilson, 1962). Ambiguity related to goals and accountability structures for PE can lead to feelings of marginalization and decreased motivation for teaching (Herbert, 2007). For example, in the USA standardized testing has been widely adopted to guide the work of teachers in core subject areas such as numeracy and literacy (Valli et al., 2007), but no such tests exist to guide the work of PE teachers. Furthermore, teachers' work, which often extends beyond the school day due to requirements such as grading, preparing lessons, committee work, and completing paperwork, lends itself to feelings of overload (Conley and Woosley, 2000; Conley and You, 2009).

Experiencing role stress can cause problems in the workplace such as poor job performance, lower levels of commitment and higher rates of accidents (Hom and Kinicki, 2001). Role stress has also been linked to decreased job satisfaction, and increased burnout and attrition (Byrne, 1991; Conley and You, 2009; Lee and Ashforth, 1996). The socialization that occurs as role performance is negotiated can further result in reality shock and the washout effect (Blankenship and Coleman, 2009; Veenman, 1984). Reality shock has been defined as 'the collapse of missionary ideals formed during teacher training by the harsh and rude reality of everyday classroom life' (Veenman, 1984: 143) and occurs when the realities of school life do not match one's expectations based on acculturation and professional socialization. In these cases, teachers enter a school context in which they encounter perspectives that do not match their subjective definition of what it means to be an effective physical educator. Similarly, the washout effect, which is a process through which the pressures of the institutional press lead to the dissolution of knowledge, skills and dispositions instilled during undergraduate training (Zeichner and Tabachnick, 1981), reflects the tendency of veteran colleagues to pressure beginning teachers toward social role conformity. This pressure often promotes traditional approaches to pedagogy and establishes barriers to anything learned during PETE that conflicts with these traditional practices (Richards et al., 2014d).

One area of role stress that has received particular attention in the PE literature is teacher/coach role conflict, which results from conflicting expectations for performance across the dual roles of PE teacher and athletic coach (Locke and Massengale, 1978; Richards and Templin, 2012). Recruitment into PE can involve conflict between teaching and coaching roles, and the way in which the dual role structure is conceptualized within school environments can lead to stress and cause individuals to prioritize one role over the other (Herbert, 2007; Templin et al., 1994). While the majority of this research has been conducted in the USA, teacher/coach role conflict has been acknowledged in a variety of countries in which PE teachers engage in extracurricular coaching roles (see Kwon et al., 2010; O'Connor and Macdonald, 2002).

Related to recruitment, acculturation experiences predispose individuals to adopting orientations that lie along a spectrum ranging from coaching oriented to teaching oriented (Curtner-Smith, 2001; Richards et al., 2014d). Individuals who develop strong coaching orientations tend to prioritize coaching over teaching, and those who develop strong teaching orientations are more likely to give preference to the teaching role. Those who fall toward the middle of the spectrum have equal preference for both roles. Recent evidence indicates that PE recruits may be more interested in the teaching role than they have been in previous generations (Pike and Fletcher,

2014). However, a notable portion of recruits pursue careers in PE primarily to coach and ‘view teaching PE as a career contingency’ (Curtner-Smith et al., 2008: 99). Professional socialization tends to be relatively ineffective in altering the beliefs and practices of those individuals who develop strong coaching orientations because it runs counter to their core beliefs and subjective theories related to role prioritization (Curtner-Smith et al., 2008; Richards et al., 2014d). The development of role orientations have a traceable impact on teachers’ careers as individuals who develop a strong preference for one role, but are compelled to fill both roles concurrently, and are more likely to experience role stress and burnout than those who have a balanced preference for both roles (Richards and Templin, 2012; Ryan, 2008).

Although teachers across all subjects coach (Richards et al., 2014c), PE teachers face additional pressures and expectations to engage in coaching duties. So much so that, in some contexts, coaching is perceived as ‘as an expected extracurricular professional commitment’ for PE teachers (Konukman et al., 2010: 19). Role-sets expect superior performance and winning records from the coach, but often do not hold the PE teacher accountable for teaching quality. Accolades associated with being a good coach also tend to be greater than those afforded for being a good teacher (Richards and Templin, 2012). As such, the structure of the school encourages time to be spent on being a good coach while implying that rewards for being a good teacher, and consequences for being a poor teacher, will be minimal. Such a culture reaffirms the beliefs of individuals initially attracted to PE because they want to coach and challenges those that believe in the importance of quality teaching (Richards et al., 2014b).

Over time, teachers resolute in their mission to teach quality PE may become burned out and leave the school. Other PE teachers continue to work in environments that pressure them to prioritize the coach role. This results in role retreatism (Millslagle and Morley, 2004), and has a negative impact on commitment to and performance in the teaching role (Konukman et al., 2010). Although role conflict and role retreatism have been cited widely in the PE literature, evidence also indicates that it is possible for teacher/coaches to survive and thrive in the dual role structure (Napper-Owen and Phillips, 1995; O’Connor and Macdonald, 2002). Toward this end, Richards and Templin (2012) drew on OST and role theory to propose a multidimensional perspective of teacher/coach role conflict. It was postulated that, while some teacher/coaches experience role conflict, it is possible for individuals to develop a sense of role balance (Marks and MacDermid, 1996). Foundational to this perspective is the influence of socialization experiences related to recruiting into and training for a career in PE, as well as ongoing socialization in the context of schools. Teacher/coach role conflict would be more severe, for example, when role-sets and the culture of schools emphasize performance in the coaching role, and less severe when school cultures promotes balance across both the roles.

Conclusions

The purpose of this paper was to articulate role socialization theory as a perspective that draws on OST and role theory in describing the lived experiences of PE teachers within the sociopolitical context of schools. Borrowing elements of each of its parent perspectives, role socialization seeks to explore: (a) the ways in which the occupational role of the PE teacher is socially constructed and contextually bound in a school setting; (b) how individuals are attracted to, prepared for, and socialized into PE teaching and coaching roles; and (c) how socialization influences the ways in which role-sets view the role of the PE teacher as a member of the school community. While this

brief introduction of role socialization theory is not comprehensive, it does lay the foundation for the more complete development of the perspective in future works.

Role socialization theory posits that individuals' understanding and performance of the PE teacher role is shaped through the socialization process as they are prepared for their responsibilities, and as they interact with various role-sets as part of their daily work. When role consensus is achieved between role-sets and the status incumbent, issues pertaining to marginalization, isolation and role stress are likely to be reduced. Since all involved agree on the way in which the role of the PE teacher should be performed, the status incumbent is less likely to feel negative, interpersonal consequences associated with that performance (Turner, 2001). While this can lead to the development of a positive and supportive culture among teachers, it should be noted, however, that role consensus is not a value-laden construct. Consensus may support best practices in teaching PE, but in certain contexts, it may also support a 'busy-happy-good' (Placek, 1983) mentality in which PE is viewed as a less than educational enterprise. As such, administrators and school leaders must expect high quality practices and develop cultures that promote and support these practices. Furthermore, role consensus represents an ideal rather than a common phenomenon (Biddle, 1986). It is likely that physical educators will encounter perspectives that run counter to their own, and that they will need to navigate the resulting role stress. PETE programming should prepare students for these experiences (Richards et al., 2013).

The role of school teacher has long been considered a complex and emotionally draining enterprise (Day et al., 2007; Ryan, 1970). Recent government initiatives in the USA and elsewhere have only intensified this stress with a focus on high-stakes testing and teacher and school-level accountability (Valli et al., 2007). Given the further consideration that current legislation in many countries is not supportive of PE in the school curriculum, it is more important now than ever to understand the lived experiences of PE teachers and how these experiences relate to the development of effective PE programmes. By drawing from both OST and role theory, role socialization theory allows for an increased understanding of workplace culture and the social construction and negotiation of definitions pertaining to teaching and coaching roles. Role socialization theory also accounts for the role of the socialization process in the development and maintenance of the PE teacher role. Therefore, as scholars continue to examine teacher socialization and the influence of the sociopolitical contexts of school on teachers' lives and careers, it is recommended that role socialization theory be adopted as a theoretical framework.

As role socialization theory continues to take form, psychometric instruments intended to measure the constructs and hypotheses it proposes should be developed. While inventories are currently available to measure some constructs, such as role stress (Conley and You, 2009) and teacher/coach role conflict (Richards et al., 2014b), others lack psychometric instrumentation. For example, marginality has been documented among PE teachers in numerous qualitative studies (Lux and McCullick, 2011; O'Sullivan, 1989); however, to date no attempt has been made to quantify the experience of marginality or to validate an instrument intended to measure the construct. Similarly, no reliable and valid measures of isolation, school and community support, or teacher/coach role preference are available in the extant literature. In the future, the proliferation of both qualitative and quantitative enquiry promises to inform what we know about the lived experiences of PE teachers. For example, the advancement of qualitative research agendas could provide insight into how certain constructs relate to one another and vary based on grouping variables such as gender, school level and teaching context (Richards et al., 2014d).

Furthermore, the influence of public policy on the experiences of PE teachers is an underdeveloped area of research that should be addressed by future scholars. Marginalization occurs not only within the

school, but is also embedded within the discourse of public policy documents, such as ‘No Child Left Behind’ (US Department of Education, 2002) in the USA, which cast PE as less important than other school subjects. Conceptualizing PE as peripheral to the central mission of schooling may shield PE teachers from some of the stress associated with standardized testing and teacher accountability programmes (Valli et al., 2007). However, these policies are also likely to have negative implications for the work of PE teachers that need to be explored more completely in future research.

In closing, the underlying motivation for proposing role socialization theory was to provide scholars of teacher socialization research with a more flexible and robust theoretical framework for conducting research. Furthermore, the paper has drawn attention to important issues related to teacher identity development that have implications for PETE faculty working with teacher education students and in-service teachers. As articulated by Day and colleagues (2007), developing a more complete understanding of identity development and the lived experiences of teachers in the sociopolitical world of schools is important because

‘Teachers matter. They matter to the education and achievement of their students and, more and more, to their personal and social wellbeing... although some students learn despite their teachers, most learn because of them – not just because of what and how they teach, but, because of who they are.’ (p. 1)

If we truly want to understand who teachers are, we need to understand their lives beyond the classroom both within and outside of the context of schools. By exploring the ways in which teachers are socialized, navigate relationships with role-sets, and manage tensions stemming from role stress within the occupational milieu of schools, role socialization theory reflects a step toward a more complex understanding of teachers’ identities, lives and careers.

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