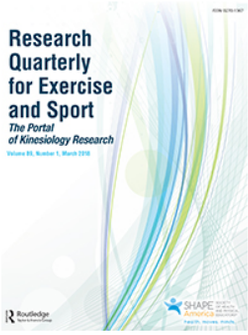

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Entering the Field of Physical Education: The Journey of Fifteen First-Year Teachers

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Given the significant challenges facing today's physical educators, the purpose of this study was to examine the expectations of induction teachers and identify the factors in both their personal and organizational environments enhanced or constrained their assimilation into the field during their 1st year. **Method:** Using occupational socialization theory as a guide, data from demographic surveys and a series of formal interviews with participants at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year were inductively analyzed for theme development. **Results:** Results revealed positive acculturation experiences and unity regarding the purpose of physical education as preparing students to be fit for a lifetime. Barriers were noted to be family and personal crises, role conflict, isolation, marginalization, issues with classroom management and discipline, and difficulties in developing positive relationships with stakeholders. Enhancers were identified as positive interactions and rapport with students, colleagues, and administrators and favorable individual dispositions. **Conclusion:** Implications indicate a need for purposeful physical education teacher education training to proactively address these barriers during professional preparation as well as the creation of additional support systems for beginning teachers.

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With nearly 150,000 new teachers entering the field each year, the education system is infused with an abundance of new energy and a palpable sense of optimism wrapped around a willingness to bring change (Ingersoll, Merrill, & Stuckey, 2014). Often, though, within short order, those ideals clash with full-blown doses of the reality encountered during day-to-day experiences. During the first 5 years of employment, more than 41% of teachers will leave the profession (Perda, 2013), a trend that has been slowly increasing during the last 25 years (Ingersoll et al., 2014). These percentages are often higher in urban and rural education settings (Barnes, Crowe, & Schaefer, 2007), presenting a significant barrier for overall improvement of the education system.

In physical education, beginning teachers face unique challenges such as isolation (Shoval, Erlich, & Fejgin, 2010), marginalization (Blankenship & Coleman, 2009), reality shock (Richards, Templin, & Gaudreault, 2013), and role conflict (Locke & Massengale, 1978). Professionally, issues with classroom management (MacPhail & Hartley, 2016) and the novice's lack of instructional expertise and experience can create concerns during lesson instruction and the transfer of knowledge (Shoval et al., 2010). In addition, the teaching environment can pose significant barriers. For example, negative outcomes often occur when induction teachers perceive low levels of support from colleagues, students, and administrators (MacPhail & Hartley, 2016). Diverse populations, education policies, and lack of resources, such as space and equipment, can detrimentally impact assimilation (Richards et al., 2013).

In spite of these circumstances, however, newly minted professionals usually arrive with a genuine desire to impact students, with some believing that teaching carries a moral obligation for positively developing students (MacPhail & Tannehill, 2012). Even with such optimistic energy in these newly minted agents of change, physical education curricula remain relatively unchanged as educators resist reform efforts (Zhu, Ennis, & Chen, 2011). Engaging students in physical activity and sport remains a primary curricular goal; however, the delivery of programming varies widely as physical educators seek to keep pace with dynamic educational trends (Seymour & Garrison, 2015). Traditional approaches to physical education are proving to be less relevant for an increasingly diverse student body (Krause, 2014; Schmidlein, Vickers, & Chepyator-Thomson, 2014). In addition,

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developing effective physical educators remains a primary concern for improving the field. To protect the vitality of the profession, meaningful change must occur through increasingly creative teaching methods, reflective decision-making practices, and collaborative efforts geared toward demonstrating physical education's unique and essential contribution to the community (Doolittle, 2014).

Occupational socialization theory, connected to physical education by Lawson (1983), describes the array of influences that shape a teacher. This lengthy process uniquely unfolds as an individual encounters certain experiences and circumstances (Schempp & Graber, 1992). Every profession exerts an influence on its members, and new recruits must make decisions to position themselves somewhere along the continuum of protecting culture and traditions or innovating toward change in the profession (Lawson, 1983). Over time, the cycle can lead to formation of beliefs and assumptions about teaching strategies, the ability of students to learn, and the scope and sequence of the curriculum (Timken & McNamee, 2012). Beginning with acculturation during the school-age years, teaching candidates are exposed to an "apprenticeship of observation" whereby they form expectations for the "work" of teaching, including both the routines and rituals associated with the profession (Lortie, 1975). Upon entry into a professional physical education teacher education (PETE) program, the course of study related to teacher preparation, candidates' preconceived values from acculturation experiences may be challenged as they reconcile whether to accept or reject the ideologies presented in their training. This dialectic process, often occurring during professional socialization, allows for opportunities to examine existing beliefs and can provide an impetus for growth and development in the future physical educator (Schempp & Graber, 1992). In all, the process of socialization evolves as each teacher develops experience and is influenced by various contextual factors (Lawson, 1983).

The final phase of occupational socialization and the focus of this study is organizational socialization, and unlike professional socialization, it can be extremely influential. This is when the real "work" of teaching begins, and the induction educator must learn the process of navigating the day-to-day reality of the profession (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Lacey (1977) identified a variety of outcomes during assimilation. Some educators embrace the school environment's desired behaviors despite personal reservations (strategic compliance), some espouse behaviors that match the context of the environment (internalized adjustment), and others proactively alter their environments (strategic redefinition; see Lacey, 1977). In some cases, an "institutional press" is created between personal, professional, and environmental influences, and the ideals acquired during professional training simply "wash out" (Zeichner & Tabachnik, 1983). In other cases, physical educators positively assimilate and have productive careers (Lux & McCullick, 2011; Woods & Lynn, 2014).

In reality, however, across the body of literature, relatively few longitudinal studies of physical educators exist (Banville, 2015; Lynn & Woods, 2010; Woods & Lynn, 2001, 2014), and across the body of literature related to socialization in physical education, most research focused on the results of assimilation for entire cohorts of beginning teachers rather than comparing results across genders, school settings, or school levels. Among the relatively few exceptions, Banville (2015) examined differences among a heterogeneous gender group of 21 beginning teachers across the K–12 spectrum. She documented this sample's increased emphases on both their teaching context and their beginning teaching repertoire (Banville, 2015). Woods and Lynn (2001) chronicled the career journey of physical educators. Of 6 elementary physical educators (4 men and 2 women), 50% (3 men) remained in the field for more than 9 years, and after 25 years, only 2 men remained (Lynn & Woods, 2010; Woods & Lynn, 2014). Those who did persist cited their ability to negotiate challenges as a decisive factor. Collegiality, demonstrating flexibility, and perceiving control over one's environment were key elements in that process (Woods & Lynn, 2001).

Addressing the level of the teacher, Richards and Templin (2011) highlighted the journey of Janet and the 1st-year socialization experiences related to her state's mentoring program. Janet, an itinerant in both elementary and middle school settings, perceived positive support from both colleagues and her administrator in the latter setting but experienced isolation and a lack of collegiality within the elementary school environment (Richards & Templin, 2011). In contrast, a recent study of 45 beginning teachers revealed no differences in perceived success among physical educators employed across school levels (Zach, Stein, Sivan, Harari, & Nabel-Heller, 2015).

Specifically related to gender differences, Blankenship and Coleman (2009) provided details of the early portion of the induction process for elementary physical educators Roxie and Dean. Overall, Roxie exhibited more washout of ideals and skills compared with her male counterpart (Blankenship & Coleman, 2009). Banville (2015), relatedly, found that male participants placed more importance on establishing a professional identity than did their female counterparts.

The induction setting may also influence teacher success. For example, teachers employed in diverse settings may encounter massive challenges, especially because their PETE experiences are limited in terms of school context (Flory, 2016; Flory & McCaughtry, 2014). Flory (2016) reported that all three (two female) of the urban beginning teachers she studied, even with varying degrees of previous exposure to diverse settings, described feelings of cultural distance and struggles to provide meaningful curricula for their students (Flory, 2016). Such research confirms that delivering instruction that is culturally relevant requires understanding the dynamics connected to the community of learners (Flory & McCaughtry, 2014).

Given the significant challenges facing today's physical educators, the purpose of this study was to examine the expectations of induction teachers and identify the factors in both their personal and organizational environments that enhance or constrain their assimilation into the field during their 1st year. Unlike previous research that has been limited in its heterogeneity, this study examined the effects of organizational socialization on male and female 1st-year physical educators across a variety of geographical settings and school levels. The longitudinal data add depth and breadth to the sparse existing literature on these topics by addressing the following research questions: (a) What expectations are present as 1st-year physical educators enter the field?; (b) What factors positively enhance the socialization process of 1st-year physical educators?; and (c) what factors negatively constrain the socialization process of 1st-year physical educators?

Method

Recruitment of participants

All 2014 PETE graduates from five Midwestern and Southwestern public and private universities were contacted regarding the project, and a total of 15 consenting 1st-year, full-time physical educators, including 8 women and 7 men, were selected from this convenience sample to participate for a period of 1 academic year. The mean age of participants was 25.87 years (*SD* = 4.24 years), and all self-identified as Caucasian. In total, the participants were heterogeneous in their marital status, school level, geographic location, and school setting, as noted by the percentage of the student population eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (see Table 1).

Data collection

After obtaining university institutional review board approval for the project and consent from participants and school districts, data collection occurred through formal interviews, field notes, and a demographic survey. Data were collected in four distinct phases: Phase I occurred near the beginning of the academic year (generally August). Phase II data were collected within 2 months of the participants' employment (generally October). Phase III, near the semester break (generally January), and Phase IV, near the end of the academic year (generally May), continued with the same protocols and collection strategies.

Interviews

To decrease variation and establish continuity of questioning across participants and throughout data collection, formal interview guides, shaped by the theoretical framework, were utilized. The same experienced interviewer conducted all interviews and asked questions in a uniform manner with pertinent follow-up questions posed as needed (Patton, 2014). Each formal interview lasted approximately 30 min to 45 min. Interviews were conducted in person whenever possible and were recorded for transcription.

Table 1. Participant demographic data.

Name	Gender	Age	Marital Status	Location	Level	% FRL	Physical Education Time/Week
Adrian	M	33	Single	Southwestern Suburban Public	Elem.	30	One 50-min period
Brady	M	39	Married	Southwestern Suburban Public	Middle	40	Five 50-min periods
Carla	F	25	Single	Midwestern Suburban Public	High	58	Five 50-min periods
Chad	M	27	Cohabitating	Southwestern Suburban Public	Elem.	32	One 50-min period
Daniel	M	24	Married	Midwestern Private	Primary	0	Two 30-min periods
Eleanor	F	24	Single	Midwestern Suburban Public	Middle	83	Five 50-min periods
Jess	F	23	Single	Midwestern Suburban Public	Middle	33	Five 50-min periods
Jordan	F	27	Married	Midwestern Private	Elem.	0	Three 30-min periods
Kate	F	23	Single	Midwestern Urban Public	Elem.	97	Five 50-min periods for 18 weeks
Luke	M	23	Single	Midwestern Urban Public	Elem.	95	Two 45-min periods
Marie	F	22	Married	Southwestern Suburban Public	Primary	32	One or two 35-min to 50-min periods
Nicole	F	22	Single	Midwestern Suburban Public	Elem.	87	One 40-min period.
Paul	M	31	Married	Southwestern Rural Public	High	51	Five 50-min periods
Sarah	F	22	Single	Midwestern Rural Public	High	23	Five 50-min periods
Zach	M	23	Cohabitating	Southwestern Suburban Public	Elem.	83	Two 30-min periods

Note. Primary = Grades K–8; Elem. = Elementary, Grades K–5 or K–6; FRL = free or reduced-price lunch.

The question sets for each interview phase particularly targeted the candidates' experiences, both positive and negative, as well as their expectations. For comparative purposes, many of the same questions were repeated throughout all interview phases. For example, candidates were queried about which experiences had been better than expected and were asked to describe their relationships and interactions with colleagues and administrators during each interview. To gather baseline data during Phase I, participants responded to questions such as, "What challenges do you think you will face as a physical educator?" and "What do you most want to accomplish during your 1st year of teaching?" Phase II questions asked participants to describe their "experiences so far," the challenges they had encountered, and the way(s) in which they were addressing those challenges. The focus of this stage was to establish participants' impressions of employment and describe the realities of the classroom environment. The focus in Phase III was to examine the nature of the successes and barriers both inside and outside the classroom environment, and the same questions from Phase II were readministered. At the end of the academic year during Phase IV, participants were asked to reflect on their experiences as a whole and on their "expectations for the 2nd year of teaching," and many of the previous interview questions were revisited.

During Phases II, III, and IV, extensive field notes were taken during observations of each participant's teaching. In total, a minimum of four classes were observed for each participant during each phase. These data served to corroborate, triangulate, and add depth to the evidence present as a result of the other data collection methods.

Demographic survey

Teachers also completed an online demographic survey during Phase I. The survey elicited details pertaining to age, gender, race/ethnicity, self-reported scores for grade point average (GPA) during undergraduate coursework, and background information regarding employment.

Data analysis

Each participant was given a pseudonym, and all interview data were transcribed verbatim. The development of themes proceeded with inductive analysis through Huberman and Miles's (1994) four-step process of data collection, data reduction, organization of themes, and comparison of themes to the theoretical model. Data collection continued according to a prescribed timeline composed of interviews, surveys, and systematic observations. During each phase, participants were offered opportunities for member checking through e-mailed transcripts and the option to amend responses to both interview and survey data. In addition, researchers regularly compared perceptions, field notes, and emerging themes. During each phase, interview data were assimilated question by question for comparison. Similar responses were grouped by category, and upon completion of this process, responses to congruent interview questions across all phases were compared and analyzed for emerging themes.

To enhance the trustworthiness of this study, techniques consistent with those outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985) were utilized, including creation of an audit trail detailing the research process and timeline, informal and formal member checking with each participant after transcription of each interview to verify accuracy, use of participant quotes, intentional cross checking for negative cases through thorough review of transcripts, and constant comparison of existing data to new data as content units were distilled into categories. In addition, periodic meetings with experienced peer debriefers were conducted to aid in developing interpretations of the data. The use of multiple sources of data and a multifaceted approach served to provide a high degree of trustworthiness.

Results

The overall themes of this research project are organized by their appearance during the academic year (beginning composed of data from Phases I and II, midpoint composed of data from Phase III, and end composed of data from Phase IV). For continuity in reporting results, all themes described were identified by a majority of participants unless otherwise indicated, and a comprehensive list is presented in Figure 1.

Beginning of the school year (Phases I and II)

Positive acculturation and disposition

Acculturation experiences were a positive experience for 11 of the 15 teachers, and those interactions continued to shape them as teachers. In fact, this influence, for most, was a primary impetus in their subjective warrant. For Eleanor, it was especially true. She stated, "Having those special teachers who made a difference in my life made me want to go and make a difference in the others' lives."

As a whole, this group self-identified individual dispositions toward a strong work ethic, which was verified through interviews and demographic surveys (mean undergraduate GPA = 3.68, SD = 0.25). Many of these 1st-year teachers, Jess included, believed they had something to prove. She explained, "I want to show

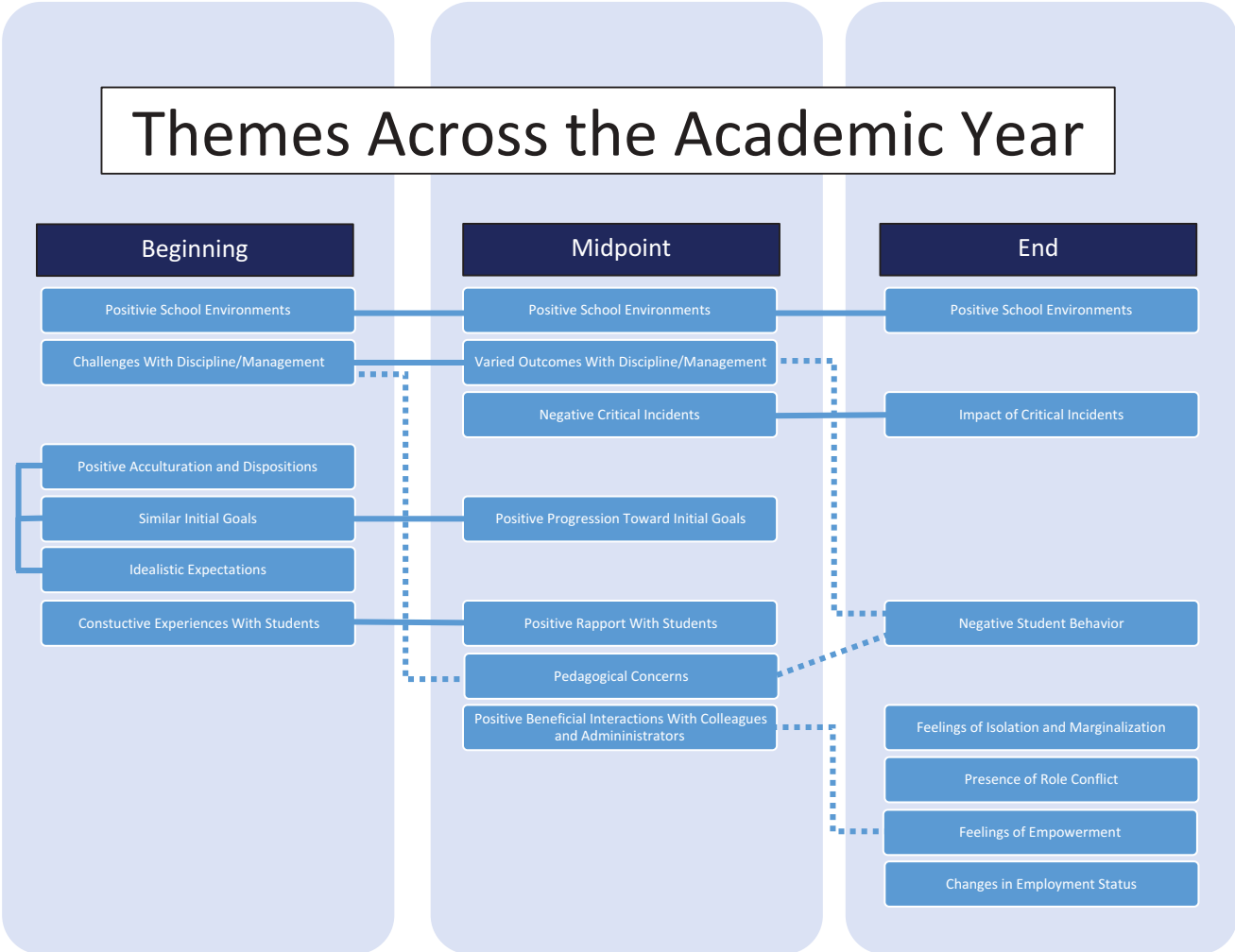

Figure 1. Themes across the academic year. Solid lines indicate a direct relationship over time, while dashed lines indicate an indirect relationship over time.

the school district that even though I'm a 1st-year teacher, I'm also an excellent teacher. I want to prove that … I can be effective and make a difference in the students." The primary goals for these 1st-year physical educators were to develop a routine for classroom management and develop a working discipline plan. Zach stated, "I just want to make sure my classes are managed. That way, we will have smoother transitions and more activity time. If I'm spending all of my time managing, it's taking away from the students being active." Zach's positive disposition and acculturation experiences, similar to those of many of his peers, propelled him to strive hard after his goals.

Similar physical education goals

Before school started, participants were united in their beliefs about the purpose and outcomes of physical education: Educating students to be fit for a lifetime and providing the skills to be physically active for a lifetime were the primary responses from 13 of the 15 participants. Participants, such as Daniel, echoed that the role of physical education was "easily one of the most important subjects in school because it can impact every single aspect of a student's life." Those beliefs were paired with fundamental teaching philosophies identifying a desire to help students apply physical education knowledge and skills to real life. Sarah expressed her goal in the following statement: "I want them to understand that they can be active in their own way and be healthy in a variety of ways." She went on to explain, "I want them to be able to enjoy and understand the basic concepts of it (being healthy). If one of them has a basketball, they can play over the summer and stay active and have fun with it." Similarly, Eleanor infused the skills she taught with teamwork concepts and believed it was important for her students to be

able to apply those same skills later in their jobs. As a whole, this group was unified in terms of creating positive outcomes for their students.

Positive school environments

In terms of the workplace, 11 of 15 teachers expected a supportive and welcoming environment from colleagues and administrators, and after the first few weeks of employment, most believed their experiences had been positive. Jess summed up her environment this way: "It's a very friendly teaching atmosphere. My coworkers are very open and willing to talk. They like to play jokes on each other, which is perfect because I like to do that kind of stuff, too." In fact, not one 1st-year teacher described initial interactions that were mostly negative. A few teachers, such as Carla, did not have any personal interaction with their administrators during these first few weeks of the school year. Carla voiced frustration over her unmet expectation with the following words: "I actually didn't get to meet my principal when I interviewed. I remember thinking on the 1st day of school that I was going to work, and I had never met my boss before. That was a little crazy." Conversely, 4 of these 1st-year teachers were finding additional support in the form of administrators who were former physical educators. Paul stated, "My principal is a former PE (physical education) teacher himself. He understands the importance of PE and helps me out the best that he can." Marie had a similar experience with her administrator. She said, "He can give an example of how it was when he was teaching. He can tell me how to fix things. That helps a lot." In general, the school environment contributed to initially positive assimilation processes.

Constructive experiences with students

Ten of the 15 participants had better-than-expected experiences in relation to student interactions. These 1st-year teachers, even those who had classes predominantly filled with students learning the English language, specifically noted that students were more cooperative and better behaved than expected. For most, it was easy to relate to students, which had a positive effect on the teachers' experiences. Paul, employed in a setting completely contrasting his student teaching context, expected students to be "rough" but was pleasantly greeted by a "great student base." Zach described his student population with the following words: "When they play football at lunch, the kids come together at the end. I didn't orchestrate this, but they all want to say something nice about another person. That's not something you would really ever see … The kids are great." For teachers such as Adrian, who were employed in school levels contrary to their preference, the positive start to the school year was a welcome surprise. He stated, "I really didn't want elementary school, but it was a job. I needed a job, but now I really do like it." The personal interactions between teachers and students, as identified through interviews and field notes, was often cited by the beginning physical educators as highlights of the 1st-year experience.

Challenges with discipline and management

As the year began, however, some teachers, including Sarah and Nicole, struggled with creating effective discipline plans. Sarah indicated that she knew that management would be a challenge based on her student-teaching experience. Eleanor was worried that the students would "walk all over [her] or give [her] a hard time" because she looked so young. In contrast, Nicole had different expectations. She expressed the following sentiments:

> I thought that the students would be more receptive to discipline. The school I'm at is very rough and a lot of the students do not respond to discipline. They don't care as much if they get in trouble. They don't care if I call their parents. They don't care if I write them up, so that has been different. I just think I'm dealing with a very different population than what I'm used to, so that has kind of thrown me a little bit.

In relation to management, while some teachers employed positive management strategies such as a focus on developing quality teacher–student relationships and proactive lesson planning, all 1st-year teachers employed a tiered warning system with lower-level consequences for first offenses and higher-level consequences for subsequent offenses. Nicole found this aspect to be challenging and struggled with students who were disrespectful toward her rules and routines. As a strategy, she took a very structured approach. She explained:

> First, they get a nonverbal warning, and I told them that means I will either look at you or walk closer. That means that I see what you are doing, and I don't like it. If they continue, they go down to the next consequence, which is a verbal warning. If they still continue, they'll get a time-out for a minute. When they feel they can … follow the rules, they can come back into the activity.

With management and discipline strategies garnering mixed results, this theme illustrates the diverse nature of the assimilation process.

Idealistic expectations and goals

At the beginning of the year, some participants admitted to underestimating the amount of work

involved in a typical day, especially related to nonteaching responsibilities. Adrian particularly was disenchanted with the amount of work outside the classroom. He conveyed:

> The teaching part, it's only like 10% of the job. There's a whole heck of a lot more, and the teaching part is the easy part. I didn't expect all of the e-mails, the meetings, all of the little side committees that you have to be on. I totally forgot about duty. I thought I would just show up at school, get my cart and equipment … and be ready to go.

In addition, the 1st-year physical educators projected changes that might occur from the beginning of the year to the midpoint of the school year: Better classroom management and fewer discipline issues with students were the primary responses from half of the beginning teachers. The participants perceived that initial behavioral issues among students stemmed, in part, from their lack of pedagogical experience dealing with a variety of skill levels. Luke echoed the sentiments of several other teachers when he stated, "My behavioral issues are coming from those kids who get it right away, get bored, and want to move ahead to the next thing." Similarly, Daniel expressed his concerns with this statement: "Having all of the grades (K–8) is different than I expected … It's a lot more difficult designing good lessons for all of those different grades." Though challenges and barriers were present in many situations, most of these 1st-year teachers displayed resiliency and perseverance as they navigated difficult circumstances.

Beginning-of-the-year summary

Initial experiences were generally positive with regards to building relationships and rapport with students, colleagues, and administrators. Candidates identified areas that in their perceptions needed improvement, and they discerned potential strategies for mediating barriers and challenges both inside and outside the classroom.

Midpoint of the school year (Phase III)

During the midpoint of the year, the participants explained the nature of the challenges, barriers, and successes as well as the congruency of their realities to initial expectations. These data provided valuable insights into the socialization process.

Negative critical incidents

With a semester of teaching complete, several individual critical incidents began to surface among the physical educators. Chad declined to continue participation in the study due to overwhelming personal issues, including the birth of his first child. Similarly, Brady, who encountered severe relational issues within his immediate family, admitted that personal factors outside of school began to affect his teaching, and he participated sporadically in the study for the remainder of the year. Another newly married participant, Paul, indicated his increased level of stress with the following comments:

> There's a lot going on in my personal life. I will admit that this week, my focus has been on that. In this year since I graduated from college, I've gotten married, started coaching football, I'm buying a house, and I'm taking on coaching baseball this upcoming season … If I can stay focused through this, I can probably manage just about anything.

Similarly, Marie was anticipating starting a master's degree program the following semester. These types of critical incidents played a major role in the participants' unfolding stories.

Student rapport becomes an asset

As a whole, 9 of 13 participants continued to perceive their ability to develop rapport with students as a primary strength, and positive experiences, documented through field notes and interviews, were occurring because of those relationships. Zach commented on one such significant critical incident with a student: "He's (the student) going through a hard time … So, I had lunch with him every other day for a while, and his teacher said how thankful she was that I was doing that—that I was a positive role model for him." Luke also used the rapport he built with students to help mitigate some students' discipline issues. He explained:

> I was kind of shell-shocked the first couple of weeks, but by now, I know when certain kids act up that things are going on at home. It's not all about what I'm asking them to do; it's something from outside of school.

Mixed with the overwhelmingly positive perspectives were a few critical incidents resulting in negative effects. In her role as a mandated reporter requiring her to report signs of abuse in her students, Kate was forced to contact Child Protective Services. After the incident, she said, "That was really hard … Other teachers will tell me that there is nothing I can do, but I feel bad because I want to help those kids." In general, this cohort displayed genuine care and compassion for their students, and emotional factors weighed heavily on the participants as they progressed through their 1st year.

Progressive advancement toward initial goals

In assessing their initial goals, every participant believed that he or she was making positive progress. Even though the diverse school environment had initially been difficult for Carla, by the midpoint of the year, she felt energized. She stated, "I think I've done a whole 180 on the comfort level (her original goal). It's like my school now." In a similar school environment, Eleanor also expressed that she was moving past the "surviving OK" stage to a point at which she could be more focused on her instructional goals. Similarly, Kate was determined to make a difference. She expressed, "I'm focused on reaching those kids who everyone else says are unreachable—the kids that everyone else has decided are not worth saving." Even in light of these sometimes-difficult circumstances, many participants continued to work toward their initial goals.

Positive school environments

At this point in the year, 7 of 13 participants perceived that their school environments, including relationships with colleagues and administrators, were positive. Luke expressed, "I really enjoy the people I work with. If it wasn't for that, I would probably really be struggling right now … I think they respect PE, too … I know that doesn't always happen at every school." While Luke's sentiments matched those of the majority of his cohort, a few were navigating more difficult organizational environments. Eleanor was disappointed with her current situation. She stated, "If you're a new teacher, you haven't 'earned your stripes' yet. We don't get to have some of the privileges that some of the other teachers who have been there longer get." Similarly, Kate felt marginalized and described it the following way:

> Being a 1st-year teacher, I get looked at like I don't really have much knowledge, and I don't get much say in things. My ideas get pushed to the side. I'm the low person on the totem pole. I'll create these great lesson plans and show him (her coworker), and he's like, 'Well, we're just going to do this [my way].'

Through the first half of the school year, the school environment generally continued to enhance the assimilation process.

Beneficial interactions with colleagues and administrators

In addition to the positive school environment, the strength of rapport with students, colleagues, and administrators continued to positively impact the induction year for most participants. Luke, in particular, expressed that his administrator was providing a great deal of accountability. "She's pushing me pretty hard, but that doesn't bother me at all. She told me again this morning that she expects a lot from me. I'm fine with that," he said. Likewise, Zach explained:

> I just think that coming in as a 1st-year teacher, you get nervous about the school you're at, the people you're going to be working with, about the administrator and whether he supports you or not … Teachers are taking notice [of physical education] in a positive way. They're getting excited and giving me all this good feedback. I have positive relationships with the kids … They say how much fun they had and how much they learned …. That's been great.

In contrast, Nicole had little interaction with most of her colleagues and her administrator. As an itinerant teacher, she felt disconnected. She said:

> I'm only here 2 days a week. I don't really feel accepted by the other teachers. I've heard them say that it's just PE. That I should be able to cut my class short if needed. The other special teachers (art and music) respect PE, but the regular teachers do not.

The blending of both positive and negative experiences provides insight into the diversity of factors that can either enhance or constrain the assimilation process.

Varied outcomes with discipline and management

Also continuing the pattern from the beginning of the year, the tiered warning system for discipline remained in most classrooms—9 of 13. For example, Marie employed the following system:

> The first time is a warning. The second time they go to time-out. The third time they have to sit out for the rest of the class. Usually, it doesn't get to that point, and I let them rejoin the class when they're ready.

Adrian, who had a military background, began the year emphasizing discipline and accountability. When asked about his strengths as an educator, he answered:

> Management … …What I did early on is paying off now. It's allowing me to get to know the kids and their personalities … Now, [during class,] it's management, have some fun with them, manage them again, start the lesson, teach, have some fun with them in the lesson, and more management if I need to … It's not management, management, management like it was in the beginning of the year.

Conversely, a few others considered their ability to manage the classroom and provide discipline a work in progress. Jess described her uphill battle:

> There's definitely some individuals in my class that have made the lessons very frustrating [sic]. They are just not trying, or they're going out of their way to do

> deceitful things. They'll try to see if they can get away with things without me noticing. Just figuring [out] how to work with those negative behaviors has just been draining on me.

Similar to the beginning of the year, varied discipline and management outcomes were characteristic of this midpoint phase.

Pedagogical concerns

Also at midyear, contrasts to initial data regarding the delivery of lesson content and lesson preparation began to appear. These perceived weaknesses were not verbalized during the initial interviews, and for teachers such as Adrian, the learning curve was an issue. He stated, "The more you teach, the more you see what is out there that needs to be done as a teacher. Every week, there is something new … It's a lot." Similarly, Eleanor expressed her frustration with her lesson delivery when she stated, "I tend to overplan things and squeeze too much into the lesson … I end up rushing things at the end and don't really close out the lesson very well." Also, at this point in the year, the typical workday was quite a bit longer for 7 of the 13 teachers due to additional coaching responsibilities. Sarah admitted to struggling with dual roles. She explained, "There are days where I feel everything is kind of jumbled … It's all happening so fast, and there's so much that has to be done. It kind of gets overwhelming." Pedagogical concerns, present at the midpoint, provided unique challenges to daily instruction.

Midpoint-of-the-year summary

At the midpoint of the school year, participants candidly discussed their perceptions of sociological enhancers, such as building of student rapport, a sense of positive progress toward attaining 1st-year goals, and life-giving interactions with colleagues and administrators. In contrast, themes surfaced regarding barriers and challenges to the assimilation process. These included the effects of negative critical incidents within several of the participants' personal environments as well as struggles with employing the appropriate discipline, management, and pedagogical techniques or strategies.

End of the school year (Phase IV)

During the final interview, participants addressed the cumulative experiences of the 1st year and expressed goals and expectations for the 2nd year. These data provided summative insights into the nature of the year-long assimilation process.

Feelings of empowerment

Even at the end of the year, participants continued to feel empowered and full of energy. Kate echoed the sentiments of her cohorts when she stated the following: "I'm still on the top of my game. I'm still ready to come to work every day." Similarly, Adrian commented, "I still love being a PE teacher. It's a lot of fun." The vast majority, 12 of 13, affirmed their role as "agents of change" and felt their initial goals were at least partially fulfilled. Going forward, all except 1 of these 1st-year teachers indicated a personal goal of proactive preparation for the upcoming summer months. Zach described his approach to the 2nd year as twofold, a combination of reflection and planning, when he stated, "I will go back through my lesson plans and the notes I took … and see what worked and what didn't. If it didn't work, I know I need help to resolve the issue." The feelings of empowerment that were present at this point in the school year served to energize the teachers toward future professional growth.

Role conflict

In contrast to information gathered at the beginning of the year, almost all participants—11 of 13—coached a sport during the school year, nearly double the number who had expected to coach. Balancing the demands of both coaching and teaching led to several documented cases of role conflict. In the most blatant example, Paul acknowledged that he felt an emphasis on his ability to coach rather than teach. He explained:

> That's where there's job security … I asked [my administrator] how it works with me coming back next year. When I won my first football game, he said that they would keep me around for another week. Every win … bought me another week. When I got a grant for baseball, he (the administrator) was like, 'You just bought yourself 2 more weeks.' I am pretty sure it's only a joke.

Similarly, Jess believed that her planning for instruction was suffering because of pressure related to her coaching responsibilities. She stated:

> My planning has gone down significantly from where I was at the beginning of the year. I have definitely overbooked myself. Most days, I leave home by 6:30 in the morning and don't get home until after 8:30 at night. I get home, go to bed, and the next day I get to do it all over again.

Sarah, too, struggled to find balance between teaching and coaching. She explained, "There are days where I really have to think about not showing [my students] that I'm cranky because I was at a late meet … It all gets so exhausting." Even with the self-described

challenges in balancing teaching and coaching, all participants who had secured teaching positions for the following school year expected to coach in Year 2.

The impact of critical incidents

A number of critical incidents arose in the period between the midpoint and end of the school year. First, continued personal issues within his immediate family forced Brady to take a leave of absence from work, and he did not complete the semester. Second, 3 other 1st-year teachers resigned from their positions. Carla cited a lack of a collegial environment with other staff as the primary impetus for leaving her job, but she was considering applying for teaching positions in neighboring school districts. Jordan, expecting her first child in the fall, made the decision to leave the workforce at the end of the school year, and Paul, due to his wife's job transfer, was moving out of state and was not sure if he would seek another job in the teaching field. In total, 10 of 15 teachers, 67%, had secured teaching contracts for a 2nd year.

Positive school environments

In the organizational environment, one common theme persisted. Eleven of 13 teachers continued to perceive that their school environments and relationships with colleagues and administrators were positive. Jess sensed strong cohesion among her colleagues. She described her environment: "We have a younger staff here, and I think that puts us all on the same page. We're all just striving to get the students to that higher level … Everyone's working to better themselves." Similarly, Paul shared this sentiment: "That's one thing I've done really well. There isn't anyone here I don't get along with." Zach also described a "sense of unity" among his school population. This theme, present throughout the year, served to provide a foundation of hope as the teachers anticipated another year in the field.

Feelings of isolation and marginalization

Despite the overall consensus of positivity at this point during the year, challenges with isolation and marginalization did occur in nearly every setting during the school year. Five participants specifically cited feelings of being "disconnected" from their colleagues, and 10 participants recalled instances of marginalization. The former stemmed primarily from personality or age differences and the physical location of the gym space, while the latter appeared in the form of disrespectful attitudes, comments, or specific actions or lack of action by colleagues or administrators. Nicole noted that the teachers in her building did not "get along with each other." In fact, she thought that some of the teachers were "biased" and not "meeting their students' needs." Participants noted that these challenges decreased the level of camaraderie they felt within their school environments but did not deter them from continuing to pursue improvement in their effectiveness as teachers. Overall, feelings of isolation and marginalization presented a significant barrier to a positive 1st-year assimilation experience.

Negative student behavior

During the second semester, the teachers perceived that the quantity of positive student experiences decreased, and a primary challenge identified by 9 of the 13 participants was issues with student behavior, a factor that had been cited as a positive influence earlier in the year. Common complaints, mentioned during interviews and noted during field observations, were increases in off-task behavior and lack of engagement related to end-of-the-year student malaise. These concerns, in turn, influenced the teachers' perceived ability to continue to develop a rapport with students, a factor described as a strength during the first semester. Sarah summarized her cohort's feelings in saying:

> I didn't expect the kids to be so crazy coming to the end of the school year. Their excuse is that school is almost over. I tell them that they still have to behave. They still can't bring their cell phones [to class]. They still can't ask me out. They still can't refuse to participate … It's gotten crazy.

Even with the aforementioned year-end behavioral and discipline issues, the majority of participants believed they would use the same type of discipline and management in the upcoming school year. Kate felt certain that she would keep her "three strikes" policy, and Marie indicated she would use the same plan but add a goal for the next school year to be more consistent. The negative student behavior, although somewhat unexpected, did not detract from participants' sense of confidence in their abilities as physical educators.

Changes in employment status

Lastly, a change in employment status was forced upon three of the participants. Brady, Jess, and Nicole were part of their districts' reduction in force initiatives and were not offered contracts for the upcoming school year; however, at the time of the final interviews, both Jess and Nicole had already secured new teaching jobs, the former in physical education and the latter in health. At the end of the school year, because he had successfully stabilized his personal issues, Brady was actively seeking

employment. With the exception of these participants and the aforementioned Paul, Carla, and Jordan, the other 1st-year teachers were retained in their current roles.

End-of-the-year summary

In all, these teachers weathered significant personal, professional, and environmental challenges. Some were anticipated; some were unexpected. Most of the participants embraced the process with a receptive attitude and positive spirit. The combination of factors that enhance or constrain the assimilation process will shape these teachers as they continue on their unique journeys through the career cycle.

Summary and discussion

In light of the themes and trends highlighted in the previous section, it is important to note that while each of the participants' journeys contained unique facets, the purpose of this research was to examine the common influences during organizational socialization. In an effort to satisfy the original research questions, the data were further distilled, and as a result, five overarching themes emerged.

The impact of personal factors

Family, crisis, and individual disposition appeared to be significant factors impacting the induction experience. Several teachers, for example, described changes in their immediate support structures. Recent marriages for 2 of the physical educators, challenging familial relational issues for a 3rd, and a new baby for a 4th certainly added complexities to levels of stress that were sometimes already overwhelming. These outside-the-classroom factors have the potential to directly affect teaching proficiency inside the classroom. In this case, 2 of the physical educators were not able to appropriately cope with the demands placed on them, requiring 1 to withdraw from the study and the other to request a leave of absence from work. It is important to note that crisis, in some manner or form, occurred during each participant's academic year. For the majority, crises were minor, such as losing gym space or dealing with personal sickness, and those teachers were able to navigate through the incidents. In Brady's case, a personal crisis within his immediate family required his attention to be turned to matters outside the classroom. In total, 3 of these 15 teachers voluntarily resigned their teaching positions for an attrition rate of 20%. Although the sample size was limited, it reflects higher percentages than those cited in recent literature for beginning public school teachers (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015). Developing the skills and experience to deal with the day-to-day challenges that occur during the "normal" course of teaching is a critical component of teacher retention, and data from longitudinal studies of physical educators support the connection of factors within the personal environment to career longevity or attrition (Lynn & Woods, 2010; Woods & Lynn, 2001, 2014). Successful socialization outcomes, as described by Lawson (1983), are directly linked to a teacher's ability to weather the "institutional press" of diverse influences (Zeichner & Tabachnik, 1983). Furthermore, teaching with an "active attitude," an enthusiastic disposition, and a hearty work ethic may contribute to feelings of success (Zach et al., 2015).

The impact of role conflict

Another major factor influencing the level of success was role conflict, which was notably related to individual dispositions. These participants were high-achieving, self-confident individuals who historically had met previous challenges. At the beginning of the year, less than half indicated a desire to coach. By the end of the year, nearly all had coached at least one sport, with a number coaching two or more sports. For the first time, some struggled with the conflict of balancing the demands placed on them. They desired to give their best and felt enormous pressure to be successful. Often, it was self-imposed, but Paul felt internal and external pressure to "prove himself" as both a high-quality educator and coach. In such cases, one role may take priority with the more valued role, usually coaching, finding success at the expense of the other role (Locke & Massengale, 1978; Richards & Templin, 2012; Richards et al., 2013).

For induction teachers with strong coaching orientations, the values of PETE programming may be easily discarded as they adopt custodial teaching approaches in physical education (Richards & Templin, 2012), but the majority of participants demonstrated a high fidelity to the models and programming taught during their professional education. During socialization, each beginning teacher must make decisions, as identified by Lacey (1977), related to the demands of their role(s). Additional roles and expectations may, in turn, increase the difficulty of this process. As part of professional preparation, conversations related to balancing the demands of teacher/coach and examinations of how role orientation affects a teacher's identity may provide a starting point in forming more realistic expectations among 1st-year teachers (Richards et al., 2013).

The impact of student behavior

In the teaching environment, the challenges facing induction teachers in the areas of classroom

management and discipline have been well documented (MacPhail & Hartley, 2016; Richards et al., 2013), and this cohort was no exception. Even the teachers who were quite consistent in their proactive and reactive protocols struggled at times to manage student behavior. Many insisted their places of employment were vastly different (more diverse settings than their personal family backgrounds) than they experienced during training. Learning how to navigate the complexities of the school environment and culture requires time and experience. Physical education teacher education programs, outside of student teaching and clinical experiences, are generally limited in their scope to provide an accurate view of the day-to-day reality of beginning teachers, and often, the transition can be especially challenging (Flory, 2016; Flory & McCaughtry, 2014). The dynamic process of Lawson's (1983) occupational socialization is widely dependent on a vast array of variables including the diversity of the induction setting (Flory, 2016). Professional training with abundant realistic opportunities, including learning experiences exposing candidates to the micropolitical realities of a variety of school environments, may provide a mediating effect (Richards, Gaudreault, & Templin, 2014).

The impact of quality relationships

Inside the school environment

The ability to navigate the school's organizational environment and build quality personal relationships was an important part of obtaining positive outcomes for many of these physical educators, and in some cases, it helped to decrease feelings of marginalization and isolation. Developing rapport with students and colleagues appeared to be an easy task for the majority of this cohort; however, some participants' experiences lacked meaningful interactions with administrators or colleagues. In such cases, isolation can ultimately breed feelings of marginalization. When individuals feel either personally or professionally disrespected, a struggle to create legitimacy often ensues. This struggle, in turn, directly impacts the willingness of teachers to apply the principles from professional training (Blankenship & Coleman, 2009) and establish a strong professional identity (Banville, 2015), and it may lead to decreased expectations (MacPhail & Hartley, 2016). Maintaining communication with cooperating teachers and PETE faculty as well as professional organizations can be a potential starting point for decreasing feelings of isolation and marginalization (Lux & McCullick, 2011; Woods & Lynn, 2014), and plenty of options exist for increasing the support for induction teachers. Seminars, mentoring, building an effective support network, and providing teacher accountability are foundational to teacher retention and development (Banville, 2015). Similarly, support from administrators, especially those who espouse congruent values regarding student learning, can provide critical support in curbing washout (Blankenship & Coleman, 2009) and in creating positive socialization experiences (Richards & Templin, 2011).

Outside the school environment

In addition to isolation and marginalization, some participants expressed feelings of inadequacy in their ability to build relationships with other stakeholders such as parents and community partners. Existing literature has noted this inadequacy as a significant barrier in the assimilation process (MacPhail & Hartley, 2016; Richards et al., 2013).Two main contributing factors were lack of parental support and language barriers among diverse populations. All these teachers self-identified as Caucasian; however, nearly half were employed in settings in which they were minorities. Teachers successfully navigated issues in the classroom and were consistently able to build strong rapport with students, but difficulties were expressed regarding parental communication. Parents and other key stakeholders can play a significant role in the support of new teachers, but conversely, if beginning educators perceive a lack of support, difficulties can arise in establishing and maintaining quality relationships (Blankenship & Coleman, 2009; Richards et al., 2013) and can lead to a negative socialization experience (MacPhail & Hartley, 2016).

The impact of stakeholder expectations

In all, addressing challenges in the organizational environment can be daunting even for experienced teachers. The "institutional press" of expectations created by those within the organizational environment can be a contributing factor to washout (Blankenship & Coleman, 2009; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979; Zeichner & Tabachnik, 1983), and in this study, participants teaching as part of a team (those employed at the secondary level) displayed evidence of this institutional press. Several cited their low standing as 1st-year teachers as a reason to accept the teaching philosophies and values of colleagues. This strategic compliance and internalized adjustment are common outcomes for induction teachers who hold a relatively low status within the school environment (Richards, Templin, & Graber, 2014). Additionally, the socializing effect of the student population on beginning teachers can be powerful (Richards, Templin, et al., 2014). These factors, singularly and synergistically, have the potential to

directly alter the assimilation journey (Lawson, 1983). When students embrace the strategies and content provided, smooth induction can occur; however, when student resistance is present, washout may occur as the novice teacher reverts to more traditional pedagogy (Blankenship & Coleman, 2009).

Limitations

Overall, these results are representative of the experiences of these particular participants, and although diverse across gender, school level, and school setting, the study was homogeneous across race and ethnicity of the participants. In this study, few cases of gender and level differences were found; however, more cases of issues related to the beginning teachers' inexperience in working with the specific types of contexts they encountered arose in both expected and unexpected outcomes. The presence of periodic interviews requiring reflection and forecasting and a positive, ongoing relationship with the researchers may have provided a socialization experience different from that of a typical 1st-year physical educator. In the end, it is likely that these limitations most notably affected the potential generalizability of the results but did not affect the ability of the researchers to satisfy the purpose of the study.

What does this article add?

The current study presented a unique perspective on the journey of induction physical educators through the lens of diverse settings and encounters. Furthermore, this study extends the research base by providing additional conclusions to benefit the field as a whole by better informing PETE curricula and programming, increasing awareness of potential challenges within the socialization process for induction physical educators and administrators, and providing impetus for increasing support during what can be a tenuous process. An abundance of practical strategies for improving the assimilation process for beginning teachers, such as creating a seminar series during PETE or engaging students in learning experiences that actively encourage frank discussions regarding both expectations and realities of teaching, exists in recent manuscripts (Richards, Gaudreault, et al., 2014; Richards et al., 2013) and has sparked the potential for conversations among stakeholders. Additional opportunities exist for promoting significant changes in the structure of current induction systems and, in turn, promoting significant positive changes in physical education.

As is evident in the factors related to the attrition of physical educators such as Brady, Carla, Jordan, and Paul, the personal environment, often garnering the minority of the focus of assimilation strategies addressed during PETE programming, may impact the eventual outcome of the 1st year. Considering a curriculum designed to provide a more holistic approach to the entire assimilation process, one considering more fully both personal and organizational factors, may provide new teachers with a stronger, purposeful preparation, and in turn, it may begin to positively decrease attrition. This manuscript sought to begin a comprehensive dialogue related to the PETE preparation process for future physical educators.

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