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“It’s Up to Us:” Factors Influencing the Perspectives and Practices of Instructors Working in an Out-of-School Swimming Program for Underserved Children and Youth

Daniela M. Susnara

The University of Alabama, dsusnara@ua.edu

Matthew Curtner-Smith

The University of Alabama, mdsmith@ua.edu

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Abstract

The purposes of this study were (a) to describe the perspectives and practices of instructors working in an out-of-school swimming program (OSSP) for underserved children and youth and (b) to examine the factors which shaped these perspectives and practices. The theoretical framework employed was occupational socialization. Two female instructors participated in the study. Five qualitative techniques were used to collect data and standard interpretive techniques were employed to analyze them. Key findings were that the instructors were highly skilled and had well-developed sets of beliefs about teaching swimming and working with disadvantaged children and youth. These perspectives and practices were influenced by the interaction of the instructor's acculturation, professional socialization, and organizational socialization. Implications for selecting instructors for OSSPs included asking potential instructors about their occupational socialization and hiring experienced physical educators. The study also suggested that instructor training includes a substantial teaching component and elements on technical pedagogy and teaching philosophy in the aquatic context.

Keywords: swimming program, water safety instructor, underserved youth, qualitative analysis, occupational socialization

Drowning is the second leading cause of unintentional deaths among American children and youth under 14 years of age (WHO, 2018). Moreover, children and youth from low socioeconomic backgrounds residing in underserved communities are at the greatest risk of drowning because they are unlikely to take swimming lessons or participate in recreational swimming (Irwin et al., 2009; Irwin et al., 2019; WHO, 2018). Most at risk are minority (e.g., African American) children and youth (Gilchrist et al., 2014; WHO, 2018).

A number of structural, institutional, personal, and cultural factors combine to place underserved children and youth at risk for drowning. Structural and institutional factors include the dearth of pools built in underserved communities and the difficulty public schools in these communities have in gaining access to pools in other locations (Ross et al, 2014; Storm, et al., 2017). Key personal factors are parents' inability to pay for swimming lessons and transport their children to pools. Culturally, those residing in underserved communities tend not to value swimming because they cannot afford to learn to swim and access to pools is problematic (Ito, 2014; Storm et al., 2017). Moreover, the lack of minority role models and the stereotyping of minorities as non- or poor swimmers serve to exacerbate the negative perceptions of swimming minorities already have (Norwood et al., 2014; Storm et al., 2017; Quash, 2018). Consequently, water safety knowledge and the ability to swim is generally low among underserved children and youth (Ito, 2014; Storm et al., 2017).

To date, little research has occurred with programs designed to improve this state of affairs. Two recent efforts conducted in the United States, however, indicated that it was possible to improve underserved children and youths' aquatic skill and knowledge of water safety. These interventions, studied by Frindell (2016) and Olaisen, Flocke, and Love (2018), were 9 days and 8 weeks in duration, respectively, and included formal presentations to parents and swimming and land-based lessons for their children.

Rationale and Purpose

One crucial component of any program aimed at improving the swimming and water safety knowledge of underserved children and youth is the instructors. Learning about the instructors' beliefs, pedagogies, and the ways in which they interact and relate to the children and youth whom they are teaching may help to improve future efforts at working with this population. Specifically, this kind of research may facilitate improvements in instructor selection and training. To this end, and as part of a larger investigation of a program designed to improve the swimming skill and water safety of underserved children and youth, the purposes of our study were (a) to describe the perspectives and practices of instructors working in an out-of-school swimming program (OSSP) for underserved children and youth and (b) to examine the factors which shaped these perspectives and practices.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical lens we employed during this study was extrapolated from the work on the occupational socialization of mainstream physical education teachers (Curtner-Smith, 2009; Lawson, 1983a, 1983b; Richards et al., 2014), adapted physical education teachers (Park & Curtner-Smith, 2018a), adventure educators (Maurer & Curtner-Smith, 2019), and university sport pedagogy faculty (Merrem & Curtner-Smith, 2018; Park & Curtner-Smith, 2018b) which has revealed why instructors of physical activity working in different contexts, with different content, and with different groups of children, youth, and adults think and act as they do. This research, and the theory developed from it, (e.g., Curtner-Smith et al., 2008; Lawson, 1983a, 1983b; Zmudy et al., 2009) has been extremely useful in terms of informing those designing initial teacher/instructor training programs or conducting professional development courses for teachers and instructors.

The research carried out in this line has mainly focused on instructors' *acculturation* (i.e., the influence of pre-training biography), *professional socialization* (i.e., the effects of formal undergraduate training), and *organizational socialization* (i.e., the impact of the workplace culture) (Curtner-Smith, 2009). More recently, researchers have also studied *secondary professional socialization* (i.e., the influence of formal graduate training) and *secondary organizational socialization* (i.e., the impact of university culture on faculty members) (Lee &

Curtner-Smith, 2011). Findings and theory from the first four of these phases of socialization were salient to our study.

The main finding from research on acculturation pertinent to our study was that future instructors had been shown to develop sets of beliefs and values about goals and effective pedagogies, known collectively as the “subjective warrant” (Lawson, 1983a), prior to their training. Key to the development of this subjective warrant was the “apprenticeship of observation” (Lortie, 1975), that is the experiences of future instructors when taught by physical education teachers, sports coaches, adventure educators, and physical activity instructors in other contexts (Curtner-Smith, 2017).

The most important finding from the research on professional socialization, as far as our study was concerned, was that trainees’ subjective warrants served as a filter for the messages espoused during their formal training. Specifically, objectives and pedagogies featured in training programs that were congruent with their subjective warrants were embraced by trainees. Conversely, goals and methods promoted by those conducting the training that were incongruent with trainees’ subjective warrants were rejected (Prior & Curtner-Smith, 2020a, 2020b). In addition, the most influential component of a training program was shown to be time spent practice teaching in the field (Richards et al., 2014).

Two findings from the research on organizational socialization also proved to be useful for our study. First was the discovery that workplace conditions (i.e., equipment and facilities) can enable or limit the degree to which instructors can teach as they like (Park & Curtner-Smith, 2018a). Second was the realization that workplace cultures created by administrators, co-workers, students, and parents also dictate the extent to which new instructors can teach as they have been trained (Curtner-Smith, 2001). If new instructors begin work in cultures that are congruent with their views about teaching, then they are free to teach as they believe. In contrast, if progressive instructors encounter conservative workplace cultures that clash with their beliefs and values, they are forced to modify their practice (Prior & Curtner-Smith, 2020a). In this situation, progressive instructors employ one of several coping strategies. First, they can “strategically comply” (Lacey, 1977) and go along with the prevailing values and practices they encounter. Instructors who take this route often do so reluctantly, rationalizing that it is the safest option and that if conditions change, they will return to their original positions. Unfortunately, research has also shown that the values and beliefs of those instructors who strategically comply for a lengthy period are “washed out” (Zeichner & Tabachnik, 1981) by what has been likened to an “institutional press” (Zeichner & Tabachnik, 1983). Ultimately, instructors who strategically comply may also “strategically adjust” (Etheridge, 1989) to their new workplace cultures and permanently adopt

the beliefs and methods of their colleagues (Prior & Curtner-Smith, 2020b). A second strategy that progressive instructors can adopt when faced with a conservative culture is attempting to “strategically redefine” (Lacey, 1977) or push back against their institution’s normal values and beliefs. Obviously, this strategy carries more risk. A safer half-way strategy is to engage in “guerilla teaching” (Curtner-Smith, 1997). This involves going along with their institution’s normal practices when being observed but teaching in line with their real values when not. Conversely, if instructors enter the workplace with conservative views about teaching, and the culture they encounter is relatively progressive, it is they who have to adopt one of the three coping strategies.

There were also several components of the work on secondary professional socialization that were salient for our study. These were the fact that this form of socialization had been shown to be more potent than professional socialization in terms of changing instructors’ perspectives and practices (Goc Karp et al., 2007; Lee & Curtner-Smith, 2011; O’Bryant et al., 2000) and that the key socialization agents were faculty, coursework, other graduate students, and opportunities to practice teaching and conduct research (Dodds, 2005; Lee & Curtner-Smith, 2011; Merrem & Curtner-Smith, 2018; Park & Curtner-Smith, 2018b).

Finally, and as alluded to in the previous paragraphs, we should stress that occupational socialization is an unequal dialectical process in that the institutions for which instructors work have most of the power, but this does not prevent them from pushing back against prevailing views and practices, consequently changing both “the system” and themselves (Schempp & Graber, 1992).

Method

Design and Participants

The participants in this case study were Joan and Paula (pseudonyms), two instructors who worked in the OSSP and were certified Red Cross Water Safety Instructors (American Red Cross, 2014). Both identified as white and female and were born in the southeastern United States. They were purposefully selected because they had a reputation for being very effective teachers and they had undergone all four phases of socialization in which we were interested (i.e., acculturation, professional socialization, organizational socialization, and secondary professional socialization). In line with previous qualitative studies of similar design (e.g., Curtner-Smith, 2001; Merrem & Curtner-Smith 2018), we decided to work with a small number of participants so that we could provide an in-depth analysis. Furthermore, in congruence with the principles of interpretive research, we were cognizant of the fact that the occupational socialization of Joan and Paula would not represent all swim instructors working in OSSPs.

At the time the study commenced Joan and Paula were 36 and 27 years of age, respectively. As well as working in the OSSP, Joan was a full-time first year sport pedagogy doctoral student and had previously worked as a physical education teacher in three public schools districts for 12 years. Paula was in her second year as a physical education teacher at a local private school. Both women had initially trained to be physical education teachers in different undergraduate physical education teacher education (PETE) programs and had also completed Master's degrees in sport pedagogy at different institutions. Ethical approval to conduct this research was obtained from our university's institutional review board. Joan and Paula formally consented to take part in the study.

Setting

The OSSP took place during three summers at a Parks and Recreation Association (PARA) swimming pool and the adjacent Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) building which were located in a low-income underserved section of a southeastern American town (population: 90,000). The state in which the town was situated was tenth in the number of unintentional drowning in the United States across all age groups from 1999 to 2017 (CDC, 2017). The indoor swimming pool was 25 meters long, 10 meters wide, and varied in depth from 1.68 to 0.91 meters. Within the YMCA were a number of multi-purpose rooms and a large well-equipped gymnasium.

Out-of-School Swimming Program

The staff of the outreach section of a major research university situated in the town, the staff from the YMCA, and one professor and students from the university's kinesiology department collaborated to deliver the OSSP. It was directed by two university outreach staff members. The OSSP was designed by following key principles for effective out-of-school programs. These were selecting goals based on the community's needs, forming partnerships with local entities and businesses who were able to provide resources and expertise (e.g., a local golf company), and collecting data to establish the degree to which the program was effective (Bartko, 2005; Lauver & Little, 2005; Hemphill & Martinek, 2017). Moreover, included in the OSSP were components that had previously enhanced out-of-school programs' effectiveness. In congruence with Bartko (2005) and Lauver and Little (2005) these components were that program instructors would strive to construct supportive relationships with the children and youth enrolled in the OSSP, would select developmentally appropriate, enjoyable and stimulating tasks, and would aim to cultivate a sense of community and safety with the children, youth, and their parents.

Our study was conducted during three summers in which the OSSP was delivered. During the first four weeks of June in each of these summers, the OSSP

took place from 8:30 am until 11:30 am on Monday through Thursday. Children and youth within each of three age groups (4 to 6 years, 7 to 9 years, and 10 to 14 years) were placed in small homogenous groups, in terms of experience and skill level, for instruction. Within each day, groups participated in three program components. The core component was a 40- to 50-minute swimming lesson. Secondary components were 40- to 50-minute enrichment and nutrition (focused on literacy and health-related knowledge) and land-based physical education lessons (focused on the acquisition of fundamental movement and sports skills).

The 16-lesson swimming component was taught by 8 to 10 instructors each summer. They were all certified Red Cross Water Safety instructors. Joan and Paula taught during all three summers. The objectives of this component were to improve water confidence, water safety, and aquatic skills. The ratio of instructors to swimmers was generally 1:4. Instructors were asked to plan lessons using the materials from the Red Cross Learn to Swim curriculum (American Red Cross, 2014) and to focus on teaching basic aquatic skills to non-swimmers, and strokes to beginning swimmers and those few children and youth who were reasonably proficient swimmers.

Data Collection

Data were collected by the first author with five qualitative techniques. A total of 40 *non-participant observations* of Joan and Paula were conducted across all three summers. These observations involved taking copious field notes on the pedagogies and methods the instructors employed, their interactions with and the responses of the children and youth they taught, and the perspectives that were reflected in their practices. *Informal interviews* with Joan and Paula were conducted before and after their classes and during breaks from teaching. The main goal of these interviews was to confirm and fill out interpretations of observational data. Notes on formal interviews were written as soon after they had been completed as possible. Eight *stimulated recall journal reflections* were also conducted with each instructor. The protocol for these interviews involved Joan and Paula watching film of one of their lessons and being asked to reflect on their teaching and describe the thoughts behind various pedagogical actions they took. In addition, *document analysis* was conducted on the lesson plans produced by each instructor with the focus being on extracting key pedagogies employed.

Finally, both Joan and Paula were *formally interviewed* face-to-face on three occasions. These were at the completion of each year of the OSSP. Interviews ranged in duration from for 45 to 60 minutes. Formal interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim. The protocol for each formal interview was semi-structured in that it involved asking the teachers the same set of questions but allowed for multiple follow-up prompts. Questions posed to the instructors during

the interviews were designed to gain demographic information (i.e., age, gender, race, and ethnic origin) and data on their perspectives and practices regarding the teaching of swimming (e.g., What are your main goals when teaching swimming? Which teaching styles, methods, and models do you employ when teaching swimming?) and key factors within their acculturation (e.g., Is there anything in your background prior to teacher training that attracted you to teaching swimming? How were you taught to swim as a child?), professional socialization (e.g., Describe any specific training you received to teach swimming during your undergraduate PETE.), secondary professional socialization (e.g., Describe any additional training you received to teach swimming during your graduate education.) and organizational socialization (e.g., How has the culture and structure of the OSSP helped or hindered your teaching of swimming?) that had influenced and shaped these perspectives and practices.

Data Analysis

The analysis was carried out by the first author. Phase 1 involved separating the data from all sources and for each teacher into five subsets that were congruent with the study's two purposes and theoretical framework. These subsets were: (a) instructors' practices and perspectives regarding the teaching of swimming, and factors within the instructors' (b) acculturation, (c) professional socialization, (d) secondary professional socialization, and (e) organizational socialization that had influenced their practices and perspectives. During phase 2, the data in each subset were coded by employing the techniques of analytic induction and constant comparison (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). Specifically, a descriptor and numeric code were given to each data chunk (e.g., belief, occurrence, teaching episode). Within phase 3, coded data in each subset were collapsed to form themes and sub-themes which were given new broader descriptors. Lastly, in phase 4 data were selected to illustrate the themes and sub-themes described in this manuscript. Throughout this process the second author acted as a critical friend (Costa & Kallick, 1993) and critiqued emerging descriptors, themes, and sub-themes. Following Goetz & LeCompte (1984), trustworthiness and credibility were established by triangulation from the five data sources, a thorough search for discrepant and negative cases, and member checking during informal interviews. In addition, Joan and Paula were asked to examine an earlier version of this manuscript for factual accuracy.

Findings

We begin this section by describing the perspectives and practices of the two instructors. Next, we describe the key factors that shaped the development of these perspectives and practices during Joan and Paula's acculturation, professional socialization, secondary professional socialization, and organizational socialization.

Instructors' Perspectives and Practices

During their initial interviews and subsequent observations of their teaching, it became apparent that both Joan and Paula were progressive and strongly committed teachers in terms of their goals and objectives, and the value orientations (Curtner-Smith et al., 2018) these goals and objectives reflected. For example, in congruence with a disciplinary mastery perspective and the official goals of the OSSP, both instructors clearly prioritized teaching the children and youth in their classes “how to swim,” “about water safety,” and to be “comfortable” in the water:

Number one is to help these students be comfortable in the water and realize that swimming is fun. But after that, right at the get-go, teach them how to be safe in the water. I really want them to understand the safety aspects, but also how to swim. (Joan, formal interview 1)

My main goal is to get the kids comfortable in the water. Just getting them to where they're comfortable putting their face in and exploring through the water, getting them confident and trying a couple of new things by the end. And then . . . get them to where they're pushing off the wall and gliding or swimming with noodles or by themselves, being confident and safe swimming in the pool. (Paula, formal interview 1)

These more traditional goals were largely achieved through employing Mosston and Ashworth's (2008) practice and self-check styles of teaching:

Paula is teaching the front crawl kick... She breaks down the skill and tells them to “point your toes” and “kick from the hip.” The group practices the kick while using kickboards with their faces above water. This allows them to focus on improving the kick and to listen for feedback from Paula. (Paula, field note, lesson 3, year 1)

On Monday, the stations were: exhaling/rhythmical bobbing/rhythmical breathing; floating; and front/back glides with a roll. On Tuesday, stations were simultaneous arms on back/front; simultaneously legs on back/front; and treading water by moving arms and legs.... Thursday, we planned water game stations: red ball, green ball; big bad wolf race; cowboys and cowgirls; and sharks and minnows. (Joan, journal reflection, lesson 3, year 3)

Moreover, the two instructors frequently spoke about providing their charges with “developmentally appropriate lessons,” and “high time-on-task,” as well as “modifying” and “extending” the instructional tasks in which they asked children and youth to engage.

As well as advocating a traditional perspective focused on mastering content, both instructors also indicated that they were interested in realizing goals related to the social responsibility, self-actualization, and social reconstruction

value orientations (Curtner-Smith et al., 2018). Central to any success they had with objectives related to these perspectives, Joan noted, was forming close “personal relationships” with the children and youth and working on “getting to know” them on a more personal level.”

The social responsibility perspective was reflected in the instructors’ aim to give the children and youth “voice” and the power to make some decisions about how they learned through the use of Mosston and Ashworth’s (2008) guided discovery and divergent production styles. Paula, for example, stressed that she was keen to have her classes “solve problems” and “explore” different techniques providing doing so was safe:

[By] letting [the children and youth] lead in how they're going to solve a problem, whether it be how they're going to get something off the bottom of the pool or how they're going to get to the other side of the pool. Kind of letting them use the noodle to get there, how they choose. (Paula, formal interview 3)

Both instructors also indicated their interest in the self-actualization value orientation by emphasizing the need to “individualize” their teaching so that “each child could . . . grow to his or her full potential.” Again, when it was safe, this was achieved by differentiating their instruction and employing Mosston and Ashworth’s (2008) inclusion style. This involved providing an “assortment” of instructional tasks at different levels that catered to “diverse learners.” Because they were working with beginning and weak swimmers, differentiating instruction in this fashion was not always possible but it did not stop the instructors searching for ways in which to help individual students at different skill levels:

The space where I am at does not allow for many of them to go [take turns] at one time. I would take them to the deep end, but I have one student who cannot touch [the bottom of the pool] and gets tired. I also cannot . . . be out there for him. I will be looking around this week to see how I can help him have more opportunities to practice. (Paula, journal reflection, lesson 9, year 2)

Finally, both instructors revealed their concern for social reconstruction throughout all the three years of the OSSP. Joan for example explained that:

Without this program, these children would not receive swim lessons. I bet they would not even have access to informal swimming lessons. In poor communities like this, lack of swimming experience is a cycle. The kids’ grandparents don’t swim, so the parents don’t swim, so the kids won’t learn how to swim. It’s up to us to make sure these kids learn how to swim and understand everyone can learn how to swim. (Joan, formal interview 3)

Similarly, Paula noted that:

Each year we have a lot of kids come back. The retention rates seem pretty good. But what I think is most important are the skills they come back remembering. It is so impactful for the 4 to 6 years to be able to look up to the older group and see them swimming. It is so important for the new students to be able to look to the returning students and see them swimming. It shows them they can swim, just like their peers, and that they just need to learn. (Paula, formal interview 3)

Factors that Shaped the Instructors' Perspectives and Practices

Acculturation

In congruence with previous research (Curtner-Smith, 2017; Richards et al., 2104), both instructors were initially attracted to a career in physical education by their interest in sport and physical activity:

I was in gymnastics when I was younger and then I was in “flip-flop,” which was tumbling, apparatus, and trampoline. And then I went to many basketball camps. Then, in middle and high school, I competed in volleyball and basketball on sports teams from 7th through 12th grade.... I grew up playing basketball with my dad on the driveway. And that led to learning the game, and then to competing, and then to me wanting to share my passion. (Joan, formal interview, year 2)

This attraction was enhanced by the positive apprenticeships of observation (Lortie, 1975) that both described experiencing during their own schooldays:

Growing up I loved PE, soccer, and cheerleading.... I think I really enjoyed all of it because of my teachers and my coaches.... They definitely contributed to my passion for teaching and getting kids active. (Paula, formal interview 1)

Neither Joan nor Paula had an extensive background in aquatics or swimming. Rather, Joan's main activities and sports had been basketball, volleyball, and gymnastics while Paula's main focus had been on cheerleading and soccer. Nevertheless, both instructors had been “exposed to swimming” early and informally by their parents as illustrated in the following interview extracts:

Well, my dad does not know how to swim, so he was always scared of the water. My mom, she does know how to swim. And she was a big proponent of us [i.e., Joan and her siblings] taking swimming lessons. So, from a very young age we took swimming lessons, and we went all the way up to diving lessons (Joan, formal interview 3).

I was put in a pool with some floaties on and then eventually encouraged to push off the wall to my parent or jump off the walls to my parent. Then diving for pennies on the steps, or I remember struggling and they just kind of like, let me figure it out a little bit. And then once I got to where I wasn't scared of the water, my neighbor taught lessons, so we just went to the pool next door (Paula, formal interview, year 1).

Joan and Paula had also taken organized formal private swimming lessons outside of school during which their instructors had, evidently, employed effective and traditional practices with the core teaching styles being “direct”:

There were two instructors and there were about 11 of us and they did a lot of showing us what to do and then having us do it. And it was in the deep end, we couldn't stand up, the water was freezing. We're all shaking.... So, it was like, “Do ten bobs,” and they would all watch us do the bobs. They would check off the sheet; they would tell us what to do (Joan, formal interview 3).

Collectively, these experiences led to Joan and Paula entering their PETE with a subjective warrant (Lawson, 1983a) that indicated they were already committed to the teaching role, as opposed to coaching extracurricular sport, a focus on which past research has indicated to be detrimental to the quality of physical education teaching (Curtner-Smith, 2009). Importantly, and unlike some American preservice physical education teachers (Prior & Curtner-Smith, 2020a), the two instructors also believed that teaching swimming was potentially part of their future role.

Professional Socialization

Joan and Paula completed their undergraduate PETE at two different universities. Both instructors were enthusiastic about their programs and indicated that they were compatible with and built on the subjective warrants with which they entered. Specifically, and based on their prior experiences, Joan and Paula began PETE with traditional ideas about pedagogy and teaching physical education. Their PETE, however, gave them “new ideas” and potential “goals” to consider and introduced them to “progressive” pedagogies, “indirect teaching styles” and different curriculum models aimed at a variety of psychomotor, cognitive, and affective objectives:

We had a lot of different classes. Mostly us learning how to play a sport and then us learning how to teach a sport.... We learned a lot of activities and skills. And then we also had an adapted [physical education] class where we actually went out [for] a week and the participants were getting water support for their disabilities.... It was definitely more of a rehab environment for them. (Joan, formal interview 3)

While Joan's program gave her new perspectives, pedagogical tools, and "practice teaching in schools with different age groups and students," it did not include a specific course on teaching swimming. Conversely, as part of her PETE, Paula took a required course titled "teaching swimming" in which she became a certified Red Cross water safety instructor and about which she was very enthusiastic. Specifically, she explained that during the on-campus part of the course:

The first two months we were learning how to swim using proper techniques, watching each other, teaching one another or providing feedback to one another as we were learning, which was extremely beneficial 'cause I don't think I ever actually learned the exact technique for a lot of things.... I remember learning it to an extent, and I just kind of did it, but I didn't know what I was doing or why I was doing it and it definitely was not all correct. I really appreciated and loved learning how to properly swim and the technique that goes into it. Then after that we started getting ready for planning lessons to teach kids and how to transfer that knowledge into progressive teaching. (Paula, formal interview, year 3)

In line with past research (Richards et al., 2014), Paula also emphasized the importance of "hands-on teaching experience" during the course in terms of developing her pedagogical skill with this content:

I got a lot out of that experience. It developed the way that I taught. I improved what I had to work with in my teaching toolbox. It was the opportunity to learn knowing what to say and when to say it. Like if a student was struggling, recognizing that and knowing how to address it. I wouldn't know how to do that if I didn't teach. That was the main thing. And again, that just comes from experience. (Paula, informal interview, lesson 13, year 2)

Secondary Professional Socialization

Joan and Paula both indicated that their graduate education had played general and specific roles in developing their perspectives and practices when it came to teaching swimming. In general terms, and in congruence with past research (Dodds, 2005; Lee & Curtner-Smith, 2011; Merrem & Curtner-Smith, 2018), the instructors noted that they had gained in terms of learning more about pedagogical "theory," and "curriculum development." Joan and Paula also indicated that it was in their graduate coursework that they had been introduced to the ideas of critical pedagogy and social reconstruction (Curtner-Smith et al., 2018) through physical education:

Well, we learned a lot about theory in grad school and we also were introduced to the different paradigms, interpretive, positivist, and critical. Looking at how our teaching experience fit into these paradigms has been

huge. Like [the OSSP] and teaching experiences in the after-school program [also for disadvantaged children], those give us and the undergrads real... experiences we might not have otherwise. (Joan, informal interview, lesson 9, year 3)

In specific terms, Paula and Joan recalled the “crazy good experience” of co-teaching a class in which undergraduate preservice teachers learned to teach swimming, attempted to improve their own aquatic skills, and taught local school children swimming lessons:

I helped provide feedback to the [preservice physical education teachers] in the class and I helped them improve their skill level outside of class. A lot of them asked to meet and kind of work on things on their own, so I worked with them which also gives you a different kind of perspective of how to teach and was a good refresher. (Paula, formal interview, year 1)

Even though a lot of universities don't offer, well they offer it, but it's not required to take a teaching swimming class, but they do offer "learning to swim" classes. But I think we're [i.e., the university] pretty unique in having a field experience connected to ours to where they can actually learn to teach swimming as well. So definitely, [teaching the swimming course] was huge and that's what got me involved in wanting to increase my skill set. (Joan, formal interview, year 2)

Organizational Socialization

Early in the study, it became apparent that Paula and Joan's school teaching experience influenced the ways in which they interacted with and taught the children and youth in the OSSP. Most importantly, the two instructors explained that they had both taught “diverse” children and youth from “different races” and “urban,” “suburban,” and rural communities and so were comfortable working with these populations and familiar with the kinds of issues they faced:

We [i.e., Paula's school enrollment] are very well rounded in terms of culture, so even if most of our kids are white and black they don't come from the same backgrounds whatsoever. We have kids there on scholarships, so they come from low-income areas, and then we have our very privileged kids, and it is cool to watch them grow and learn together because they don't see a difference so that's unique to our school. (Paula, informal interview, lesson 10, year 2)

When I was teaching full-time, I taught anywhere from first grade through eighth grade.... Some of my students had a lot of access to organized sports, swimming, after-school resources, but some of my kids didn't. I've taught kids from all different backgrounds and that's what I love about teaching.

Meeting the kids where they're at and helping them improve at whatever they want. (Joan, informal interview, lesson 2, year 1)

Moreover, it was clear that the instructors' prior experience of working with disadvantaged children and youth in schools led to them taking an activist approach to their teaching and being determined to improve the lot of their students:

It's important for me to find resources for my students. Resources that are free, outside, and fun. Like I've said many of my students are on scholarships or are coming from low-income homes. I can't expect them to pay for organized sports or join afterschool sports. I need to share activities and skills they can do on their own for free. (Paula, formal interview, year 3)

In congruence with past socialization research (Park & Curtner-Smith, 2018a), it also became apparent that the conditions and cultures of the OSSP influenced the ways in which Joan and Paula were able to teach. Specifically, the working conditions were favorable in that the "pool was pretty big with two shallow ends and a deep end" and the instructors had "everything they needed from noodles to goggles" in terms of equipment. Furthermore, the instructors indicated that they were well supported by the OSSP directors, other staff, the students, and parents:

I have felt tremendous support from [the OSSP staff]. Each year we would have different challenges, but I felt supported through each of these challenges and we were able to overcome them and, as a result, improve the program. I even felt supported by the [other] instructors when we were working through the challenges as a team. (Joan, journal reflection, lesson 12, year 3)

Collectively, the conditions and culture of the OSSP supported the instructors and meant that, in contrast to many school physical education settings (Richards et al., 2014), there was no need for Paula and Joan to engage in any coping strategies (Etheridge, 1989, Lacey, 1977). Rather, Joan and Paula could teach as they wished:

Nothing was necessarily set in stone that said, "You have to do this," or "You have to teach this way." It was more about investing in our own practices and figuring out our students and how to best design your lessons to fit the students. I thought that freedom was huge. The amount of autonomy that we had as instructors was incredible. (Paula, formal interview, year 3)

Summary and Conclusions

This study described the perspectives and practices of two experienced and expert instructors working in one OSSP. It indicated that the instructors had superior

technical skill in terms of pedagogical methods, techniques, and content knowledge. In addition, it revealed that Joan and Paula had well-formed sets of beliefs and values on which their teaching was based. Specifically, they espoused ideas and views related to the disciplinary mastery, social responsibility, self-actualization, and social reconstruction value orientations (Curtner-Smith et al., 2018) and had the ability to realize goals and objectives related to these perspectives.

To our knowledge, this study was the first to describe how the different phases of their occupational socialization interacted to shape experienced swimming instructors' perspectives and practices. Both Joan and Paula experienced a largely positive acculturation which led to them possessing subjective warrants (Lortie, 1975) in which they were strongly committed to teaching and open to teaching swimming. Key to their professional socialization was the development of their technical expertise during coursework designed to teach preservice physical educators how to teach swimming. Equally important was the coursework which led them to consider and adopt affective objectives that went further than traditional skill-related goals. The study also indicated the importance of the instructors' organizational socialization. Initially, this was in terms of having experience with teaching diverse groups of children in the school setting. During the OSSP, the keys to the instructors' success were having good conditions and a positive and supportive culture in which to work.

Future Directions

The study leads us to suggest several practical implications for selecting and training instructors for OSSPs. First, the study indicates that, if at all possible, directors of OSSPs would do well to hire well-trained physical educators with an interest and certification in swimming and aquatics to lead and staff their programs. Moreover, during the interview process administrators would do well to ask potential instructors questions related to their occupational socialization (e.g., How, if at all, were you trained to swim? What pedagogies were you trained to use when teaching swimming? Describe the students whom you have taught to swim? What are the optimal conditions you need in an OSSP to be a successful instructor?). Second, the study reveals the critical importance of instructors being given the opportunity to work with children when doing their initial training. Third, our findings suggest that as well as focusing on technical pedagogical skill and the acquisition of content knowledge, training programs include an element aimed at provoking thought on philosophical issues in which trainees are asked to reflect on the merits of different types of goals and objectives and to make connections with how these goals and objective can be realized practically in the aquatic context. Finally, the study also indicates the importance of OSSP administrators providing

good conditions, in terms of pools and equipment, and creating positive cultures for instructors to work in.

Future research in this area should include replications of the current study using the same theoretical framework. Describing the practices and perspectives of less experienced instructors without specialist training in physical education and the socialization that led to these practices and perspectives, for example, should be helpful. In addition, studying the pedagogies and socialization of male instructors and instructors of color and with different socioeconomic backgrounds might reveal differences from the findings in the current study, particularly when working with disadvantaged minority youth and children. Finally, studies of instructors working within OSSPs of different designs and with different organizational structures would obviously be helpful.

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