

# The Archetypes and Philosophical Motivations of Urban Elementary Physical Educators

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## Abstract

Brookfield (1990), Brown (2002) and Weiner (2006) have advocated for the study of teachers' philosophies as integral to understanding motivation for teaching in urban settings. The purpose of this study investigates the teaching philosophies of 13 experienced urban elementary physical educators. Content analysis of the data collected from teachers indicated (a) these physical educators placed a greater emphasis on knowledge of students than pedagogical content knowledge, (b) had critical incidences that determined their philosophies, and (c) used cultural negotiation to enrich the lives of students. Discourse on urban physical education archetypes with implications for global instruction concludes the article.

**Key words:** cultural reflectivity, environmental atomization

Various parts of the world interpret issues related to urban schooling in ways that differ from the perspectives often defined in westernized countries. In many developing countries, urban schooling is not seen as a challenging environment for learning wrought with limited school funding, inequality, low status and diminished teacher quality (Brown, 2004). Rather, such schools are seen as high-status, prestigious opportunities for the privileged influenced by a host of economic and social factors.

MacJessie-Mbewe and Nampota (2007) note that the Republic of Malawi, a country that is over 65% poor, has an estimated Gross National Product (GNP) of US\$210 dollars. Of this 65%, 91.3% of the poor and 91.5% of the "ultra-poor" live in rural areas, leaving those in urban areas in the republic of higher socioeconomic status. Considering that the adult literacy rate in these urban areas is 90.5% in contrast to 58.7% in rural areas, it is clear that many adults have the education to promote a culture of learning in their families. This culture creates what Bourdieu (2000), refers to "cultural wealth" as the accumulated values, dispositions, habits, and information that are transmitted from one generation to another. Those who have education are more likely to be in a position to institutionalize this culture, preventing those without this heritage from becoming upwardly mobile.

In Pacific countries such as Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa and Tonga, urban schooling has been impacted indirectly through independence movements in these countries during the 1960s and 70's. The desire to break away from previous centuries of colonial influence by Europe, Asia and America, in the view of Puamau and Teasdale (2007), accelerated the growth of urban areas creating a "hybrid generation" among youth groups. These children, second and third generation removed from the rural village, have an outlook that is influenced primarily by Western world television and print culture. Thus, the disconnect between older generations in rural Pacific countries and newer generations who learn in urban

schools threatens indigenous culture in these countries.

Urban education in the United States encounters many issues in the aforementioned countries, with the addition of layers worthy of exploration. In America, urban schools are comprised of students from every racial, ethnic, linguistic and social group (Cartledge & Lo, 2006, p.7) and are disproportionately from lower socioeconomic backgrounds with unique learning needs. Currently in these schools, students are exposed to formal education for the first time (Rong & Preissle, 1998), are predominately Latino or African American (Henry & Kasindorf, 2001), speak English as a second language, and have higher instances of dropping-out from school (Kincheloe, 2004). Haberman (1995), a recognized authority on effective urban teaching in the United States, identified an issue of crisis, espousing that "having effective teachers could be the difference between life and death"(p.1). This, coupled with resource deficits, overcrowded classes, low faculty retention and salary discrepancies (Quartz, 2003), creates a quandary for teachers in urban settings.

Brown (2002) and Gehrke's (2005) past discourse on exemplary teachers in urban schools is equally salient. Along with knowledge of themselves as teachers, they noted that successful teachers in urban schools have high expectations of students and can recognize issues with their learners that are hidden. These issues, explored in depth by Murrell (2001) include the impact of hunger, anger, fear, and illness on students' behaviors, retention, and what teachers ask students to accomplish.

Ladson-Billings' (1994) work on effective urban teachers has led her to categorize these teachers as "Dreamkeepers", a description akin to what could be considered as a teaching archetype, or model of a person, personality or behavior (Jung, 1954). Teaching archetypes are rooted in the spirit of "care" (Noddings, 1992) and can be witnessed as teachers serve in roles such as "philosopher", "prophet", "Zen master", "counselor", "mother" and "priest" (Mayes, 2002). Regardless of the incarnation, the archetype for a successful urban educator is promoted in many educational circles as an ideal example upon which others are copied, patterned, or emulated.

Researchers who have investigated what comprises a successful urban physical educator's ability to teach has shown a similar ethos to Gehrke's and Ladson-Billings' past discourses, with regard to student participation (Ennis, et. al, 1999; McCaughtry, Martin, Cothran, Shen, & Kulinna, 2006), the workplace environment (Sparks, Templin & Schempp, 1993; Stroot & Ko, 2006) resilience (Henninger, 2007), curriculum development (Ennis & Chen, 1995) and culturally responsive pedagogical methods in urban schools (Culp & Chepyator-Thomson, in press). Still, scant research on urban physical education exists. More information is needed on the dispositions of these teachers and the potential impact of how this affects what is presented in the physical education class.

**Rationale for the Study of Urban Physical Educators'**

## **Philosophies**

Brown (2002) and Weiner (2006) suggested that an initial realization of urban teacher self-awareness and beliefs can be discovered through the development and implementation of a personal philosophy. Brookfield (1990) pointed out that development of a teaching philosophy can be used to develop “a distinctive organizing vision or a clear picture of why you are doing what you are doing that you can call up at points of crisis that is crucial to maintaining personal sanity and morale” (p.16). Defining teacher beliefs and the inherent or recorded philosophy that typically arises, is a notion that is complex and understudied.

Nespor (1987) saw the development of teacher beliefs as evaluative, affectively stored and based on an episode or experience. Rokeach (1968) defined beliefs as multifaceted compilations of cognitive, affective and behavioral elements that include constructs of knowledge, emotion and action. Brown and Cooney (1982) commented that such beliefs are dispositions in action and major determinants of behavior specific to the context of the environment in which they occur. Irrespective of definition, Pajares (1992) acknowledged that studying teachers' beliefs and philosophies is an essential task that may help to end the perpetuation of antiquated and ineffectual teaching.

Henninger (2007) also provided a rationale for the study of urban elementary teacher's philosophies using reflection-based methodologies. In looking at the factors that cause urban physical education teachers to stay, she suggested several reasons for considering reflection-based studies. First, studies of this type assist in gauging characteristics that identify and retain exemplary urban physical educators. Second, self-reflection can assist practicing teachers in finding mentors who can role-model and support effective teaching practices irrespective of the types of situations they face. Third, this emphasis could provide valuable information for the development of novice teachers and the development or modification of current physical education teacher education experiences. Given Henninger's recommendation, this research was conducted to add to existing literature on these topics, and fill a void in the literature regarding physical education practices in diverse social and cultural environments (Rovegno, 2008; Solomon & Lee, 2008).

## **Methodology**

The elementary schools chosen for this study were based on work by McDermott and Rothenberg (2000), who contended that improvements to the situation of urban education should begin at the primary level - for the greatest effect. Teachers in these environments, including physical educators, are often seen as surrogate parents who deal with non-academic tasks because of the lack of meaningful parental involvement in schools (Horn, 2003). Powell (2000) concluded that for youth to succeed in this global society, non-traditional methods of teaching and instruction should include recruitment of teachers who can be empathic role models to their students' situations. With this in mind, two research questions formed the basis for this study:

1. What elements encompass the development of teaching philosophies of urban elementary physical educators?
2. What critical incidents have shaped the development of these philosophies and how do teachers interact with students?

## **Participants**

An urban school district in the Southeast United States that served over 50,000 students from lower and middle socioeconomic status backgrounds was the site of the study. African Americans (54%), Hispanic American (19%), Asian American (2%) and Native American (2%) students comprised 77% of the total school population. Forty-four physical education teachers from elementary schools in the district were administered a survey in late 2007 that asked them about (a) their gender, (b) the years of service in their school, (c) grade level of students taught, (d) their highest level of educational achievement, and (e) type of school they most associated with in their upbringing. These teachers were also asked to state their philosophy of teaching and identify the origin of their philosophy. There was no specific length required for their comments. The survey and interview questions are presented in Appendices A and B.

Using purposeful sampling (Glesne, 2006), 13 teachers were chosen from the group of 44 for an in-depth interview based on survey criteria indicating that they had (a) 10 or more years of teaching experience and (b) an initial and terminal degree in physical education. Seven teachers in the sample were African American and six teachers were Caucasian. Eight of the 13 teachers were female.

Once the participants were identified for the study, individual telephone interviews were scheduled and conducted from March to December of 2008. All of the interviews were approximately one hour in length and were audio taped. The audio tapes were later transcribed verbatim, with pseudonyms being used to protect the identities of the participants. After the interview, each teacher was mailed a copy of the transcript of the interview, which allowed them to further comment or clarify their positions, attitudes, and ideas espoused on their teaching philosophies.

Two investigators experienced in ethnographic study research were recruited as the primary source of peer debriefing to assist the primary investigator. Data analysis of the philosophy statements and in-depth interviews were conducted using content analysis (Erickson, 1986; Patton, 2002) and triangulated to determine an initial set of common themes (Denzin, 1978). Authenticity and trustworthiness of the initial qualitative data were ensured through a series of activities that the three researchers completed. First, each researcher conducted an individual examination of the data, producing a set of general themes. Next, the researchers convened and discussed the collection of themes, which were further reduced into more specialized thematic areas.

## **Results**

Data analysis from the philosophy statements and interviews were structured around the two major research questions. The first portion of the data uncovered themes related to the impact of pedagogical knowledge, content knowledge, previous role models and critical incidents on how teachers' philosophies evolved. The second set of data unearthed themes related to providing inclusive environments for learning, challenging learners, and demonstrating empathy. Percentages noted are from the themes found in the content analysis of the philosophy statements and expanded upon during the recorded interviews of the 13 teachers chosen from the initial group of 44.

### **Pedagogical Knowledge vs. Content Knowledge**

One interesting aspect of elementary physical education teachers' philosophy statements was the similarity in articulating the need to impart lifelong skills to students along with content knowledge. Many teachers (10/13; 77%) gave accounts that emphasized the importance of delivering a foundation to elementary students which stressed the importance of a healthy lifestyle through cognitive and affective outcomes. The following are typical excerpts from the written philosophies and interviews:

I enjoy teaching lifelong lessons to students. For instance, golf is a sport that I try to introduce every year.... Some of these children may be business people one day and I try to tell them that they may need to have knowledge of the skill in order to make some money one day. (Frank, written philosophy statement)

I would say that we need to find a way to have kids conceptualize activity beyond just the two days. . . When they're young like this, I try to do different things in class so they can see how important activity is for their health down the road and feel good. (Curt, interview)

Over half of elementary physical educators (8/13; 61%) noted that content knowledge was relevant to them as practitioners, yet this was not considered as an important measure of student success:

Yeah, content knowledge I think is important, but not the first thing I think about in class. When I first started teaching 12 years ago, I couldn't meet students on their level because I wasn't aware of some of the issues they were having. Some of these students are in crisis. I have found it a lot better for my sanity knowing that everything I teach won't be perfect, but I make an effort to care about what's going on. (Kevin, interview)

Kevin was further prompted about his philosophy statement that spoke to the importance of communicating knowledge between his students and himself:

I couldn't meet students where they were because I came in as a white guy from Canada, knowing nothing about the south and the inner city. Our area of the province we grew up in was pretty well off. I grew up playing hockey, broomball, a little basketball and some sevens. Darts, hunting, fishing, golf, were things I did when I got older. My culture was different when I came here to [school deleted]. None of these kids did anything besides basketball.

Role models (9/13; 69%) and critical incidents (11/13; 85%) influenced the development of participants' teaching philosophies. Models were representative of parents, coaches, physical education teachers and sport figures. Critical incidents revolved around these persons, providing rich narratives from these urban physical educators. In their commentary, it was evident that the environmental factors and the people in these contexts influenced the participants as they matured to adulthood. Bonnie and Marcus discussed the impact of family and a physical educator on the development of their philosophies:

What I do is most influenced by my family and remembering how we stuck together despite the lack of money. It was tough. Both of my parents are still married and they loved their jobs, so I try to be as they are. I love my job and my

students realize this. They know they will learn and have fun in my class no matter what unit we are on. (Bonnie, written philosophy statement)

I remember Mr. John's. He was first my teacher in 3rd grade. He was just a cool guy who was in the same neighborhood as many of us. He just looked like a P.E. teacher, slim, strong, no-nonsense, but I could tell he loved us by the way he spoke. Every few weeks he would have someone he knew come to class and teach juggling, dancing or fencing. He went to Dallas for a couple of years to take care of his dad who had cancer. When I entered 10th grade at [deleted] high he was back coaching and teaching. Every couple of months or so I see him working with some of the youth group downtown near the church. That man hasn't changed much from when I was younger, even though he's retired. (Marcus, interview)

### **Philosophy and Relevance to Teaching Practices**

The second question of this research study was designed to explore to what extent urban elementary physical education teachers' philosophies impacted their classroom routines. From the content analysis of the data, themes related to inclusiveness (10/13; 77%), challenging learners (9/13; 69%), and showing empathy (8/13; 62%) were the three main areas of discussion for teachers. Gerry and Sandra discussed inclusiveness citing differences in region and gender:

My background is different from the students I teach, as well as the region that I am originally from. When teaching and conversing with students, I try to make sure I include things about the beach or types of food, to give the students experiences that they may not have had or have ever heard about. (Gerry, written philosophy statement)

I grew up in the 60's and was pretty limited in the activities that I could do as a girl growing up. I try to pay special attention to the girls in my class so that they don't feel left out. (Sandra, interview)

The physical educators indicated that the need to challenge learners in their classes was important. Such challenges helped assess students' learning and helped in motivating students with various ability levels. Teachers also stressed developmentally appropriate lessons, and emphasized that children have multiple intelligences, or simply the ability to learn in different ways:

I always make sure that activities are appropriate to the class that I am teaching. There is no feeling in the world like having students frustrated to the point that they can't enjoy anything. You can lose them for the rest of the unit like that. (Ashley, written philosophy statement)

My students learn in different ways, so I have to always recognize that and make sure that all are actively involved in what I am presenting. Not all students can listen to words without having hands-on instruction. (Hanna, interview)

Feelings of empathy were an area of impact espoused by elementary physical educators in their written philosophy statements. Based on initial findings, there was a concern for students that reflected an awareness of the impact of social class on choice and participation:

Having been raised as a poor student with little to no resources, I empathize and understand the plight of my

students. My experiences have allowed me to create a better, challenging environment for my students. I can identify with their circumstances, thus developing a bond of confidence and trust that works in my best interest. (Margie, written philosophy statement)

Knowing that my students are limited financially in the sports that they can participate in, I sometimes modify activities so that they can at least have an understanding of other options that may be available to them down the road. (Curt, written philosophy statement)

The process of reviewing results from the data led to several extensive conversations between myself, and the two experts enlisted to assist with this study. Initial research questions sought to identify elements and critical incidents that helped to shape the development of elementary physical education teachers' philosophies. Secondary questions began to arise as further discussions considered the knowledge base that a teacher in an urban elementary physical education setting must have and the characteristics this person might embody. Based on these conversations, I will provide some insights garnered from this study and explain its relevance for similar physical education environments.

### Discussion

Participants' written philosophy statements and subsequent in-depth interviews provided avenues for discussion on themes pertaining to the development of elementary physical educators' teaching philosophies and the critical incidents that assisted in their formation. The focal point of the discussion though will directly relate to the two research questions of this study that dealt with the topic of teaching urban learners in elementary physical education: (a) What elements encompass the development of teaching philosophies of urban physical educators? and (b) What critical incidents have shaped the development of these philosophies and how teachers interact with these students?

### What Elements Encompass the Development of Teaching Philosophies of Urban Physical Educators?

One of the themes consistent throughout the analysis of data is whether pedagogical content knowledge or content knowledge is more important for the initial success of urban elementary-aged learners. Pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) is described by Shulman (1987) as "that special amalgam of content and pedagogy that is uniquely the province of teachers, their own special form of professional understanding" (p.8). Further, teachers' knowledge includes the most useful forms of representations of those ideas, such as powerful analogies, illustrations, examples, explanations, and demonstrations-in a word, the ways of representing and formulating the subject to make it comprehensible to others" (Shulman, 1989, p.9).

Through the examination of teachers' philosophies and through individual discussions, it was evident that elementary school physical educators in this study had knowledge of content emphasized by Siedentop (2002), but had to learn how to apply this information over time to effectively learn. The physical educators noted that content knowledge had relevance to them, but did not feel as if it was particularly essential for students. The personal, deeply

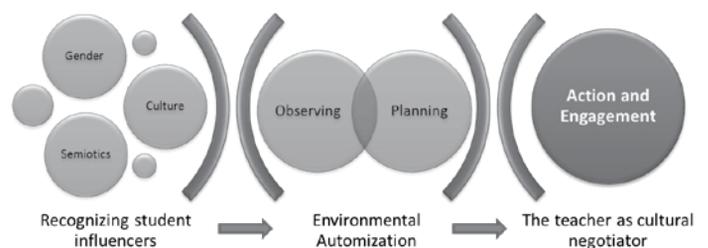
reflective and emotional responses by most teachers expressed that content should be applied to what is relevant in students' lives and that lessons should be designed and implemented bearing this in mind.

When considering perspectives of Hargreaves (1998), McCaughtry (2004) and McCaughtry, and Rovegno (2003), emotional reflections of this sort should not be seen as slight. Similar to these studies, the physical educators' interpretations of their students and their environments impacted their choices of curriculum, the subsequent application of it and the means of delivery. The presentation and synthesis of different forms of knowledge as viewed by Grossman (1990) is a mark of PCK that serves as a transformational element of change in classes.

Acknowledging the importance of students' environments and experiences in achieving physical education outcomes demonstrates a pedagogical skill of particular use in urban settings. Urban learners are among the least likely to profit from American schooling in the United States (Ysseldyke, Algozzine, & Thurlow, 2000). Often they are labeled as substandard performers by teachers, who often make idiosyncratic judgments on students' school and life successes and failures (Obiakor, 2001). The role of the elementary physical educator in recognizing where students are "coming from" and understanding how to provide an atmosphere where urban learners feel involved in the process is significant. Such attention gives students voice and ultimately empowerment.

This type of *environmental anatomization* as it is termed here emphasizes elementary physical educators recognizing the socialization processes that influence urban learners before they enter the school, including things such as home life, cultural differences, previous skills learned, language, socioeconomic status, semiotics, group affiliation and gender. Environmental anatomization attempts to eliminate assumptions and provide instruction that is relevant for each teachers' particular class. It can be used to further evaluate urban teachers' content, why it is used, it's relevance for the learner and considers the potential of what lies on the periphery. The final aspect of environmental anatomization is that it moves the teacher toward active engagement, which is the focus of the next section. Figure 1 shows a diagram of this process.

**Figure 1. Becoming a cultural negotiator through the process of environmental automization**



### What Critical Incidents have Shaped the Development of these Philosophies and how Teachers Interact with their Students?

In examining the critical incidents that shaped the development of elementary physical educators' philosophies, it was clear that communication with their students was of great influence. The subsequent actions by these teachers that took place after these

incidents sheds insight on what is considered model teaching in urban elementary settings. These characteristics also form the basis for an archetype for urban elementary physical educators that will be discussed here.

Galloway and Lasley (2010) in their vision of developing effective urban teaching environments discuss the significance of communication and the conundrum of engaging students in learning. They note that “effective teaching practices of today are built on the recognition that new information must be crafted from prior knowledge demanding that teachers know their students in a more personalized way” (p. 275). When reviewing the work of cognitive psychologists such as Bandura (1977) Piaget (1952), Egan (1988), and others, it is widely accepted that elementary age children have some semblance of prior knowledge of the world and its processes. While knowledge for these children has not been fully cultivated, it can be representative of previous dispositions and ways of learning that could affect a child’s ability to understand and augment new knowledge (Piaget, 1970). This position is referenced in one of the conversations involving Kevin, who spoke of a “teachable moment” that was impactful for him:

Kevin: so I have my fifth grade class sitting down listening to me talk about floor hockey when I start hearing laughing and giggling from a few of my boys in the corner. I stopped class right then and asked what the reason was for laughing when one of my students, Chauncy blurts out “Black people don’t play hockey!”, to which the whole class erupts in laughter. I stand there for a second, calm the class down and finish my ‘intro’ before we start with some basic skills. I thought about that comment for the rest of the day, but it eventually worked out.

PI: What worked out? Did you do anything in particular?  
Kevin: Well, I started thinking about why my students thought that black people didn’t play hockey. I guess it makes sense. The pro hockey team has been here less than 10 years. When I talked to a few of my students the next class, one told me that when they saw hockey on television, they saw all White people. Another told me that they had seen the Mighty Ducks movie on television and that they had a few Black kids on the team. Something was missing. So what I decided to do was look up African Americans who played pro hockey on the web and bring in some pictures and some written information. I used the last 5 minutes each day for the rest of the unit to talk about a few people like Willie O’Ree, Grant Fuhr, and Jarome Iginla. The class for the most part liked it I think. I even learned a bit myself.

This exchange that took place between Kevin and his students represents the viewpoint by Galloway and Lasley (2010), who discuss the importance of teachers building on the thoughts and ideas that young learners bring to classes. As evidenced by some of the dialogue presented in this study, what makes it difficult to communicate at first for many elementary physical educators is the lack of recognition of differences, whether they are cognitive or socio-cultural. This makes talk, or rather *relevant* talk, of extreme importance in urban settings. If elementary physical educators arbitrarily choose to discount the prior experiences of their students and see their talk as irrelevant, new learning which could serve as transformational cannot take place.

Engaging the understanding and preconceptions of students helps them in grasping a fuller meaning of new information (Berk & Winsler, 1995). In the case of Kevin and his students, the new information pertains to hockey and the role of African Americans in the sport. However, Kevin, as with many of the teachers in this study was also participating as a “cultural negotiator” (Mayes, Maile Cutri, Rogers, & Montero, 2007). Cultural negotiators help students explore their own and each other’s cultures in a variety of ways that enliven discussion and enrich curriculum. Instead of accepting his students’ comments on African Americans’ participation in hockey, he provided his class with substantial evidence to the contrary. Further, Kevin discussed the relevance of the information in the context of the subject matter currently being taught in the class.

Kevin’s choice to be proactive about his lack of knowledge should also be lauded in reflecting upon his attempt to reframe the vision his students had about African American participation in hockey. This “open talk” is a dialogue between teachers and students that is sorely deficient in urban settings (Salmon & Zeitz, 1995) that helps to break down misconceptions and the formation of cultural barriers (Grioux, 2005). In urban schools in America that often suffer from a lack of educational resources, this attention to educating students can promote positive social capital (Noguera, 2004) that may impact future mobility through society.

Through analysis of the critical incidences of the participants, a potential archetype of teaching for urban elementary physical education was witnessed. Elementary physical educators in their discourses showed respect for students (Brookhart & Rusnak, 1993; Wright, 1980) empathy regarding students’ challenges (Gay, 2002), a demand of high expectations (Brophy, 1999; Delpit, 1995; Nieto, 2003) and the need to create supportive environments (Brown, 2004). Further, elementary physical educators participated in what Mayes et al. (2007) and Sue, Ivey and Pederson (1996) termed as *cultural reflectivity*.

Reflection of this sort allows teachers to examine their instruction along with the psychodynamic issues, images, biases and assumptions that can affect their pedagogical practices. Also, it helps the practitioner cultivate knowledge of culturally different persons- facilitating the development of strategies and techniques for intercultural awareness and cooperation. Urban elementary physical education teachers in this study demonstrated what Tillich (1959) termed as “ultimate concern”. This concept moved teachers beyond the task of merely lessons, to a more strategic method of instruction that sought to prepare youth to be successful adults. Through this holistic focus, students learn about themselves, become resilient, and promote healthy, pro-social behaviors (Mayes et al, 2007).

Likewise, previous influences and role models assisted in shaping the archetypes of these elementary physical educators who participated in this study. Social science revolutionaries such as Mead (1934), Skinner, (1971) and Stryker (1980) all mention role modeling as a factor that influences the development of youth wishing to emulate persons in positions of authority. Additionally, Bandura’s (1986) social learning theory provided additional insight as to why observing and modeling the behaviors, attitudes and emotional reactions of authority figures is necessary for the socialization of children and their efficacy.

Upon consideration of the possible influence of teacher characteristics on urban classes, Sumrall (1995) concluded that models provide a frame of reference to show what is possible for members of underserved social groups. When children and youth see authority figures, they determine quickly if they can aspire to be in a similar position and thus determine their futures accordingly. As youth (e.g., Bonnie and Marcus), these elementary physical educators viewed family, physical education teachers and coaches in their communities as “inconspicuous icons” of sort. Thus, the unseen, everyday individuals who went about their routine without much attention or fanfare had a strong influence on their entry into the profession of education.

### Conclusion

This study was limited in that it provided one lens of an urban elementary school district in the United States. However, research of this nature has global implications. As stated at the introduction of this article, what is considered “urban” and its impact on the role of urban schooling is subject to a host of political, historical, cultural and socioeconomic factors. While definitions abound, some of the issues found in countries with large urban populations have similarities to what is represented in numerous American city schools.

Developed countries like Ireland, England, Norway, Spain and the Netherlands are not immune to growing issues in urban communities. In particular, Bunar (2007) alerts us to the social predicaments and relational dilemmas currently found in Sweden, with elementary schools representing the social, demographic, and symbolic composition of the local community. The attendance zone principle utilized in these schools has neighborhoods with bad reputations and low status represented by schools with equally bad reputations and status. Students live in poverty, graduate from school in low rates and “deal with the prospects of creating community schools, rebuilding broken ties with parents, and convincing parents become consumers of the schools’ academic products” (p. 143).

He further cites Wacquant’s (1996a, 1996b) assertion that a new form of advanced marginality and urban decay has risen in European cities due to “deindustrialization, changing modes of traditional welfare state organization, ideological transformation, and dissolution of local social networks” (p. 144). Similarities exist between what Wacquant labels as the “black belt”, inner-city ghettos populated by African Americans and the “red belt”, areas around Paris, France, that are predominated by the impoverished and unemployed working class. Notably, is Bunar’s observation that the long-term effects of social isolation and negative perception of the urban ghetto causes youth to internalize the stigma, making it part of their identity and giving them a limited perception of their opportunities. This commentary is similar to discourse espoused by Apple (2006), Culp (2005), and Mills (1971). Regardless of the location of the school and the resources available for instruction, this study underscores the role of the teacher as an integral piece to maximizing student success, as they can encourage students to consider worlds once thought unattainable.

Urban school realities in the 21st century demand a thorough examination of the practices of teachers who perform well in these settings. In uncovering the meanings behind philosophy statements

for elementary physical educators in this study, it was determined that these teachers were vested in ensuring the success of the students in their classes. For most, the process of developing a philosophy statement provided powerful opportunities to reflect on the reasons for their teaching actions, uncovering past events that left significant impact on their choice of career and internalized their teaching beliefs. In discussing their teaching philosophies, urban elementary physical educators inspired students in the same manner that they themselves were inspired in their youth.

In sum, the philosophies of these educators echoed what Goodyear and Allchin (1998) felt was a purpose of the task. Written philosophies that identified the importance of teaching to student situations along with personal interviews of these elementary physical educators gave insight on their practices. Furthermore, this study highlighted the personal and professional rewards of teachers committed to maximizing the success of their students in an urban elementary school physical education setting.

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<b>Appendix A. Demographic Questionnaire Items and Responses</b>	
Questionnaire Items	Number and Percentage of Participant Pool
	(N=44)
<u>Gender</u>	
Female	28 (64%)
Male	16 (36%)
<u>Years of service in physical education position</u>	
1-4 years	4 (9%)
5-10 years	14 (32%)
10 or more years	26 (59%)
<u>Grade level of students taught</u>	
K-3	13 (30%)
K-6	31 (70%)
<u>Highest degree obtained in physical education</u>	
B.S./B.A	44 (100%)
B.S./B.A and M.S/M.A	12 (27%)
B.S./B.A., M.S./M.A. and/or higher	1 (2%)
<u>Best description of the school(s) attended</u>	
<u>as a student:</u>	
Rural	11(25%)
Suburban	14 (32%)
Urban	19 (43%)
<u>Please provide your (1) philosophy of teaching and (2) how it originated</u>	Open-ended response by participants

<b>Appendix B. Telephone Interview Questions</b>
1. Could you please identify your race and gender.
2. If you would please, state your background in physical education. (probe: degrees obtained, years that degrees were obtained)
3. How long have you been part of this current school system? (probe: other schools of work, places of work)
4. What is your philosophy of teaching? (probe: initial development, changes in ten years)
5. How did this philosophy of teaching originate? (probe: previous experiences, influences from family, critical events)