

Concepts in Occupational Socialization Theory

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Keywords: Occupational Socialization, Secondary Professional Socialization, Dialectics, Mentorship

Abstract: Occupational Socialization Theory (OST) has been a thoroughly researched topic among scholars of sport pedagogy for over 40 years (see Richards, Pennington, & Sinelnikov, 2019). The purpose of this mini-review is not to cover the extensive body of knowledge based in OST research, but to provide a brief outline on two less often mentioned concepts lying within OST; the phenomenon of dialectics and mentorship as a socializing agent. First, it is important to recognize the model of OST relying on a three-phase, time-oriented continuum for understanding the phenomenon is now outdated (Pennington, in press). The past five years there has been an increase in occupational socialization theory scholars describing the socialization experiences of individuals pursuing higher degrees in physical education or seeking careers as professors of physical education teacher trainers or PETE faculty (Pennington, 2019).

Secondary Professional Socialization Phases

Presently still, there is much less research conducted describing the socialization experiences of doctoral physical education students seeking careers as professors of physical education teacher (PETE) trainers, but several generalizations can be made from the studies that do exist. These studies suggest, foremost, the pattern of socialization is similar to that of previously studied preservice teachers (PT) and practicing teachers (see Curtner-Smith, 2009). Specifically, the influences of acculturation and organizational socialization were much more powerful than those of professional socialization (Lee & Curtner-Smith, 2011). However, doctoral students' secondary professional socialization can be relatively potent and powerful to the extent that it could overcome nonteaching orientations that had survived to that point in a teacher/teacher educator's career. The potency is likely the result of faculty mentor, a practitioner-focused master's degree program, and engagement with PETE during undergraduate studies (Lee & Curtner-Smith, 2011; Richards & Templin, 2016). There is strong agreement from both PETE doctoral students and PETE faculty that programs must prepare people with the content knowledge of the field of PETE (Parker, Sutherland, Sinclair, & Ward 2011), and *mentorship* has proven to be a powerful tool to meet these goals (Pennington, in press).

Dialectics in Socialization

“Understanding the making of a teacher from a dialectical perspective makes possible new insights into how and why individuals are recruited, prepared, and inducted into teaching physical education” (Schempp & Graber, 1992, p. 330). Eloquently defined by Schempp and Graber, “the word *dialectic* refers to a process involving the confrontation of contending propositions that ultimately resolve into a synthesis of perspectives and actions of a new and unique design” (Schempp & Graber, 1992, p. 330). In the desired outcome, dialectics can produce a common understanding and a symbiosis of benefits *between* socializing agents (the teacher and the pupil). When students begin in their PETE programs the dialectic effect increases as they unpack potentially differing beliefs of physical education with professors. “The greater the difference, the more pronounced the dialectic” Schempp & Graber, 1992, p. 330). When paired together in undergraduate methods courses, PETE undergraduates and PETE graduate instructors have the unique advantage of learning from the shared experience and dialectically socializing one another into their desired professional role- the teacher and the teacher educator.

The Role of Mentorship in Socialization

Mentoring is understood as a relationship that allows a novice to gain insight and training through the experience of an expert in a particular field. Mentoring can be traced back to Greek mythology and has commonly been linked to business world, but these principles easily transfer to contexts of higher education (Jacobi, 1991). According to Long (1997), components of a mentoring relationship should include emotional and psychological support, assistance with professional development, and role modeling (p. 116).

Mentoring can foster the socialization of teachers when beginning teachers are paired with an experienced mentor during their induction into the school environment as a way to ease the transition (Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Mentoring can play a critical role during professional socialization during undergraduates’ formal teacher education programs if preservice teachers are intentionally paired with faculty or peer mentors to guide them through program experiences. A further extension of the peer mentoring relationship – and of particular interest in the present topic of discussion – is for undergraduate students to be paired with doctoral student mentors who are simultaneously being socialized into the role of PETE faculty. In such an arrangement, undergraduate students can receive targeted feedback and support, while graduate students learn how to work in a teacher education program and relate to preservice teachers.

Conclusion

Much of what doctoral students [as objects of observation is OST research] proclaim as both paramount and positive as a function of their socialization into the position of PETE faculty closely relates with mentorship. Dodds (2005) found that mentors provided knowledge that helped new faculty negotiate institutional cultures and expectations for research and teaching (Casey & Fletcher, 2012). Doctoral students express key agents in their socialization are relationships with mentoring professors, field experiences, and the opportunity to teach themselves. Relationships with professors were particularly influential in terms of solidifying and broadening perspectives on PE teaching and PETE (Lee & Curtner-Smith, 2011; Richards & Templin, 2016). Furthermore, having full responsibility for teaching methods courses, organizing and supervising EFEs, and mentoring student teachers had positive socialization influences for prospective PETE faculty (Lee & Curtner-Smith, 2011).

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