

TEACHING PERSONAL AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN AFTERSCHOOL  
PROGRAMMING AND BEYOND

by

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A DISSERTATION

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## ABSTRACT

Schools continue to become more diverse though teachers and afterschool program coordinator are unprepared to work in such settings. The teaching personal and social responsibility model (Hellison, 2011) serves as a tool to guide practitioners and teacher through the process of developing culturally responsive pedagogies, providing positive social and emotional learning experiences for youth, and guiding participants through the process of applying knowledge learned in the model's setting to alternative environments such as during the school day or at home.

The first study utilized the culturally relevant physical education model and occupational socialization theory as tools to understand how preservice teachers may address their previous life experiences during their professional socialization. The purpose of the first study was to understand the ways in which socialization experiences influenced the development of culturally relevant physical education through the teaching personal and social responsibility model. Qualitative findings indicated that preservice teachers began to get to know their students, understand differences, and make efforts to connect with them. Suggestions are made regarding physical education teacher training in the future.

The second study utilizes self-study of teacher education practice to understand a teaching personal and social responsibility practitioners' experiences, along with occupational socialization theory. Results indicated that there was a high degree of initial frustration, but as relationships and experience developed over time, the practitioner grew to fully enjoy and utilize the model and value self-study.

The purpose of the third study was to explore the social-institutional conditions and teacher and learning practices that guide their social-emotional learning and overall healthy development. Ethnographic findings indicated that the classroom context conflicted with afterschool program contexts, and that the school setting was predominantly needs-thwarting while the afterschool program was a needs-supporting environment.

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the love of my life, Ryan, who provides constant support, encouragement, and laughter. Also, to my mother, Laura, and my sister, Casey, for being my dearest confidants and advice givers, and for providing unconditional love. Finally, to all of my family and friends who have surrounded me with positivity and infinite kindness.

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## CHAPTER 1

### PRESERVICE TEACHERS' LEARNING TO IMPLEMENT CULTURALLY RELEVANT PHYSICAL EDUCATION WITH THE TEACHING PERSONAL AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY MODEL

#### **Abstract**

Schools continue to become more diverse while preservice physical educators remain predominantly white from middle class backgrounds. There is a need to provide future teachers with the necessary culturally awareness and social justice training. The culturally relevant physical education model provides three steps to follow, the tenets of which align well with the teaching personal and social responsibility model. Occupational socialization theory is a useful lens for looking into how preservice teachers may address their previous life experiences during their professional socialization. The purpose of this study was to understand the ways in which socialization experiences influenced the development of culturally relevant physical education through the teaching personal and social responsibility model while teaching in an afterschool program in a high-poverty school.

A phenomenological case study approach was utilized with twelve preservice physical education teachers (8 males, 4 females). The study occurred over the span of two semesters, with data collected predominantly through class assignments within methods courses and associated early field experiences. Qualitative data analysis revealed three themes: (a) getting to know the public, (b) the acknowledgement of cultural distance, and (c) bridging the gap. The themes were well aligned with the steps for the culturally relevant physical education model, and the

preservice teachers made consistent reference to the teaching personal and social responsibility model acting as a guide in the process of overcoming their acculturation in order to meet student needs. This manuscript provides suggestions for physical education training programs regarding models-based practice and enhancing cultural awareness.

*Keywords:* Teaching personal and social responsibility, culturally relevant physical education, occupational socialization theory, physical education teacher education, models-based practice

### **Introduction**

Schools within the U.S. are continuing to become more diverse. Census data released in 2017(a) indicates that about 51.9% of school-aged students are of ethnic or racial minority background. Further, the poverty rate for youth under the age of 18 is at 18% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017b) and over 66% of elementary schools receive Title One funding, a resource that supports schools where at least 40% of the students are from low income families (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). These statistics support the notion that teachers must be prepared to work with youth from all backgrounds and socioeconomic situations; however, literature continues to show that preservice teachers (PSTs) receive limited training related to cultural awareness and social justice (Villegas and Lucas, 2002).

Social justice is a complex concept within education, and can be viewed as both a process and a goal as students are empowered to engage in learning, understand how power dynamics apply to their own lives, and reflect on ways to pursue a more socially just society (Walton-Fisette and Sutherland, 2018). As a way to move toward social justice integration, Flory and McCaughtry (2011) developed the Culturally Relevant Physical Education (CRPE) model, which is a three-step model designed to improve physical educator's ability to provide appropriate instruction to diverse groups of students. We adopted occupational socialization theory (Lawson,

1983a; Lawson, 1983b) to understand how PSTs learn culturally relevant practices through the teaching personal and social responsibility (TPSR; Hellison, 2011) model.

### **Occupational Socialization Theory**

Occupational socialization theory is a dialectical perspective that encompasses the study of individuals as they learn about and take part in a profession (Richards et al., 2014). The present study focuses on two of the traditional three phases: acculturation and professional socialization. Acculturation includes pretraining socialization that influence one's decision to enter into physical education teacher education (PETE; Lawson, 1983b). During this time, individuals develop preconceived ideas of what it means to be a physical educator, otherwise known as a subjective theory (Grotjahn, 1991). These subjective theories are based on recruits' own experiences with physical education during their formative educational experiences and interactions with key socializing agents; they are resistant to change (Richards et al., 2013; Curtner-Smith, 2017). While schools are continuing to diversify (Bureau, 2011), the demographic profile of PETE recruits has not changed much and still tend to be white with middle class backgrounds (McCullick et al., 2012). This is problematic because it often results in a challenge between student and future educator backgrounds which can destabilize education advancement (Ladson-Billings, 2000; Irving and Hudley, 2008).

Professional socialization begins once an individual makes a formal commitment to pursue a career as a teacher and enrolls in a PETE program (Lawson, 1983b). This phase is meant to prepare PSTs with the skills and knowledge needed to be an effective teacher, and to face elements of their subjective theories that do not align with evidence-based practices (Richards et al., 2013). PSTs that enter into PETE with subjective theories that differ from their training may filter out the new information (Richards et al., 2014). When considering PSTs

cultural responsiveness, diversity content should be incorporated within an entire teacher education program, including coursework and field experiences (Flory, 2016a; Villegas and Lucas, 2002). Many programs, however, provide limited sociocultural training, leaving PSTs unprepared for the possibility of attaining a position in a diverse school (Flory, 2016b). This is particularly problematic given that many beginning teachers get their first position in a school that does not match the context in which they experienced acculturation (Kane et al., 2008). The approach to PETE programs could improve by preparing PSTs through incorporating explicit teaching focused on cultural awareness and social justice issues, in line with the culturally relevant physical education model (Flory and McCaughtry, 2011).

### **Culturally Relevant Physical Education**

The variety in student backgrounds in US schools requires that teachers are knowledgeable about their students' culture, not just knowledgeable about the content they teach (Civitillo et al., 2018). Ladson-Billings (1995) states that in order for culturally relevant teaching to occur, it "must meet three criteria: an ability to develop students academically, a willingness to nurture and support cultural competence, and the development of a sociopolitical or critical consciousness" (p. 483). The CRPE model (Flory and McCaughtry, 2011) is one method developed for physical education that may improve the learning experience and student-teacher relationships in situations where teachers' backgrounds differ from those of their students (Flory, 2016b). The framework includes a three-step process. The first of these steps is knowing the public. The public includes the students, but also includes the families and communities associated with the school in which one is teaching. Teachers must develop an understanding of their students' home lives, language, and ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds.

The second step of CRPE is to identify areas of cultural distance between teachers, their students, and their students' families. Cultural distance is "the discrepancy between worldviews, values, and backgrounds that shape individuals' and groups' explanations for how the world operates" (Flory and McCaughtry, 2011). For example, a PST may recall playing outside with friends in their neighborhood after school but learns that several students do not have this experience because their neighborhood is not safe. The third and final step relates to enacting strategies to bridge the cultural distance (Flory and McCaughtry, 2011). It is essential for physical educators to be trained to modify their lessons to be effective, as opposed to teaching with unfamiliar language and content (Flory, 2016a). This allows teachers to mold their lessons to fit with their students' worldviews and experiences, which results in an improved educational experience and more positive engagement (Irvine, 2003). An example of this connection may be teaching a unit on bowling as opposed to tennis because there are no tennis courts in the neighborhood, but there is a local bowling alley that welcomes youth members.

The needs of all types of learners may be met if PETE programs integrate CRPE into structured coursework and field experiences. Flory (2016a) shares suggestions that PETE programs may utilize. A couple of these include (a) evaluating the program, (b) identifying partners that may provide teaching strategies based on experience with diverse students, (c) considering the approach to change and difficult conversations, and (d) starting small and putting in effort over time. It can be uncomfortable to experience new cultures and settings, and PETE faculty must prepare for discussions around PSTs associated feelings, particularly when CRPE challenges PSTs subjective theories. The TPSR pedagogical model (Hellison, 2011) presents one additional avenue through which PSTs can learn to integrate cultural relevance into their physical education lessons.

## **Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility**

The TPSR model is a best practice physical education teaching method (Metzler, 2017) that utilizes physical activity as a tool to provide explicit learning opportunities focused on developing social and emotional skills (Hellison, 2011). These skills are practiced with the purpose of continued application, or transfer, outside of the structured physical education or out of school time program setting (Jacobs and Wright, 2017). The model is rooted in five primary goals: respect, participation and effort, self-direction, caring for others, and transfer (Hellison, 2011). As is indicative of a curriculum that utilizes CRPE strategies, teachers employing TPSR must reflect regularly to build a humanistic approach to teaching and overcome the initial challenge of giving power to the students. A humanistic approach includes showing empathy and stressing positive behavior. These responsibilities are achieved through the use of a flexible lesson structure that includes time to interact with and get to know students, discuss the meaning of the TPSR goals, practice the goal in a physical activity, and discuss group and personal goal performance (Hellison, 2011).

Though the field of physical education generally agrees that using a models-based approach is appropriate, studies have indicated that it is challenging to learn and implement pedagogical models with fidelity (Curtner-Smith et al., 2008). In particular, teachers struggle to give up traditional teaching styles, particularly when their subjective theories do not align with the goals of the model (Richards and Gordon, 2017). Challenges in incorporating models may be more easily overcome if models are introduced to PSTs during the PETE experience and when PSTs have multiple opportunities to practice implementing a model (Stran and Curtner-Smith, 2009).

TPSR may provide a bridge from PSTs' current knowledge set to learning how to utilize CRPE in unfamiliar settings. Incorporating TPSR into PSTs' professional socialization may better prepare them to fill roles in diverse schools as the model provides ample opportunities for teachers to connect with their students through relational time and connect their students to their curriculum, such as providing their students opportunities to use their voices to contribute (Hellison, 2011). Further, TPSR is designed to be implemented in communities characterized by their diversity and is task-oriented, both of which are associated with culturally responsive pedagogy (Rukavina et al., 2019). The purpose of this study, therefore, was to understand the ways in which PSTs' socialization experiences influenced the development of culturally relevant physical education through the TPSR model while teaching in an afterschool program in a high-poverty school. The research questions that guided this study include: (a) how do the preservice teachers' perceive their students' lives?, (b) what elements of cultural distance between preservice teachers' acculturation and their students' lives are identified?, and (c) how do preservice teachers overcome cultural distance?

## **Methods**

### *Research Design*

A phenomenological case study approach was utilized to highlight the meaning the PSTs made as they learned CRPE through TPSR (Vagle, 2016). A case study is defined by Merriam (1998) as "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit" (p. xiii). Identifying boundaries in a case is essential in creating clear objectives and organized data collection (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). The present study placed margins around the PSTs completing PETE coursework and field experiences in an afterschool program setting. The group represented one unit as they



experienced the process together, creating a collective meaning. Phenomenology is based on the understanding that there is an element of meaning that is mutually understood as a common experience within a particular group (Patton, 2015). Phenomenology fits well with topics that are considered affective or emotional because it promotes understanding occurrences as they were seen through the eyes of the participant (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015; Patton, 2015). Given that working with diverse youth and implementing CRPE may conflict with PSTs' subjective theories, phenomenology was deemed a suitable fit for this study as it will help develop an understanding of how the PSTs made meaning of this situation (Giorgi, 2009).

### *Participants and Setting*

A total of 12 PSTs (eight males, four females) enrolled in an entry level methods course and associated early field experience agreed to participate in the study. The PSTs were purposefully selected for this study based on their enrollment in the focal courses. Eleven of the PSTs identified as White and one identified as African American. The average age was 21.17 years ( $SD = 0.97$ ), with the highest age being 23 and the lowest being 20. While all of the PSTs were in their first year of the PETE program, the average for years spent at the university upon starting the study was 3.83 ( $SD = 1.07$ ), with a high of six and a low of three years.

### *The Methods Course and Early Field Experience*

The study participants were enrolled in a sequence of courses across two semesters that focused on learning elementary physical education teaching methods (see Table 1.1 for a full overview of the courses and field experiences see; Ivy, Richards, Lawson, & Alameda-Lawson, 2018; Richards, Ivy, Lawson, & Alameda-Lawson, 2018). The fall semester course was focused on the components of and proper way to integrate the TPSR model and the skill themes approach (Graham et al., 2012; Hellison, 2011). Given that the early field experience was situated in an

elementary afterschool program, the TPSR model provided the pedagogical framing and socioemotional learning content whereas the skill themes approach provided the physical activity content (Richards et al., 2019b). After field experience began, the class continued to meet on campus for debriefing discussions and to scaffolded instruction. During these meetings the group discussed the diversity of their students and their home lives, incorporating elements of CRPE without explicitly talking about the model.

In the second semester, the PSTs gained further insight into instructional practices and delved deeply into CRPE. The three steps of CRPE were introduced and one of the model developers, Dr. Flory, guest lectured to explain the approach. The PSTs completed activities that asked them to think critically about their background and how it varied from their students. For example, they filled out a form describing various aspects of their personal lives with questions like, “what did you do after school when you were a child?” The group discussed the differences among themselves and then the differences they saw between themselves and their students. This was facilitated by the fact that in the second semester the PSTs knew more about their students than may be typical in PETE because they had already spent a full semester in the field setting. Once the field experience resumed, the PSTs were challenged to think of ways to bridge the gaps in their teaching and to share their thoughts with one another through weekly on campus debriefing sessions.

The field experiences associated with both courses occurred in the same afterschool program. The program operated out of an elementary school where 85% of the students were underrepresented minorities and 90% received free or reduced cost lunch. The program included about 70 children from first through fifth grade that attended for two hours three days a week over the span of 30 weeks in the school year. The children that took part were referred to the

program by school staff based on academic, behavioral, and/or socioemotional needs. Each semester, the PSTs were split into teaching pairs and worked with small groups. In both semesters, the PSTs used the Tool for Assessing Responsibility-based Education 2.0 (Escartí et al., 2015) as a teaching tool to reflect on their implementation of responsibility-based instruction (Hemphill et al., 2015). Reflection of results provides insight regarding what components of the TPSR model are integrated effectively, and which need to be addressed further. The PSTs completed a TARE 2.0 based on a video of their teaching in the first semester, and then they did another in the second comparing so as to compare their results across semesters.

### *Data Collection*

Multiple data collection techniques were utilized throughout the study and most were embedded in the coursework which had the benefit of promoting reflection (Tsangaridou and O'Sullivan, 1994). Following each teaching experience, the PSTs completed a critical incident reflection where they described an experience, either positive or negative, that stood out to them while teaching that day (Flanagan, 1954). The PSTs also completed weekly journal responses online. All course writing assignments were included as data sources. An example of a writing assignment includes an essay focused on working with diverse youth. Non-participatory observations were conducted by research team members with field notes taken every day that the PSTs led the program (Patton, 2015). Each PST was videotaped three times, once in the fall and twice in the spring, to gather information on TPSR use and student interactions during the teaching process. The PSTs completed TARE 2.0 observations and reflections on their videos that were used as data (Escartí et al., 2015). Semi-structured interviews were completed with each of the PSTs at the end of each semester (Roulston, 2010). Semi-structured interviews lasted 30 to 45 minutes and were conducted on campus. Questions focused on the PSTs experiences

using TPSR, perceptions of the program and participants, and teaching to address diversity. For example, “how are the children’s life experiences similar or different from your own?”

#### Positionality and the Role of the Researchers

During this study, the second author, Tom, was the primary instructor of the PST participants’ classes and the first author, Karen, regularly led lessons. We recognize the potential influence of power that may have played a role during the study. The PSTs may have altered their responses to prompts based on their perceptions of what we wanted them to say or do. To counteract this issue, the participants provided consent at the beginning of each semester during class while Tom was outside of the room. Similar to studies completed by Rovegno (1994) and Richards and colleagues (2019a), Karen clarified that she was not their primary instructor and was not responsible for assigning course grades. She assured the PSTs that they could be open and honest with her regarding all aspects of the class and it would not negatively impact their academic outcomes. Tom was not informed of what students took part in the study.

Karen felt that the PSTs were comfortable with and trusted her as they regularly came to her for advice or to share their thoughts or frustrations, this can be viewed positively in that they were more likely to be open and honest throughout the study. While separate from the grading process, Karen still cared about the PSTs’ success and provided them support in their teaching and reflection. We also reject the notion that any research can be objective as the researcher plays a significant role throughout the process (Rovegno, 1994). It seemed important, therefore, to track how her positionality may have influenced this study. Karen regularly made journal entries following interactions with PSTs to remain attentive to how their relationship may have slanted the meaning of the investigation and to reduce the potential occurrence of influence.

## **Data Analysis**

Karen conducted inductive and deductive analysis over several phases (Patton, 2015). The process had inductive components in that the researcher understood that results may oppose the associated theoretical doctrines, but it was also deductive in that the data was examined through the lenses of occupational socialization theory and CRPE (Richards and Hemphill, 2017). Constant comparison was also utilized as themes were developed and redeveloped over time as new data were coded (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). All of the data were reviewed as Karen read through each piece of data and assigned descriptive codes (Maxwell, 2013). The next phase involved axial coding as connections were made between the codes to begin to develop themes across the data sources (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015). The final themes were reviewed with Tom to challenge Karen's potential bias and to seek out overlooked connections amongst the data.

Trustworthiness (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) was present in numerous ways in order to enhance the methodological rigor of the study. Multiple data sources were utilized for triangulation, ensuring inferences were appropriate as results were supported in numerous locations (Tracy, 2010). Peer debriefing occurred during data analysis as Tom routinely checked the work of Karen and challenged potentially biased interpretations. A rich, thick description was also provided with the hopes that the reader can apply the described process in their own setting if desired (Creswell and Miller, 2000). An audit trail was kept throughout the study through the form of journaling and memos to ensure that any decisions made were appropriate and justified. Throughout data analysis, negative case analysis occurred as we were open to contradictions to the emerging findings (Anney, 2014).

## Results

The PSTs developed CRPE as they spent more time in the early field experience over the academic year. Once data analysis was complete, the development of three themes had occurred, the themes aligned with the three steps of CRPE. These themes include (a) getting to know the public, (b) the acknowledgement of cultural distance, and (c) bridging the gap. As themes are presented, participant quotations are offered to support researcher assertions. All participants and children discussed are identified using pseudonyms assigned by the researchers.

### *Getting to Know the Public*

The early field experience was challenging for the PSTs in the beginning. Though on-campus meetings had delved into descriptions of the school, it did not prepare them for the in-person experience of teaching students from diverse backgrounds, which differed from their acculturation experiences. Lisa expressed this in a discussion post when she stated, “this was my first real experience in an area with kids coming from poverty affected families.” Lisa had only had previous experience working with high income predominantly white youth while working in Jewish camps in the northeast region of the United States. During an interview she added, “the first time that I walked in there, I was a little culture shocked... the second I walked into that school, I knew it was going to be different.” Certain behaviors stood out to the PSTs right away. Greg, for example, talked about his students during an interview saying, “they'll get mad and they'll like look at each other and... it'll be more of like street talk and I've never heard - I mean I've heard it before, but like I will never talk like that.” (discussion post). In a discussion post, Marie stated, “I was very surprised on how they behaved on day one of us teaching, I expected the kids to do better.”

Following this initial experience, the PSTs were quick to begin blaming the children for the lessons going poorly. Immediately following an early teaching episode, Marie wrote a critical incident stating, “I thought I was doing my best teaching and getting the students to be involved. They were lazy and didn’t want to do anything... I feel like they are over it and don’t want to be here.” In another critical incident form, Asher noted, “today was a bad day. The kids didn’t cooperate at all, they wouldn’t listen to us no matter what we tried, and they were at each other’s throats the whole time. The lesson was great, the kids were not.” The experience was overwhelming at times, leaving some PSTs feeling defeated. During an interview, Asher reflected, “there were times where I felt like I’m not going to be a good teacher. I’m not going to be a good PE teacher... If I decide to go to elementary I’m not going to be good at it.”

Despite the challenges faced and the negativity surrounding the experience, the PSTs continued use of the TPSR model prompted a number of interactions and discussions resulting in the development of relationships with the children. As these relationships grew, the PSTs began to gain knowledge about the individual’s backgrounds and home lives that informed their teaching. In a writing assignment, Eli stated in a writing assignment that through conversations with the children in his group during relational time he learned that, “they get yelled at during school the majority of the day.” He also noticed that not all of the children have stable home lives, “I’ve seen kids be picked up in a van by their parent with no seats in the van, and 4-5 kids will pile up into the van.” Cameron also made observations about his students, stating, “It’s just like [they wear] dirty clothes or the same clothes over and over again” (Interview). In an interview, Rebekah talked about how she noticed respect being shown to the most dominant child which she did not understand because he was not kind to others, “I have one [student] a lot

of students respect. It's weird because I see him as the bully of the group. He would go around saying, "You wimp! Are you shrimpy!? I'm gonna knock you down."

As more time was spent in the program, more observations were made, such as the following discussion shared by Liam: "I mean, you've got kids in poverty that may or may not get three meals a day, don't have fathers at home, potentially don't have mothers at home - a split relationship... This has been the biggest eye opener." During the process of learning how to handle behavior problems utilizing the TPSR model, Greg wrote a discussion post about a realization he had while teaching in which, "some of my students are told that if someone messes with you, you hit them, and that is not okay [in the program]. That is not the student's fault, that is often how kids are raised in their homes." The PSTs blame and frustration for their students began to dissolve throughout this process and they began to think more deeply about their role in the experience.

### *The Acknowledgement of Cultural Distance*

As the PSTs began to identify the reasons behind their student's words and actions, they also began to identify similarities and differences in their own lived experiences. This process was explicitly encouraged through an on-campus meeting that prompted the PSTs to consider details related to their childhood, such as their religious upbringing, socioeconomic class of their family, school, and neighborhood, access to safe play areas, family dynamics. These conversations and the weekly discussion prompts asked the PSTs to consider their own socialization experiences in relation to their students lived realities. As for similarities, some PSTs saw some resemblances of their students in their own experiences. Asher noticed that many of his students came from one parent homes and he also "came from a one-parent home, so I



understood how frustrating and tough it could be in school when you have one parent trying to play both roles. You act up. You got crazy... I just kinda relate to them” (interview).

While some PSTs saw connections between their own backgrounds and those of their students, most noted differences. The predominant differences that were consistently identified across the PSTs were based in class, race, and family structure and their associated privileges. Kara was “born in a middle-class family and attended a private school...in a predominately white area. I also knew that when I went home, I would have a meal prepared. I cannot say the same about my kids” (writing assignment). Lisa provide some additional examples in a writing assignment of how her background is different from that of the students she taught:

When I first came to teach at this school I had immediately recognized major differences in our lifestyles. I grew up in a wealthy area in southwestern Connecticut, I played outside... I had many toys, clothes, books, electronics and so on. I was always taught to be kind, be respectful of others, and so on. I went to very good schools that had good programs and we had equipment for everything. Teaching at this school became an eye-opening experience for me because the culture was so different than what I was used to.

As this process unfolded, an awareness that the approach to teaching would need to be changed to better fit the needs of the children and show more compassion became apparent. Liam, for example, stated in a writing assignment, “I have to get on a level of understanding for what the kids go through on a day to day basis in and out of the classroom in order to not offend and/or create a non-effective learning atmosphere.” Eli also addressed this concept during an interview when he said, “You need to step back for a second and put yourself in their shoes and understand where they are coming from. Talk to them, give them opportunities, and maybe change the way you teach... get them involved.” A discussion post written by Mason

emphasized the concept of changing what you know from your own experiences to what is needed within the community within which you are teaching:

I came from a very dominant teaching environment where it was “what I say goes” and if you did not perform you were punished...It has taken me some time to release the teaching style I was so used to...as the semester went on I grew closer to my students and the dominating personality was no longer something I felt necessary. I believe it’s crucial to learn how your students respond and base your teaching style on that.

### *Bridging the Gap*

The PSTs thoughts regarding the way they should be teaching began to transform into action as their time engaging in the field experience progressed. The most prevalent change was when the PSTs adjusted their language and communication with their students to better fit their lifestyles. Relationships were developed through the use of the TPSR model. Through writing assignments, several made comments such as: “TPSR helps build my lessons to where I can build relationships with my students” (Rebekah), and “I have connected with my students by talking to them about their day and what’s going on in their lives [during relational time]. Just being there and being intentional with my kids... they know that I care about them” (Cameron). In an interview, Carlos talked about conversations he would have with his students around the TPSR goals, such as “How would you respect someone you're playing basketball with outside of school, how would you respect your brother at home, your sister ... I was able to connect these lessons... put it in ways that they would understand.” Some of the PSTs, such as Kara, were creative in finding ways to bond with students, particularly when there was a language barrier: “we had one girl that joined us... She didn't speak any English. We... had a struggle with that a

little bit but still tried to show her that we cared just in body language and our facial expressions” (Interview).

The PSTs continued to have more practice implementing TPSR and time learning about the model in further detail, providing them with a set of skills to accomplish the model’s goals. As the PSTs practiced TPSR suggestions for discipline in the form of discussing behaviors and setting goals for improvement, they took advantage of the one on one moments to develop bonds. Liam discussed his thought process with his students, saying, “we are trying to build them up... I’ll be like, look man, I see we are struggling today. Just give me the best you’ve got... I am here with you, if have any questions just come ask me... they seem to like the connection” (Interview). He talked about this even further in a reflection assignment during which time the TARE 2.0 tool was used to compare teacher behaviors from the first to the second semester. Regarding his newly developed strengths he said, “being able to sit down and relate with a student when they are having problems. That is not just with [movement] skills, but items happening inside and outside of the classroom that could affect their behavior or participation.” Carlos made a connection with his students by being open to suggestions for improvement, “I had to take Javier off to the side because he did not follow directions. I was able to get him to participate and enjoy it by asking him what he thought would make it more fun” (critical incident report). Conversations went both ways, as the PSTs chose to share information about their own lives in order to connect with the students. When a student was acting out because he was having trouble in school, Greg chose to share his own academic struggles: “I talked to him about how... I had to go to like reading classes to read. I didn't like reading in front of anybody. I still don't like reading in front of anybody... I don't ever tell anybody that” (Interview).

While changing informal interactions and building relationships was the primary way in which the PSTs addressed cultural distance, some also modified their lesson plans and teaching behaviors to better fit their students' needs and interests. In a writing assignment, Kara stated, "during activities, we tried to keep them similar to games or sports that the students might play at home." Carlos addressed this process as well:

I would plan activities that I knew I could relate them to out of school activities that the students were participating in. By doing this these students were focused, and I was able to get through to the students and I felt this was a way for me to connect with them.

When these students focused, I was able to start giving them more responsibility which in turn allowed them to start having more self-direction. Also, the students were usually more interested in a lesson when it was something that they were doing in their free time or when it was helping them improve their skills for a game or activity. (Writing Assignment).

The TPSR model acted as a guide in this process as well, as a component of the model suggested the inclusion of students' choices and voices and leadership. Reference to this was made when Kara made the following TARE 2.0 reflection:

I think one [success] in particular is the choices and voices of the students... I have strived to give them options and opportunities to give ideas and suggestions when it was appropriate. I tried to make every activity fun for the students and knowing what they want to do helped me achieve that goal.

Several of the PSTs attempted to find ways to integrate this process in order to make their teaching better suit the needs of their students. A field note from the researcher was completed on Benny's teaching of a literacy dance lesson, empowerment was addressed with the following

comment, “Great! Students are responsible for creating their own stories, they don’t have to act out an already written story.” The youth in Benny’s group were provided the opportunity to develop something that was relatable to themselves and their peers while also advancing the challenge of the task.

The PSTs completed the academic year within the program using the TPSR model with two key takeaways shared across each participant. The first of which was “being patient and finding those ways to communicate with people from those backgrounds and figuring out how you need to talk to them” (Benny, interview). Being patient was key, as each participant indicated. A comment made by Eli during his interview covered those shared by many in the group: “patience was something that I had to work on and understand that was a big part of what I’m going to be doing and being cooperative, just giving your time to the students.” The second key takeaway was that the PSTs “have learned a great deal when teaching the TPSR model. It has helped mold my beliefs and values when teaching and I know I will use it the rest of my career” (Lisa, writing assignment). The PSTs indicated that the model’s guidance was pivotal in their growth and ability to implement CRPE in the field experience setting, and it would be a valuable resource in their future teaching, particularly if they worked in a similar setting.

### **Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to understand the ways in which PSTs’ socialization experiences influenced the development of culturally relevant physical education through the use of the teaching personal and social responsibility model. The PSTs initially struggled to understand their students, likely because their subjective theories and expectations regarding physical education were being challenged as they worked in a culturally diverse environment (Grotjahn, 1991; Richards et al., 2014), and their first response was to resist rather than learn

(Curtner-Smith, 2017). Conversations and observations with students over time resulted in developing an understanding of their student's lives within and surrounding the program. This connects with the CRPE model as it calls for a deep understanding of youth lives, families, and the surrounding community (Flory and McCaughtry, 2011).

A greater awareness could have been developed through immersion in the community such as local businesses, neighborhoods, churches, public transportation system (Ware, 2006). The full understanding of the students lived experiences and cultures is limited if it does not include the assets provided by the community. What they did develop, however, allowed for a critical look to be taken into their own acculturation experiences, predominantly based on socioeconomic status variations, compared to the students in the program. Difficult conversations were prompted through regular on campus discussions and personal reflections (Flory, 2016a; Walton-Fisette and Sutherland, 2018), leading to the PSTs identifying ways their upbringing countered, and at times related to, that of the students in their groups.

As the semester progressed, the PSTs began to contemplate how their life experiences and the way they view the world differed from their students. The PSTs learned that they were going to have to make a conscious effort to step out of their comfort zones to enhance the learning experience and relationships developed during the field experience. Great improvements were made in consistent communication and relationship development displaying evidence of efforts towards bridging the cultural distance gap (Flory and McCaughtry, 2011). Further indication was discovered through task alteration, though examples of these were more limited than the changes to informal communication. A key component to the PSTs moving through the CRPE steps was that TPSR was a catalyst and guide throughout the process. As lessons were developed around the TPSR lesson structure, a number of opportunities arose for the PSTs to

communicate with their students and make the effort to get to know them as individuals (Hellison, 2011). Further in line with CRPE, the TPSR model also promotes student empowerment, seeking opportunities to provide students with input regarding lesson development and linking their interests into the curriculum. Consistently returning to the tenets of the model led the PSTs to give students the opportunity to add to the lesson, providing a chance to teach to the program youths' culture as the teachers began to share their authority. Further, the regular use of teacher reflection was beneficial in prompting the PSTs to think more deeply about their students' behaviors and the potential reasons behind their choices (Hellison, 2011).

The PSTs indicated that the TPSR model was beneficial for them and that they would continue to utilize it in their professional lives. This reinforced the idea that introducing models during PETE training better prepares PSTs for their use and to overcome associated challenges (Stran and Curtner-Smith, 2009), particularly TPSR as it was largely different than the acculturation experiences of multiactivity or non-teaching physical education (Ferry and McCaughtry, 2013). It is challenging to give up the idea of traditional styles of teaching (Richards and Gordon, 2017), and difficult to utilize a new model to its full potential (Curtner-Smith et al., 2008). Utilizing PETE as an opportunity to simulate the use of the model in a school setting was well received, and confirms Casey's (2018) thoughts regarding models-based practice introduction during teacher training.

In the future, PETE programs may consider incorporating courses that provide practical opportunities to integrate models, specifically TPSR, in settings that counter the acculturation experiences of their PSTs (Flory, 2016a). Courses should also incorporate explicit discussions around acculturation and how it plays a role in an individual's approach towards teaching. The

results indicate that the PSTs subjective theories shifted throughout the experience, perhaps because they were consistently being prompted to consider their acculturation experiences and how they play a role in their teaching and connections with their students as well as being placed in an unfamiliar setting. Literature indicates that acculturation is sturdy and difficult to change (Curtner-Smith, 2017), thus the process put forth throughout the present study may provide insight into PETE programs abilities to be more impactful.

Although the findings from this study make an important contribution, much work still needs to be done in the area of CRPE. One important extension of this study would be for PSTs to become more imbedded fixtures within communities by spending time in the youth's local common places and through communication with key individuals in their youth's lives such as parents or neighbors (Flory and McCaughtry, 2011). Further, though this study did take place over the span of one year, CRPE was not integrated into other courses in which the PSTs were enrolled. Addressing CRPE and social justice concepts congruently across the PETE curriculum would likely have a greater long-term impact (Flory, 2016a). Further, while TPSR has a logical connection to CRPE, similar connections should be explored with other pedagogical models, such as sport education and health-related fitness. Further research could be done to understand the potential for these and other models to provide a platform for CRPE. There is also a possibility that the PSTs that took part in this study strategically complied (Lacey, 1977) throughout the school year by consistently writing about and saying what they believed was necessary for a desirable grade. Steps were taken to reduce this possibility by using a longitudinal approach and a variety of data sources; however, follow up studies with participants regarding their use of CRPE and/or TPSR in their future professional setting would support or challenge some of the findings.



Finally, to fit Ladson-Billings (1995) definition of cultural relevant teaching, three components must be attained: an ability to develop students academically, a willingness to nurture and support cultural competence, and the development of a sociopolitical or critical consciousness. The PSTs were trained in best pedagogical practice in order to ensure academic improvement and they also demonstrated the willingness to support cultural competence. Their professional development experience throughout this study may have prepared them for the use of the TPSR model and practice being patient throughout the process of developing an understanding of, connection with, and curriculum based on the culture and community of their professional school setting. In addition, the steps of CRPE were discussed throughout the courses and the PSTs had the opportunity to place themselves within them, hopefully increasing the chances that they would repeat the process as professionals.

There is still room, however, for improvement on the third, the growth of critical or sociopolitical consciousness. This has been described as teachers being aware that school and education are not separate from outside cultural and societal occurrences and circumstances (Gay, 2010). The PSTs in this study had taken steps through regular reflection to address their own privilege in relation to other's lived experiences, but a more in-depth look could be conducted. In particular, addressing the concept of "whiteness", the systemic racism occurring based on normalizing white culture and labeling all others as nonstandard (Matias, 2013), was limited and is an essential component to sociopolitical consciousness. For example, the PSTs understanding of their students in this study was predominantly focused on their poverty status. This development is acceptable if it is purely knowledge based, but some comments associated poverty with weakness which normalizes whiteness, the opposite of the desired reaction. Further

research looking into how this process could be enhanced is essential in order to develop well-rounded contributing teachers and citizens.

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APPENDIX

Table 1.1

*Elementary Physical Education Teaching Methods and Early Field Experience Courses*

	<u>Fall Semester</u>	<u>Spring Semester</u>
On-campus Meetings	<i>Week 1-8</i> Twice per week for 50 minutes each <i>Week 9-18</i> Once per week for 50 minutes	<i>Week 1-6</i> Twice per week for 3 hours each <i>Week 7-17</i> Once per week for two hours
On-Campus Content	TPSR Model Basics Skill Themes Approach Basics Behavior Management Strategies	TPSR Model Advanced Skill Themes Advanced CRPE Strategies and Discussion
Early Field Experience	<i>Week 9-18</i> Twice per week for 1 hour each	<i>Week 7-17</i> Twice per week for two hours each
Early Field Experience Content	Locomotor movements Dance Gymnastics	Chasing, Fleeing, and Dodging Throwing and Catching Dribbling and Volleying Kicking and Punting Striking Dance Literacy

## CHAPTER 2

### A SELF-STUDY OF A TEACHING PERSONAL AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY PROGRAM COORDINATOR

#### **Abstract**

The teaching personal and social responsibility model has been incorporated into physical education and out of school time programming globally, but there is limited literature focused on learning to teach using the model from the practitioner perspective. One method for deepening the understanding of this practice is through the use of self-study of teacher education practice. We used self-study to understand the experiences of Karen, a doctoral student at Southeastern University, as she developed and implemented a teaching personal and social responsibility-based program in an elementary afterschool program for three years. We used occupational socialization theory to better understand the progression of her experiences. Data were collected through journaling and critical friend discussions. Qualitative data analysis resulted in three turning points that were presented as three themes, including: (a) a planted seed needs light and rain, (b) an emerging bud with growing roots, and (c) rising in full bloom. As captured through these themes, Karen experienced a high degree of initial frustration, but as relationships and experience developed over time, she grew to fully enjoy and utilize the model. Self-study of teacher education practice played a role in her ability to continue learning and growing in her model implementation. The findings support previous literature indicating self-study can be used as a developmental tool. They also reinforce the challenging but rewarding process of implementing the teaching personal and social responsibility model. Preservice faculty members without K-12 teaching experience may develop their practical skills by implementing physical activity-based programming during their studies.

**Keywords:** Teaching personal and social responsibility, occupational socialization theory, self-study, doctoral education, out-of-school time programming.



## Introduction

Sport-based youth development programs have the potential to concurrently help children learn physical activity skills as well as teach socioemotional skills that can transfer outside of the program (Danish, Forneris, Hodge, & Heke, 2004; Perkins & Noam, 2007). Socioemotional skills can be used to understand and control emotions, make healthy choices, improve social skills, advance goal setting, and form lasting relationships (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL], 2018). In order for learning to occur, program leaders must be effective communicators, earn youth's respect, be positive, and handle problems in a manner that promotes learning and empathy (Danish et al., 2004). Leaders must also create a safe and trusting environment that allows youth to develop comfort in showing vulnerability, while still feeling valued and appreciated (Fuller, Percy, Bruening, & Cotrufo, 2013). These are not skills that always come naturally for many physical activity program leaders, which highlights the importance of suitable educational opportunities that prepare practitioners for long term use (Hirsch, Mekinda, & Stawicki, 2010).

Implementing a best practice model within a physical activity setting requires time and commitment (Metzler, 2017). It takes up to two years for a practitioner to work through frustration and doubts and develop comfort implementing a model in full (Casey, 2014). This length of time can add to frustrations and causes many to resort to more comfortable behaviors that align with how they were taught, typically in full-scale game play or roll out the ball styles of teaching (Richards & Gordon, 2017). The Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility (TPSR; Hellison, 2011) model is an example of one application of sport-based youth development that has been identified as a best-practice model in physical education and activity settings (Metzler, 2017). In the past, occupational socialization theory (Lawson, 1983b, 1983c)

has been utilized to understand how practitioners are socialized to understand and implement best practice teaching models (Curtner-Smith, Hastie, & Kinchin, 2008). In the current investigation, we explored Karen's socialization and experience learning to use the TPSR model through her doctoral program in the southeastern region of the US through self-study of teacher education practices (S-STEP; Laboskey, 2004) with the support of her critical friend, Tom. We adopted occupational socialization theory (Lawson, 1983a) as a framework for understanding Karen's experiences and interpreting the findings.

### **The Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility Model**

The TPSR model was developed as a guide for teaching youth to develop and enhance their strengths in thinking and acting conscientiously (Hellison, 2011). Whereas many other pedagogical models in physical education focus primarily on physical skill learning (Metzler, 2017), TPSR prioritizes socioemotional learning as a key outcome for youth, with the goal of transferring lessons learned to other areas of youth's lives, such as the home, school, or community (Gordon, Jacobs, & Wright, 2016). To facilitate these outcomes, program leaders draw upon responsibility-based teaching strategies, including modeling respect, setting expectations, providing opportunities for success, fostering social interactions, assigning tasks, giving opportunities for leadership, allowing choices and voices, providing a role in assessment, and challenging youth to transfer goals (Escartí, Wright, Pascual, & Gutiérrez, 2015).

The focus on social and emotional learning is paired with empowering youth to exercise their voice by providing feedback on the program and participating meaningfully in the decision-making process as it relates to program activities (Li, Wright, Rukavina, & Pickering, 2008). The transition to providing youth with decision making opportunities can be difficult and

uncomfortable as practitioners feel they have less control and/or are less important to the overall flow of the lesson (Richards & Gordon, 2017). Leaders who struggle with program implementation may exhibit a lack of flexibility, act in an authoritarian manner, and resort to traditional, teacher-centered instructional approaches if they feel as if their authority is threatened (Buchanan, 2001). While attempting to utilize the model, leaders have also experienced difficulties navigating cultural differences related to students' racial identities and family backgrounds while working to engage and motivate youth (Richards & Gordon, 2017). In order to navigate program and model implementation, it has been recommended that TPSR practitioners reflect on their thoughts and actions regularly and interact with others to gain suggestions and input on their performance (Hellison, 2011). This process will help create an understanding of how various factors play a role in the successful implementation of the model.

### **Occupational Socialization Theory**

Occupational socialization theory focuses on the process of learning about and working within a profession (Lawson, 1983a). Whereas most applications of occupational socialization theory have focused on the work of inservice physical education teachers, there has been a recent push to extend the theory to focus on the recruitment, education, and ongoing socialization of physical education teacher education (PETE) faculty members (Merrem & Curtner-Smith, 2018; Russell, Gaudreault, & Richards, 2016), with particular applications through S-STEP (Richards & Ressler, 2016). We sought to understand Karen's socialization in the role of coordinator for an afterschool program as she simultaneously filled the role of doctoral student. As a result, our discussion of occupational socialization theory focuses on the phases of anticipatory socialization and doctoral education. The third phase, faculty socialization, is less relevant as Karen was still completing her doctoral education at the time of this study.

Anticipatory socialization includes all experiences in life leading up to enrolling in a doctoral program. This phase includes the lived experiences that occur prior to formal commitment to pursue doctoral education and include formative educational experiences, physical education teacher education (PETE) program training, and time spent teaching physical education in a school environment ((Richards, Templin, & Graber, 2014)). These experiences collectively contribute to the development of individuals' subjective theories related to what it means to be a teacher and/or a faculty member as well as motivation for pursuing a career in higher education (Grotjahn, 1991; Lawson, 1983a). Subjective theories are personal understandings of what it means to fill a particular occupational role that have been influenced by physical education and sport and based on interactions with agents such as parents, teachers, professors, and coaches (Richards et al., 2013). For example, individuals' understandings of the roles required to be a faculty member begin to develop during their own teacher education as they observe and interact with the faculty members (Richards & Fletcher, In Review).

While many individuals teach in school-based environments before pursuing a doctoral degree (Parker, Sutherland, Sinclair, & Ward, 2011), some other individuals transition directly into doctoral education (Richards & Ressler, 2017). Regardless of the specific path taken, most individuals who begin doctoral education do so with the intention of seeking careers in academia (Golde & Dore, 2001). The process of becoming a faculty member is multifaceted as doctoral students balance multiple roles (Richards, McLoughlin, Ivy, & Gaudreault, 2017). Doctoral education can be powerful, with evidence indicating that commitment to best practices may be developed or strengthened (Lee & Curtner-Smith, 2011). Many view physical education as being highly structured,

predominantly teacher-led, and sport-based (Richards & Gordon, 2017), doctoral training has the capacity to challenge these perceptions. Doctorate students have also indicated that both negative and positive relationships with faculty and peers are an essential component of the experience (Feldman et al., 1998; Richards et al., 2017). These relationships may include moral support, guidance, and/or assist in developing an understanding of the influence of power dynamics.

The influence of relationships also plays a role in S-STEP, as regular communication with peers and other influential individuals is key to self-reflection and the development of personal identity (Foot, Alicia, Tollafield, & Allan, 2014). Self-doubt is prominent in preliminary teaching experiences, such as the implementation of an afterschool program, and a sense of community should be developed in the form of critical friendships (McAnulty & Cuenca, 2014). In addition, S-STEP methods prompt explicit interpretation of experiences and feelings as well as considerations moving forward personally and professionally (Bullock & Ritter, 2011). Lynch, Richards, and Pennington (2018) focused on a physical education teacher education doctoral student's experiences, displaying growth in teacher development and an emerging understanding that personal identity continues to shift over time. Based on the positive outcomes doctoral students have experienced related to developing as professionals and identifying personal needs during training, literature has called for more individuals in this role to utilize S-STEP as a developmental tool (Foot et al., 2014; Lynch et al., 2018). Further, self-study is rooted in reflective practice and making reflection habitual will better prepare individuals to continue throughout their professional lives (Feldman et al., 1998).

In order for future TPSR practitioners to be effective, it is important that they abandon their initial subjective theories that do not support progressive ways of teaching (e.g., including student choices and voices; Richards et al., 2014). This is a long drawn out process (Casey,

2014), but is possible during the time spent as a doctoral student (Lee & Curtner-Smith, 2011). Further, a lack of previous teaching experience in physical education teacher education doctoral students has been identified by some as a disadvantage (Parker et al., 2011), the findings of the present study have the potential to support combining faculty training with an afterschool program coordinator position to reduce this issue.

Additionally, this study may show how the process of partaking in S-STEP and associated practice can contribute to self-study development and provide an example that others may utilize while moving through their own doctoral education. Karen's use of the TPSR model and work within afterschool settings was essential to her doctoral education as training for her future career trajectory; her long-term goals included developing and researching out of school time programming. The purpose of this study, therefore, was to understand how Karen experienced and improved her practice as she learned to implement the TPSR model as the coordinator of an elementary afterschool program over the three years of her doctoral education. The research questions guiding this process were: (a) how did Karen navigate her experience as program coordinator of an afterschool TPSR-based program?, (b) what were the primary challenges faced as program coordinator?, and (c) what successes did she experience as program coordinator?

## **Methods**

### *Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices*

Through S-STEP, educators can take a detailed inquiry into their personal experiences, actions, interactions, observations, and ideas (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 1998; Ovens & Fletcher, 2014). Effective S-STEP focuses on and promotes reflection on practice and the self-in-practice (Samaras & Freese, 2009) based on the responsibilities,

knowledge, and beliefs associated with a concentrated venture or profession (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009). Qualitative methods, such as reflective journaling and taking field notes, are useful for recording and defining practice and experiences. Findings from such methods are provided in hopes of developing a knowledge base that informs future practice (Loughran, 2007). A necessary component of S-STEP is that it becomes interactive (Ovens & Fletcher, 2014); such as establishing a critical friendship (Petrarca & Bullock, 2014). Both members within a critical friendship must confront each other's postulations and realities and work towards alternative conceptualization of teaching, with the goal of developing a shared understanding of practice (Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2015).

Tom, who was Karen's doctoral supervisor and director of the afterschool program, served as Karen's critical friend in this study. His position meant that he was present with Karen at all times while at the program. He had also conducted S-STEP research previously, both on himself and as a critical friend. While there are some advantages to this relationship, the fact that Tom was also Karen's academic advisor meant that there was a need to be aware of the power dynamic (Fletcher, Bullock, & Kosnik, 2012). We knew that we would need to be willing to learning from one another regardless of the differences in their experiences and status in our roles. Tom addressed this early on and encouraged Karen to be open in her discussion and to treat him as she would a colleague. This process was difficult at first. We needed to learn to trust one another, which began as Tom began to be willing to expose his own weaknesses and shortcomings. This level of openness and honesty quickly provided Karen a similar level of comfort with Tom, as did her understanding that Tom was committed to assisting in understanding and improving her practice.

*Context of the study*

Karen grew up in the US Mountain West and attended a nearby university for undergraduate and master's degrees in physical education. She felt as if her PETE program prepared her well as a teacher but she did not get practice with the TPSR model. Karen stayed at the same university after graduation to get her masters while coordinating and studying an afterschool program (First author, et al.). She then decided to move to Southeastern University to continue her education and coordinate a new afterschool program while studying with Tom. Upon beginning her doctoral studies, Karen became the inaugural coordinator for a TPSR-based elementary afterschool program. Hellison (2011) encouraged the use of regular reflection and journaling when using TPSR. Karen embraced this concept and felt it was critical to recognize and develop her practice as it developed to ensure that it was appropriately aligned with the model's tenets and her desire to be effective. She was anxious about utilizing an unfamiliar model. She shared these concerns with Tom, and he suggested that she use S-STEP to study and improve her own practice while also developing recommendations for others who develop afterschool programs.

The program in which Karen worked took place at an elementary school attended by approximately 450 youth in close proximity to Southeastern University. The student population included 85% underrepresented ethnic minorities, and 90% of the youth qualified for free and reduced lunch. The afterschool program included about 70 participants that were selected based on school staff referral due to academic and/or behavioral needs. The program met for two hours on three days each week and included an academic enrichment component in addition to the TPSR lessons that Karen coordinated. The lessons were structured based on the TPSR lesson format (Hellison, 2011). Karen and Tom led all three sessions each week for the first six weeks



of each semester. The program then paired with the university, providing a site for early field experience for preservice physical education teachers twice a week. During the early field experience, Karen and Tom led lessons for the third day of the program each week. Further details about the program can be found in a program description article published separately (first author, et al.).

### *Data Gathering*

Karen wrote in a reflection journal about three times each week during the academic year following each day of the program for two and a half years. She began writing in August of 2016 and continued through December of 2018. During this time, she made 300 entries that were an average of one single-spaced page in length for a total of 90,797 words over 304 pages. The entries were focused on what happened during the program and Karen's associated feelings, as well as goals for improving her practice. The entries were not guided by any prompts, though Karen did address goals she had made in the previous entry and informal discussions with Tom provided additional focus to the entries. Karen provided journal access to Tom so he could use entries as a guide for critical friend discussions. A total of 20 critical friend discussions were conducted and audio recorded, each lasting an average of 20-30 minutes. Tom asked Karen questions that made her critically think about her role, progress, and steps for moving the program forward. For example, Tom asked "how can you navigate the challenges you are facing with the school personnel?" He also kept her aware of her preconceptions and encouraged her to consider obstacles with an open mind.

### **Data Analysis and Trustworthiness**

Karen served as the primary deductive and inductive analyzer (Patton, 2015). Data analysis was guided by occupational socialization theory (Richards & Hemphill, 2017), but also

we also looked for opportunities to extend and challenge the theory. Constant comparison was used as the coding structure was extended to and modified as new data were coded throughout the analysis process (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Karen conducted open and axial coding (Maxwell, 2013) and sought out turning points (Bullock & Ritter, 2011). Turning points are moments in S-STEP when a new understanding or doubt develops during the process of journaling and/or critical friend discussions. The characteristics that make up a turning point include (a) an affective component, (b) a problem of practice developing, (c) the educator implicitly or explicitly seeking help from the critical friend, and (d) an action-orientation focused on change. Previous literature with turning points has shown that it may be either a distinct moment in time (Fletcher & Bullock, 2014; Richards & Fletcher, In Review) or a slow burn over time (Richards & Fletcher, 2018). The data were then reviewed again and codes and turning points were sorted into each themes and subthemes (Richards & Hemphill, 2017).

We knew that it was important to be aware of and acknowledge our potential partialities in order to provide the full and honest truth to readers and ourselves. It can be challenging to admit faults and address potential prejudices that are undesirable which could lead to insights being overlooked (Maxwell, 2013). As Karen's critical friend, Tom was an essential piece in drawing out honesty and eliminating biases in the study in order to add trustworthiness (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001). In addition, several other methods were utilized to increase trustworthiness (Shenton, 2004). Data triangulation was present through the use of journaling as well as critical friend discussions. This helped Karen think deeper about her experiences and evolving beliefs. Researcher triangulation was also present as we both contributed to data analysis. This added to the role Tom played in reducing bias. An audit trail was developed

through the use of analytic memoing during data analysis. The audit trail provides clarity in the process through which the final study themes were defined.

## **Findings**

Though not perfectly linear, Karen's experiences included three turning points that were articulated during data analysis. These turning points were not associated with one particular point in time but were rather a "slow burn" as Karen's journaling and discussions altered in focus over the course of the study. Each turning point began near the beginning of each year spent in the program, though the lines are blurred between the transitions with contradictions presented throughout the findings. These turning points are presented as the following themes: (a) a planted seed needs light and rain, (b) an emerging bud with growing roots, and (3) rising in full bloom. Karen initially felt overwhelmed and frustrated, dependent on others for reinforcement and stuck like a recently planted seed. Over time she showed signs of growth and saw positive rays of light as relationships were developed and she began to practice more TPSR strategies, emerging as a practitioner. Finally, after two years in the program, Karen felt that she had fully bloomed in the TPSR model with the ability to stand tall and confident in the setting, eager to utilize TPSR behaviors and personalizing the model's principles.

### **A Planted Seed Needs Light and Rain**

Quickly after starting the program, Karen discovered that the process seemed overwhelming at times and progress was minimal at best, much like a newly planted seed, she felt like she was in the dark and could not develop without positive resources like light (TPSR focused resources) or rain (positive feedback from others). She experienced high degrees of frustration and few positive moments as growth took time.

*Concern about the unknown*

When initially beginning the program, Karen was unsure of the elementary school's protocols causing a sense of anxiety. For example, during a critical friend discussion prior to program implementation she said, "I feel nervous primarily because we are working with a bunch of other adults that will be trying to coordinate their own areas and getting kids where they need to go." During a school visit she also realized that the school population and culture was different than what she had experienced in the past. After attending an open house, Karen wrote, "looking around, it appeared that there were large amounts of diversity, very different for me after having left a program that really only had Caucasian and a few Hispanic children."

Karen's anxiety extended further when she acknowledged insecurity regarding her role and responsibilities. When writing about meetings she had prior to beginning the program, she said, "I felt that everyone else already knew what I was supposed to be doing... but I felt anxious about not understanding exactly what my role was and what I should be doing." Even after a few months of program implementation, Karen addressed her role ambiguity again when she wrote, "my role in the setting is different [than previous experience]. I don't know exactly what my job is." She had a difficult time understanding the degree of responsibility she had related to the kids in the program, the school personnel, and the university partners with whom she was working.

Further, this was her first time working with the TPSR model to its full degree and the lack of experience was another source of anxiety. She appreciated the input she gained from conversations with TPSR experts, citing one talk in particular in a journal entry: "I was impressed by the way [the TPSR expert] just jumped right in with a large number of helpful ideas that she had learned over her time working with the model. So many great things I hadn't thought of!" She also sought information from textbooks and articles she was able to access. In her journal she noted, "I chose to read several chapters to better my understanding and improve

my knowledge. I made several pages of notes regarding the core values, daily format, levels, and focus items.” Despite these efforts, the learning process associated with authentic model implementation was lacking. She expressed this concern to Kevin by saying:

I would say the TPSR element is probably my weakest at this point. I don't feel like I really know 100% what I am doing there, I just have a general idea. I feel like I am just kind of shooting in the dark and hoping for the best.

### *Support members role*

Throughout Karen’s early experiences, she became very aware of the role support members had in her feelings towards and ability to implement the TPSR model and lead the program. During her own self-criticisms, she was given reassurance by her University partners.

Karen wrote:

Following the young [children] I was provided positive feedback from Tom, Julian [faculty member] gave me a “bump”, and Clarissa [a fellow graduate assistant] expressed that I had my hands full. It was really nice to have them to build me back up after what felt like a failure session. Having a good team is such a large part of the battle.

Karen’s university partners regularly provided her with encouraging comments, which helped as she would rarely focus on the positives. This was evident in the following journal segment, “I expressed concern for the lesson, but Tom thought it went well and that some kids took their [assigned] jobs seriously. Perhaps I was over thinking it and couldn’t see the good happening.”

The school partnerships also played a large role during this time. Prior to beginning the program, Karen felt that the partnership with school personnel would be excellent. For example, early meetings resulted in a positive perception of the principal: “she is kind and clearly a strong

leader. I believe that she is ideal for the position that she is in. We are lucky to be working with someone so passionate and good at their job.” This perception of school staff and administration changed dramatically, however, once the program began meeting regularly. This was present in the way they interacted with us and the children related to their behavior and perceptions of gender roles and race. For example, the principal, “interrupted the lesson as we were about to begin by yelling loudly at a young boy who did a ‘flip spin.’ We waited for her to walk across the entire gym and speak with him in dead silence.” Another example includes a journal entry discussing a teacher who was consistently in the gymnasium during the program, Ms. Adele, approaching Karen and Tom “and saying that we needed to really lay down the law during the first few weeks and establish an authoritative environment. Also, she warned that the children will listen to Tom over me because he is a man.”

There were scattered positive school partnership moments, such as with the school physical education teacher. Karen wrote that “he immediately stated that anything we needed we were welcome to, he showed us the sound system, and he said if we ever needed him we could get ahold of him.” Ms. Adele sought a more authoritative environment but was supportive at times as well, these contradictions made it difficult to understand her. This was evident when Karen wrote, “The day ended, Ms. Adele praised the children and ran down the line giving everyone a high five. A dramatic difference from her behavior on Wednesday. She really is like two different people in one.” It was difficult for Karen to navigate the school partnerships with varying messages, she relied on the support provided by her university partners frequently.

#### *Overwhelmed and frustrated*

Once the program had begun and was meeting on a regular basis, Karen found herself feeling overwhelmed and frustrated. She regularly felt like she was teaching the way she had

been taught to the best of her ability and not succeeding: “I felt very frustrated. I had done everything I know how to do as a teacher and it kept failing.” During a critical friend discussion, she acknowledged the challenge of trying to implement a new pedagogical model that didn’t fit her previous teaching experience, “I think that's been my biggest frustration because I feel as a teacher, I am pretty strict...but when I use my normal teaching behaviors that I feel I need, I feel like I'm not doing my TPSR behaviors.” She also felt like she was constantly managing behavior and that the group was consistently off-task, eliminating time for learning. At one point she wrote:

I asked about self-control. Many of the children were talking, touching each other, spinning off of the line...I reminded them over and over again about self-control, I praised the children who were doing well, and I reminded them that the children who were sitting and listening were suffering because they did not get to participate [in the activity.] The group continued to behave the way they were.

We sat on the line for at least 10 minutes as I continued attempting to get them to show self-control.

While Karen struggled with and became frustrated by behavior challenges in the program, Tom reminded her that many of the children were being well-behaved: “there have been a couple of kids that we've tended to focus on at times as being kind of problematic, but there are also a lot of kids that are just great. Like Harold is the best kid in the world.” Karen responded, “yes, he just sits quietly every day.” Without his reminders such as the one Tom provided her here, Karen rarely focused on the examples of positive behavior. She eventually began to “feel so much dread and disappointment following a bad lesson” and would write things like: “I know our next session is a new day, but I am dreading it.” She became emotionally fatigued, one day writing, “I

completely vented to my husband, I cried, I felt exhausted and like I am not the teacher I thought I was.” There were a limited amount of small moments of successes identified, such as “they did do a great job of setting their scarves in the box and walking to the circle,” but these were regarding students following basic protocols and would frequently be followed by negative comments about specific students in the group.

### **An Emerging Bud with Growing Roots**

The second theme began in year two of program implementation and included more optimistic aspects. Time had allowed Karen to have better connections and communication with all parties involved, growing roots, and she began to focus less on the group’s performance overall and more on individual youth program member’s needs, while also beginning to integrate more TPSR components. Though the changes in this theme were not necessarily easily visible and could be considered small to the outside eye, the larger changes under the surface, in terms of positive emotions and relationships, were critical for Karen.

#### *Developing relationships and routines*

Shortly after the second year began, Karen found herself developing relationships with the children that she was working with by sharing information about herself. For example, she wrote, “I opened up the session by telling the children why I missed Friday and my experience over the weekend. The children were more attentive for this than possibly anything else the entire semester.” She also sought to identify opportunities to make connections with the children. She reflected, “one girl, Candice, was excited about my earrings because she has the same ones. She is going to wear them today and I will wear mine so we can match.” The children seemed to be responding to her efforts to build connections. She explained to Tom, “those other kids where I feel like, at first we may have butted heads, but now we're getting along really well, and they



seem excited to see me and they come up and greet me.” Karen acknowledged that these relationships were helpful in the program running effectively. During a critical friend discussion, she said, “the kids were great. And they remember the routines and they responded really well. I think that we're growing as a group. And connecting well together. I think that they've connected with me more, which is helpful.”

More productive relationships with school personnel were also developed over time, though they were still not ideal. Ms. Adele stopped stepping in to correct the students' behavior and began trusting Karen with the process. For example, Karen wrote, “I was impressed with Ms. Adele who consistently sent kids to me to ask questions instead of answering them herself, she has really changed a lot.” Though there were several affirmative moments, there were still others when the teacher's behaviors countered Karen's efforts. One example in Karen's journal stood out in this regard:

I had all of the children line up at the door and Ms. Adele began yelling at them. She screamed that they were disrespectful and rude to me and that she was disappointed in them. I was standing by the bleachers in discomfort and I didn't really know what to do about it. She said that she was going to call out some kids' names to go to a certain room and have the principal come and talk to those children.

Moments like these showed a need for further relationship development to occur. Karen had depended on her university partners to act as liaisons between the school and the program for the first year, but midway through the second year she found out that she would be leading the program on her own in year three. This meant there was a need for her to more personally

connect with school personnel. This step was taken through daily conversations. One was discussed in the journal:

I went and talked to Ms. Adele, she was apologetic regarding her behavior. She said she is trying to work on not interfering, but she just couldn't help herself. She said she is grateful to have us and to be working with us. I told her how grateful I am to have her too, and that I struggled with [TPSR] for the longest time so I can understand.

### *Increasingly positive approach*

In the first year of the program Karen struggled to see the positive behavior of the whole group when a few students were misbehaving. During the second year, Karen stopped defining the behavioral performance of the group as a whole and began to identify individual issues and needs. For example, when discussing behavior in her journal she mentioned specific children, "a couple students got frustrated with not being selected [for the game], Chuck in particular. He behaves really well most of the time and then loses it when he is not picked." She also began to think through ways of addressing behaviors on an individual basis. For example, she wrote:

I pulled JaMal out and we made a behavior contract together. He told me what would go on it and I wrote it down. He came up with I will (a) walk away when anyone messes with me, (b) take deep breaths when my heart tells me to hit someone, and (c) if the first two don't work, tell the teacher. I dated it and he signed it.

Further examples regarding personal conversations prior to starting the day, when sitting out with children after breaking the rules, and others are presented throughout the data sources indicating that Karen was able to begin to consider each child in the program as opposed to being overwhelmed by the group as a whole. Behavior issues were still prevalent and challenging, but Karen was coping with them more effectively and individually.

During this second year there was also a shift as Karen began to discuss enjoying the children and the experience. In a journal entry that was much different than the dread she expressed in the first year, Karen wrote, “I thought Monday was a pretty good day. I left feeling positive about my experience and I am excited to get back. I enjoyed putting together my lesson plan for today.” The feeling of excitement was not always present, as there were still entries indicating defeat. For example, an entry indicated, “It is so frustrating to look forward to a lesson because of how well the previous lesson went and then have it go completely the opposite way.” However, she noticed that the kids moved past the tough days, and she should too. She wrote, “the children rebound back after a tough lesson. I feel so much disappointment whereas they seem to forget it even happened. I should try to be more like that.”

Further, while Karen was insecure and unsure of how to implement TPSR in the first year, she now felt more comfortable implementing the TPSR components. She addressed these changes during a discussion with Tom in which she recalled how she used to find “every activity I could think of that did not involve equipment. I was like, ‘I’m not touching that.’ I was terrified and did not trust the students or myself.” After getting to know the children more, she began to give them more choices and voices. For example, during a tag game focused on chasing and fleeing, she gave them the opportunity to add rules. In a journal entry she wrote, “we had another round where I asked them to contribute an idea and they said they should have to say the name of the person they’re tagging. They like that one, I do too because it develops more relationships.” The choices and voices went beyond the activities as well, and were utilized in behavior management strategies. For example, Karen wrote:

I told them to split into small groups and get a piece of paper and pencil from me.

They spread out in the gym and wrote their names on their paper. I then asked

them to write down rules they should be expected to follow in the gym. They did so for 5 minutes. I had the children write consequences on the back of their papers if they don't follow the rules. I read through their rules and consequences and put up posters of them on the wall.

### **Rising in Full Bloom**

The final theme represents the final turning point for Karen in her coordinator role process. Once she entered into her third year, she seemed to find comfort and confidence in her role, truly taking ownership, and she was able to delve into the TPSR model much further than she had previously. Karen maintained a bright disposition and her abilities were easily visible to others, as the many components needed to successfully implement the model were shown. The roots that had been developing continued to grow, but now the growth was mirrored above the surface.

#### *Confidence and Caring*

Immediately upon starting the third year, Karen felt more confident in the gym. As she mentioned to Tom, "I'm feeling pretty good and I think that's the combination of experience with the kids and being able to lead activities, but also I'm like, 'okay, I'm in this leadership role. I know exactly what I'm doing out here.'" This confidence was noticed by others as well, as she indicated in her journal when "Julian said that he thinks it is going well because I seem very confident and comfortable and the kids see me handle behavior issues calmly and my tone of voice stays the same." She also felt care for and cared for by both the children and by members of the school community. Following a couple days away from the school Karen wrote, "I got a ton of hugs and the kids were all eager to share their life updates of things that had happened that

I missed. I really love seeing them, I feel like we have all connected in a really positive way.”

Another day Karen attended the school’s fall festival during the day, afterwards she wrote:

I love these kids so much. Watching them in the parade, saying their words, and interacting with them made me feel really proud. I often wonder how much I really matter to them. I only see them for three hours on three days a week, this is small compared to their classroom teachers. Moments like this during the school day and in more informal settings where I am not focused on implementing a lesson and there are a ton of other people that the kids could give their attention to, that makes me feel loved back when they make an effort to interact with me or light up when they see me. It is really astounding how much of a difference a few years makes.

A strong relationship had also developed between Karen and Mrs. Adele. This was exemplified in an instance when Mrs. Adele was advocating for the program’s space. Karen recounted the incident in her journal: “choir needed the gym to practice. She told them we have the gym and it would not be right to take our whole time. She said that she wouldn’t tell the choir director anything until she talked to me.” Including Karen in decisions related to the program showed some value for her role as the coordinator and standing up for the program’s space showed that a positive partnership had developed. Toward the end of the study, Karen discussed her relationship with Mrs. Adele and recounted a particularly meaningful interaction:

Mrs. Adele, at the end of the semester, gave me a huge hug and was like ‘have the best Christmas ever I can’t wait to see you after break, but you just relax.’ We connected. It was so unlike my first semester where I literally wouldn’t even go to her side of the gym because I didn’t want to interact with her because she scared the bejeebers out of me.

*Teaching personal and social responsibility as a way of life*

The TPSR model, one that was relatively foreign to Karen at the start of her journey, had become a way of life by the end of the study. She was constantly providing the students with choices and voices, used a guided discovery teaching style, and regularly assigned leadership roles. Related to selecting goals, Karen told Tom:

We really had rough behavior and at the end of the day, I just asked them, you know, ‘Do you feel like we need to go back to respect or do you feel like we need to keep pushing forward? What are you thinking?’ And Oleg raised his hand and goes, ‘Some of us may not necessarily want to go backward but I think we need to.’ And then a lot of the kids were like, ‘Yeah, we probably need to go back and work on that.’

Beyond that, Karen regularly tried to allow the students to lead the games, playing with how much power and support they could handle. At times she found that the students were leading activities without her help. For example, she wrote about a boy leading an activity:

He told everyone to speed walk and shortly after saying go he said freeze. “He asked, ‘why do you think I froze everyone?’ Someone said ‘because we were running.’ He said, ‘exactly, please make sure you’re speed walking.’ I joked to Ms. Adele, ‘he’s got this, I don’t even need to be here.’”

Also, during this third year, Karen incorporated journals, allowing the students to reflect by writing once a week and then writing back to the students each time. Once implementation of this had begun, Karen reflected with Tom that it was going well, but it would not have if she had tried it earlier in the program. She said, “in terms of being like overwhelmed with how the lesson was going, I don't think I could've handled it then.” The use of TPSR became so dominant in Karen’s life, she wrote, “my husband asks me if I am ‘TPSRing’ him sometimes because it has become a part of my day to day. I have fully adopted the model. My mind is constantly going

back to it.” At the end of the study, Tom encouraged Karen to reflect on the role of S-STEP in helping her to develop as a practitioner of the TPSR model. She responded, “Without self-study I wouldn't have been able to reflect, be critical, and identify the positives that were coming out of it. I really appreciate this process because we identified the faults, but we also identified how to improve them.” When Tom pushed her to reflect further, she added:

I think that my knowledge has grown immensely and instead coming out of everything, and hating this experience, I've grown and I feel prepared. I feel like I can engage in a conversation easily about this subject. I can talk about what went well, what didn't go well, openly and honestly. Which I wouldn't be able to do without self-study or the time put in over the last couple of years.

## **Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to understand how Karen experienced and improved her practice as she learned to implement the TPSR model as the coordinator of an elementary afterschool program over the three years of her doctoral education. Our results highlight the complex nature of developing into a TPSR program practitioner, highlight by three overarching turning points.

Throughout this study, Karen continuously addressed challenging experiences, emotions, interactions, and ideas while attempting to better understand herself and her profession (Dadds, 1993; Loughran, 2007; Samaras & Freese, 2006). Her teaching identity changed shape over time as she delved into the challenges of implementing the TPSR model in afterschool programs, with S-STEP providing insight into that process (LaBoskey, 2004).

Karen credits the S-STEP method for driving her to think more critically about the process in a way she otherwise would not have, ultimately developing results that would help her

in her future as well as provide insight to others that may relate to her experience, a necessary component of the method (Loughran, 2007). This includes her critical friendship with Tom, which she felt was important in helping her highlight successes instead of only disappointments, giving her constructive criticism, and probing her to delve deeper into the reasoning behind her thoughts and actions (Petrarca & Bullock, 2014; Trumball, 2004). The risk of Karen feeling uncomfortable being vulnerable with Tom was present because he was her advisor (Fletcher et al., 2012), but the power dynamic did not disrupt her ability to develop as a TPSR practitioner over time. The concept that a critical friend and interactivity are essential for a self-study to be successful has, therefore, been reinforced.

The S-STEP process highlighted the way Karen navigated her program coordinator experiences. While attempted to integrate models-based practice, like previous literature has indicated, it was frustrating to learn to utilize the model and it took about two years for her to feel comfortable using it in full (Casey, 2014). Integrating TPSR into a sport-based youth development program requires effective communication, earning the respect of the youth involved, and maintaining positivity and empathy (Danish et al., 2004). Karen struggled with these components for a full year, and even into the second year of the program. It took time and commitment to working toward success to begin to embody the necessary components and see the associated results of the model (Casey, 2014; Metzler, 2017).

A component of this struggle was likely based on her anticipatory socialization experiences that shaped her beliefs related to the appearance of quality teaching (Richards et al., 2014). Karen indicated that she struggled to give the children the power because she considered herself a strict teacher. She was used to having full control over the group in the gymnasium and was not well versed in the behavior management strategies associated with the TPSR model. Her



struggle with being flexible and with being too authoritative was similar to others who have attempted to implement TPSR (Buchanan, 2001). This challenge was compounded by an elementary school environment that promoted a traditional and authoritative approach to discipline. Karen struggled with the innovative model, and trying to implement it in a nonaccepting setting added to her frustration (Richards, Templin, & Gaudreault, 2013). If the school had been more open and encouraging of the integration of the TPSR model, it likely would have been a smoother process.

The challenge of the new model and the setting may have overwhelmed Karen to the point of no return if she did not have the backing of the university faculty and her peers. The doctoral education literature indicates the importance of positive relationships in order to feel support and have guidance (Feldman et al., 1998; Lee & Curtner-Smith, 2011; Richards et al., 2017). Karen felt supported by Tom, other faculty members associated with the program, and fellow graduate students that were involved, which played a role in her willingness to continue striving to improve. In addition, the process of S-STEP ensured that Karen was critically reflecting about her feelings and the process and actively thinking about solutions, leading to enhancement over time as opposed to resorting back to teacher-centered instructional tactics. This is in line with the Hellison's (2011) suggestion that all TPSR practitioners need to regularly reflect in order to improve their performance.

The process of doctoral education has the potential to strengthen student's commitment to quality teaching approaches and practices (Lee & Curtner-Smith, 2011). While Karen believed that she had a firm grounding in quality practices prior to beginning her doctoral education, her orientation was enhanced further as she became highly engaged with the TPSR model. Over time, she transitioned out of the mindset of utilizing controlling teacher behaviors and highly

structured physical activities. Further, the challenges and successes that she faced during the afterschool program were likely similar to those of a physical education teacher incorporating the TPSR model. This will be helpful for her as a faculty member as she will be able to draw upon authentic experiences that she had as references, reducing the challenge of educating preservice teachers without formal teaching experience (Parker et al., 2011). In addition, after practicing self-study and reflection, Karen is better prepared to utilize this method in her professional life – likely improving her overall performance in a faculty role (Feldman et al., 1998).

Based on Karen’s experiences implementing TPSR, others should consider that it is difficult process to learn how to implement TPSR, particularly if it runs counter to the way in which a teacher has been socialized (Richards & Gordon, 2017), and it is ok to feel frustrated. Based on this study, however, practitioners can be successful with positive support members and the use of S-STEP, it can be fruitful over time if patience is practiced. Additionally, PETE programs may consider utilizing out of school time spaces as forums to further the education of doctoral students, particularly those who seek to expand their knowledge related to best practice teaching models and behaviors that may not have experienced in a school setting. Connections between literature, conversations with professors and peers, and the act of implementing a model with children in a school setting can provide a rich learning experience that may provide an invaluable foundation of knowledge to be utilized in a future faculty position.

Further S-STEP studies should be conducted with doctoral students, pedagogical model practitioners, and out-of-school time staff in order to develop a more detailed understanding of the individual experience. A large part of the S-STEP process includes making a contribution to the broader collection of literature, in order to improve practice in the future (Loughran, 2007). If more individuals in these pockets of interest delve deeply into their personal and professional

experiences, a greater sense of understanding may be developed allowing individuals to feel less critical of their struggles and more confident in their endeavors. Thus, similar to previous literature, we suggest further self-studies be conducted within the realm of physical education teacher education and doctoral student training (Lynch et al., 2018), as well as within afterschool program settings. Creating an assortment of personal accounts and resources through S-STEP will enhance the future of education, practice, and the overall shared goal of improving the lives of youth everywhere.

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## CHAPTER 3

### ANALYZING THE SOCIAL ECOLOGY OF SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING AND NEED THWARTING IN A LOW-INCOME ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

#### **Abstract**

**Purpose/Objectives:** The purpose of this study was to explore the social-institutional conditions and teacher and learning practices that guide their social-emotional learning and overall healthy development. The setting for the study is a Title One Elementary School that serves a low-income community in the Southeastern United States. Among its many features, this school has adopted a character education program and has partnered with the local university to develop an afterschool program that targets positive youth development and social emotional learning.

**Methods:** Guided by ethnographic design, this study examines the lived experiences of seven children, five classroom teachers, a teacher liaison between the school and the program, and a school principal. Data collection spanned four months and included field notes, interviews, and journal entries. Qualitative data analysis was conducted using the constant comparative method.

**Results:** The results were organized by discussing the school context overall within the classrooms, the social dynamics of the afterschool program, and the interactions between the two. All in all, the data indicated that children's social-emotional learning was mediated by conflicting and at times competing social environments. While the afterschool program aimed to support children's social emotional development through more holistic notions of positive youth development, most of the observed school's practice were at odds with this purpose.



**Conclusion:** The school provided a high degree of psychological needs thwarting during the school day that infiltrated the afterschool program. The principal's incorporation of social control and teacher's behaviors based on racial and class biases appear to lead children to believe that authority figures are to be feared and not trusted, and this fear contributes to their overall distrust toward, and at times disengagement with, the school.

**Key Words:** Social and emotional learning, transfer of learning, afterschool programming, teaching personal and social responsibility, psychological need thwarting

### **Introduction**

Positive youth development programs have been increasingly utilized during out of school time (OST) hours (Fraser-Thomas, Côté, & Deaklin, 2007). These programs typically employ an asset-based approach to youth engagement, one that is focused on helping youth identify their strengths and interests at the same time they engage in structured activities (Weisman & Gottfredson, 2001). Providing positive OST environments is beneficial to youth because research indicates that the early afterschool hours represent the key times in which youth engage in irresponsible behaviors, such as drug or alcohol use (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2007). Such behaviors are common among youth, with diverse youth from low-income settings more likely to experience the negative impacts (e.g. developing a police record; Shutz, 2006).

Sport-based youth development (Holt, 2016) is one particular application of the overall genus of positive youth development programs. As the moniker indicates, these programs are structured to use sport to help promote social and emotional development (Petitpas, Cornelius, Van Raalte, & Jones, 2005) while also recognizing that merely taking part in sport is not enough to build positive character traits (Danish, 2002). Rather, it is essential that personal and social skills are defined and practiced explicitly concurrent to physical activity participation (Danish,

Forneris, Hodge, & Heke, 2004). This approach aligns with the social and emotional learning (SEL) framework, which includes five core competencies (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Health 2018). Self-awareness focuses on being able to understand emotions, strengths, limitations, and values that promote confidence and efficacy. Self-management relates to goal setting, maintaining impulse control, managing stress, and being self-motivated. Social awareness is based on empathy and an appreciation and respect for diversity. Relationship skills focus on clear communication, team work, positive forms of conflict resolution, and avoiding peer pressure. Responsible decision-making includes being thoughtful about the safety of oneself and others, ethical obligation, and social norms.

Recently, schools have been providing more attention to delivering an education that includes SEL competencies, this is an advantage for SEL-based physical activity programs because they share a common goal of developing socially and emotionally capable youth (Jacobs & Wright, 2014). Among other approaches to sport-based youth development, the Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility (TPSR) model (Hellison, 2011) is closely aligned with the SEL framework and has been used successfully within and outside of the school day setting. The present study takes an ethnographic approach towards understanding the environment of an elementary school throughout the day with the overarching goal of understanding how the support provided may influence child engagement in SEL competencies.

### **Understanding the Study's Case: The Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility Model**

The present study was developed based on the use of the TPSR model within the elementary school's afterschool program. The TPSR model is recognized as a best practice pedagogical model within physical education and physical activity (Metzler, 2017). With the understanding that TPSR should be flexible in order to meet the contextual needs of each program, the model is

broadly focused on addressing the goals of respect, effort, self-direction, and caring through physical activity (Hellison, 2011). The ultimate goal of the model is to transfer lessons learned related to the first four goals to outside settings such as the homes, schools, and communities.

The structure of a TPSR lesson provides opportunities to explicitly discuss and practice goals that are selected based on the needs and abilities of the youth over time. Recently, scholars have elected to employ the SEL framework in research and practice with connections to the TPSR model (Gordon, Jacobs, & Wright, 2016; Wright, 2017), and Table 3.1 provides an overview of how TPSR aligns with SEL. Using SEL as a framework for TPSR programming has been effective because they are both focused on the development of social and emotional competencies, take an assets-based approach to programming, and seek to promote transfer across ecologies (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 2004; Gordon et al., 2016).

Transfer is focused on how youth participants can apply the model goals in alternative settings (Gordon & Doyle, 2015; Jacobs, Lawson, Ivy, & Richards, 2017). While evidence related to transfer is scarce, some studies have shown changes in participants' grades, attendance, office referrals, and other school-related outcomes (Gordon et al., 2016; Hemphill & Richards, 2016; Walsh, Ozaeta, & Wright, 2010; Wright, Li, Ding, & Pickering, 2010). These results have, however, been few and inconsistent (Hellison & Walsh, 2002; Jacobs & Wright, 2017). It has also been acknowledged that transfer is more difficult to achieve when youth experience different expectations across settings (Lee & Martinek, 2013). For example, if the culture of a school does not support student voice and expression students may be implicitly or explicitly told that they should not engage in behaviors learned through TPSR (Lee & Martinek, 2012).

To this point, the concept of near and far transfer has been used by scholars to describe the barriers and facilitators to skill and competency transportability from some settings to others

(Gordon & Doyle, 2015). Near transfer is used to describe situations where the settings that comprise youth's social worlds are similar. Because these settings share similar norms and values, it is easier for youth to transfer their skills and know-how across their different social environments.

In contrast, far transfer is used to describe instances where youth find that their surrounding social environments have different, and at times, competing norms, values and mores. For this reason, far transfer is often used to describe the difficulties associated with the process, and an understanding that some behaviors will not transfer safely or effectively (Jacobs et al., 2017). When faced with conflicting messages, however, youth may experience an affective dilemma as they often do not have the power to reconcile or the knowledge and skills to navigate the differences (Phelan, Davidson, & Cao, 1991). Environments that tend to have unsafe neighborhoods or home situations and imposing schools may make it difficult for youth to apply positive social and emotional competencies (Buckle & Walsh, 2013).

To address some of the challenges associated with transfer, Jacobs and Wright (2017) created a framework for understanding cognitive transfer. They discuss the negative feelings or repercussions youth may experience from environments that are not that SEL supportive, but children may cognitively maintain an understanding of SEL competencies. Children may have transformative experiences, a concept focused on motivation to use skills in a setting in which it is not expected, broadening perceptions of the world based on experiences with the associated skills, and placing value on the skills based on their applicability in everyday life (Pugh, Linnenbrink-Garcia, Koskey, Stewart, & Manzey, 2010). Youth may be able to identify a range of so-called positive choices, but that understanding may not change their behavior if they do not believe they would benefit from it or if they feel the behavior would not be valued.

While Jacobs and Wright extended TPSR research to focus on youth development's environmental context, additional work remains. Of particular need are studies that widen the focus of youth development programming and an emphasis on transfer to understand the broader social ecology in which social-emotional learning occurs. This holistic view is important because it departs from the traditional program-centric approach of viewing students' learning as a function of isolated programmatic inputs or events, and instead, frames social-emotional learning as the product of youth experience between and within multiple social-institutional environments. For this reason, this study was designed to describe the conditions, practices, and experiences that children frame children's social-emotional learning at school and an afterschool program, but with special interest in describing the complex interactions that occur between different school forces, factors, and actors (Lawson & Lawson, 2013).

### **Self-Determination Theory: Autonomy Support versus Psychological Needs Thwarting**

Self-determination theory (SDT) is an assessment of motivation and personality development based on the social environment (Deci & Ryan, 1985). The environment may foster healthy and effective functioning by facilitating growth, or it may provide the opposite (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Significantly, research indicates that the development of SEL competencies is often dependent on the extent to which students have access to an optimal set of social-institutional conditions. Deci and Ryan (2002) describe these conditions as "autonomy supportive environments", which are a component of an individual's basic psychological needs (Deci & Ryan, 2000). These autonomy-supportive environments are important, if not vital, to social-emotional learning because they tend to enhance student capacity to meet their basic psychological needs of autonomy, competency, and relatedness. In this framework, autonomy refers to the degree to which students feel responsible for their own behavior (Ryan, 1995) and

are supported through the recognition of personal goals, preferences, and other inner motivational resources (Katz & Assor, 2007). Competency refers to the cognitive-affective benefits students achieve when they positively realize their (task-specific) capabilities and potential (Ryan & Deci, 2002). Relatedness refers to the sense of connection to others and feelings of belongingness to people, places and setting (Ryan, 1995).

Recently, the literature has identified several institutional practices that can support the development of autonomy-supportive environments and attend to child/youth competencies (Reeve, 2006). Teachers need to adjust their instruction based on the student's current state and provide a sense of warmth and affection to make students feel important. Further, it is essential that teachers encourage student's goals and ability to develop their own ideas. An autonomy supportive environment has gentle discipline, which guides students through morality and behavioral issues. On the contrary, the elimination or obstruction of any of the three components, referred to as psychological needs thwarting, is detrimental to the developmental process.

Autonomy needs can be thwarted when children's perspectives are dismissed or they are pressured to think and behave in an alternative and set way (Reeve, 2009). Competency needs can be thwarted when children's faults are emphasized and their improvements are suspected (Sheldon & Filak, 2008). Relatedness needs can be thwarted when aversion or hostility is visible or felt, and attention is not provided when needed (Skinner, Johnson, & Snyder, 2005). In opposition of gentle discipline, a thwarting environment may utilize a power assertion approach in which forceful commands are utilized to ensure the teacher's demands are followed (Reeve, 2006). Authority figures may utilize pressure and coercion to impose certain ways of behaving, thinking, or feeling onto others (Bartholomew, Ntoumanis, & Thøgersen-Ntoumani, 2010). When these needs are thwarted, children may become defensive and self-protective through

disengagement or taking on multiple identities which limits overall physical and emotional well-being and development (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

### **Purpose and Research Questions**

Schools have often been criticized for their tendency to emphasize control as a dominant driver of the student-teacher relationship (Varnham, 2005). The response to undesirable behaviors tends to be imposed sanctions, even though evidence indicates that this does little to alter anti-social behaviors and the response harms overall school relationships. This is particularly true in schools that are predominantly minority student populations and have been labeled as high poverty (Rocque & Paternoster, 2011). Thus, it is likely that if sanctions drive the day-to-day practices of schooling, schools have a high degree of psychological needs thwarting, particularly those in communities impacted by poverty.

If student's needs are thwarted during the school day, it reduces the likelihood that an SEL-based afterschool program's lessons will be fully realized with students and the potential for transfer of SEL skills are limited. For this reason, research is needed that provides a nuanced/contextual understanding on how a school's structure may inhibit or promote the development and/or the transfer of SEL competencies. The purpose of this study was, therefore, to explore the social-institutional conditions that frame children's actions and reactions to the practices that guide their social-emotional learning and overall healthy development. The study was guided by the following research questions: (a) How are school environments structured to support children's social-emotional learning and overall well-being? (b) How do the norms and sanctions constructed by the school and its various agents frame the engagement experiences and identity development of low-income children, especially African American students?, (c) What

existing school supports and support structures facilitate or hinder children's optimal learning and social-emotional development?

## **Methods**

### *Program description and participants*

This study focuses on an elementary school that housed a TPSR-based afterschool program in the southeastern region of the US. The school received title one funding, which is federal funding focused on enhancing academic performance of youth in schools that have at least 40% of families at or below the poverty line (U.S. Department of Education, 2017).

Approximately 444 children attended the school with 85% underrepresented minorities and 90% eligible to receive free or reduced cost lunch. The school had also been recognized by a national organization for being a school that develops life-ready leaders by integrating leadership and empowerment into their academic mission (Franklin Covey Education, 2018).

The elementary school used to serve a middle-class community located near factories, but the factories closed and the businesses in the area closed with them in the early 2000s. In 2011, the community was damaged by a natural disaster and it has been struggling to revitalize ever since. The school building itself was rebuilt following this disaster and was 5 years old at the time of the study. The principal characterized the school population as transient: "it's not uncommon in a year's time for us to have one or two children who go and come maybe three times in a year" (principal interview). Census data indicates that the community included 3,949 people in 2017, with 47% White, 46% African-American, and 7% other (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). The median household income was \$32,339. Married couples made up 41.4% of households with 17.2% of the household population with their own children under 18 years old.



Single females made up 20.4% of homeowners, with 11.4% representing single mothers with children under the age of 18.

The TPSR-based afterschool program was funded by an internal university seed grant and led by the first author. An average of 70 participants were recommended for participation in the program by school personnel based on academic and/or socioemotional needs. The group met afterschool in the gymnasium three times a week with one hour spent with the third through fifth grade participants and another with the first and second grade participants. Students spent the other program hour in the classroom working on academics with a classroom teacher. The physical activity curriculum was created based on the TPSR model's recommended format (Hellison, 2011). The program was in its third year when data were collected. Further information regarding the afterschool program, including its background and development, can be found elsewhere (Ivy, Richards, Lawson, & Alameda-Lawson, 2018; Richards, Ivy, Lawson, & Alameda-Lawson, 2018; Richards, Ivy, Wright, & Jerris, 2019).

The participants in this study included seven youth who attended the afterschool program, five classroom teachers, a teacher liaison to the program, and the school principal. Detailed information regarding the participants demographics can be found in table 3.2. All of the youth members were African American and had been in the program for at least one year. The teacher liaison, Ms. Adele, taught pre-kindergarten during the school day and then oversaw the afterschool program in the afternoon. She was responsible for coordinating all extended day tasks within the school, such as ensuring snack was distributed, youth were where they were supposed to be, and transportation home following the program. Ms. Adele was present in the gymnasium predominantly for major behavior issues, injuries, or anything that pertained specifically to the school's expectations and she frequently interacted with program personnel.

Her role was as the boundary spanner (Williams, 2002), she was responsible for developing connections, relationships, trust, and knowledge between the program and the school personnel.

### *Data Collection*

School settings tend to be based on consistent day to day routines (Leinhardt, Weidman, & Hammond, 1987). In order to be immersed in the classroom throughout these routines and for the participants to behave as they would regardless of her presence, the first author collected data at varied times throughout the day for 45 days, a total of 207 hours. A number of sources contributed to answering our research questions including observations with notes, semi-structured interviews, journal entries, and informal conversations.

*Observations and Notes.* During the time the first author spent in the school she followed the seven children throughout their regularly schedule days including the classroom, lunch, recess, and special subjects like music and physical education while observing and taking field notes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). She also kept a journal that was based on her involvement in the program that provided insight into experiences during the program and interactions with the youth members.

*Semi-structured interviews.* Each participant took part in a semi-structured interview (Roulston, 2010) one time for an average of 45 minutes. The first author conducted all interviews during the afterschool program time in a room near the gymnasium. Questions focused on their experiences in the program, in school, and their perceptions of how the two were or were not cohesive in relation to the SEL competencies. Example questions included “describe how you interact with your teacher in the classroom” and “talk about the afterschool program’s expectations for your behavior.” The teachers’ interview took place at a time that they selected in their classroom setting. They were asked questions pertaining to their teaching of SEL

competencies and expectations of their children, their perceptions of the behaviors portrayed by the youth partaking in the study that were in their class, and their understanding of the afterschool program. Example questions included “describe your behavior management plan within your classroom setting” and “please tell me about a typical day for [child’s name] from when he/she arrives in your class to the end of the school day.”

The liaison’s interview took place at a time she selected in her classroom setting and was based on her perception of the afterschool program and associated expectations, her perception of the behavior expectations and protocols within the school, and her understanding of the youth behavior in each setting. Example questions included “talk about the behavior protocols within the afterschool program” and “describe behavioral expectations of the children during the school day.” The principal took part in her interview in her office at a time that suited her schedule. She answered questions related to her expectations for the school’s climate, the teachers, and the children, and her perceptions of the afterschool program. For example, she was asked, “will you please describe what you expect the children to be doing when you enter into a classroom? How about the teachers?”

*Journal Entries.* The youth members completed weekly journal entries that captured the TPSR goal focus of the day and its potential application to other settings/activities at school, at home, and the in community. The children were given 5-10 minutes and wrote anywhere from three to ten sentences and the first author wrote responses back to the children each week. Her responses encouraged deeper thinking about TPSR concepts, such as, “I think it is great that you were able to show effort during our game last week! This week, think about how you could use it at home and add it on to your next post.” Topics within the journals also included personal

thoughts the children were willing to share with or wanted to ask of the first author, and she responded to those as well.

*Informal conversations.* Throughout the study informal conversations (Maxwell, 2013) occurred in the program and during observation at the school. These conversations were between the first author and each participant involved in the study. Notes from each exchange were written as soon as possible after they occurred. For example, after a child was disciplined in the classroom, she followed up with that child during their lunch time to see how they felt about the occurrence.

#### *Positionality and Role of the Researcher*

The first author, Karen, serves as program coordinator for the afterschool. She wanted to acknowledge that this is a role of power, particularly through her interactions with the youth. There was particular risk in that Karen's responses may have been rooted in social desirability bias based on the power differentials between her and the children. Each child participant had been in the program for at least one year and we acknowledge that this may have framed their responses to interview questions. Accordingly, Karen took a similar approach to Rovegno (1994) and told the children that they could be honest and that their responses would not result in any negative outcomes. Similar to the approach taken by Richards and colleagues (2019) and Alameda-Lawson and Lawson (2016), we argue that Karen's relationship with the students made exchanges conversational indicating a high degree of trust, likely resulting in the collection of accurate data. Further, we believe that no research can be completely objective as the researcher plays a large role in the process.

In an attempt to maintain an awareness of the influence of her positionality, Karen regularly journaled and wrote memos about her interactions with the youth and with the data

throughout the study (Birks, Chapman, & Francis, 2008). At first, she often felt as if she was an outsider and that the principal was wary of her being in the school. For example, she wrote, “I don’t know if [the principal] saw me, I kind of waved when she walked in but she wasn’t looking at me...I still feel anxious thinking about talking with her.” However, over time, she began to feel more comfortable as she had interactions with school personnel that made her feel welcome. During a field trip Karen wrote about a conversation she had with the principal who “asked if I went, I said yes and that it was fun, and she said ‘that is so great! I am glad you got to go!’ A positive interaction.”

There were, however, also times when Karen’s presence disrupted the lesson as children greeted her when she entered and occasionally tried to interact with her instead of completing their class work. For example, “he walked over and asked me if we could keep doing what we were doing during [the program],” though this subsided as time went on and the students became more accustomed to her presence. Further, at times the teachers would ask her to cover for them when they left the room, placing her in an uncomfortable position between researcher and adult supervisor, though moments like these reinforced the high degree of comfort the teachers felt with regarding her presence in their classrooms.

### **Data Analysis**

Data were collected and analyzed using an iterative procedure, whereby initial data analysis was used to inform subsequent interactions with teachers and students. Open and axial coding occurred at the end of each week as data were collected. The first author read through each source and labeled sentences or segments with descriptive codes (Maxwell, 2013). Constant comparison was utilized across all data sources throughout the process (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Consistent with ethnography, the analysis prioritized the emic view of student, staff, and

administrator experiences. (Fetterman, 1989). However, the ways in which macro factors such as race, class, poverty, and social-institutional racism impacted these lived experiences were also considered throughout.

After four months of largely iterative data collection processes, sections of text with similar codes were organized into categories that ultimately resulted in themes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Following this process, the themes were reviewed by the coauthors. This allowed for any potential bias within the findings to be addressed and potentially overlooked aspects to be brought forward. The coauthors provided insights that allowed Karen to delve deeper into the concepts within the data. After several rounds of discussions and comments, the final themes were developed.

In an effort to establish trustworthiness and reduce the potential social-desirability bias and researcher bias discussed in the positionality statement, peer debriefing was present as the results were reviewed and challenged by coauthors (Tracy, 2010). An audit trail in the form of journaling throughout data collection and memos throughout data analysis supported the decisions made throughout the process (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Triangulation occurred across data sources to ensure that there were several contributions to the development of the results (Tracy, 2010). Negative case analysis occurred as well, with a constant awareness and search for data that opposed the most common findings (Anney, 2014).

## **Findings**

The critical element of this study was that of the children and our attempt to gain insight into their social worlds. Every week day the children navigated varied expectations and realities within and across the settings of the school day and the afterschool program. We sought to share their stories by using their voices, the voices of those that directly influence their experiences,

and our own observations. In what follows, we describe the different levels of exploration which collectively comprise the social ecology of the children's social and emotional learning. We begin with a discussion of the school context overall before explicating the dynamics witnessed in particular classrooms. Next, we explore the social conditions and dynamics surrounding the afterschool program, emphasizing children's perspectives. We conclude our findings with an analysis of interactions between the program and the school, highlighting the disconnects and inconsistencies that emerged from both our student and teacher-administrative data.

## **The Social Ecology of the School**

### *The Authoritative Principal*

While taking a stroll down the hallway of the elementary school, anyone would be struck by the mass amounts of children's work, graph's measuring growth towards goals, and inspirational posters along all of the walls. For example, Figure 3.1 presents a notecard that Kiara created and put on the wall outside of the library, along with all of the children in the school, focused on how she could show leadership. The theme across each brightly colored artifact was based on a program the principal, Ms. Scott, had implemented founded on the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People (Covey, 2013), saying that it was:

designed to help a child be a leader without somebody telling them what to do. It is set up so that they can think about, 'Am I going to think with the end in mind? If I act up like this, what's going to happen?' It's also putting them in charge of their behavior. Be proactive. 'I am responsible for myself'. We have been doing it for several years.

To the outside eye, Ms. Scott desires to and has successfully developed a setting that promotes student comfort and seeks to challenge and inspire them to become competent and contributing citizens. This perspective would be proven inaccurate upon closer analysis.

The conventional notion of SEL targets the development of the self and the self in interaction with others (CASEL, 2018). However, the data indicate that many of the school's practices are designed with a different purpose, one that might appear directed toward "social control." While multiple school actors seemed to emphasize social control in different ways, the school's overall ethos toward controlling children's behavior appeared driven by the school principal, Ms. Scott. During interviews, children noted that they felt scared when they see Ms. Scott walking down the hall because they are afraid they are going to get punished. One student describes the anxiety that follows this fear, "[I get] nervous cause she get on me and I get in trouble... and embarrassed" (DeShawn Interview). Aaliyah said in an interview that if she were to misbehave in the school or in the afterschool program, Ms. Scott would suspend her and if Ms. Scott were to walk into the same room as Aaliyah, she would: "would feel kind of scared. Because there is no telling what she gonna do in there." The norm set by Ms. Scott within the school is one of fear, the children move through their day with an endless awareness that they are constantly watched or surveilled to see if they are going to misbehave and, in response, punished.

The overall environment and culture of fear created by Ms. Scott stands at odds with much of the literature on autonomy-supportive environments. Specifically, whereas supportive environments prioritize child voice and leadership (Katz & Assor, 2007), Ms. Scott eschews a focus on student autonomy and instead wants and expects children to conform to her directions. This was noted in an interview when she said "I want them to know I love them, but I expect them to do the right thing. And I think that children need discipline. They want it. Those are the two things they want." There is a theme and pattern of giving children an opportunity to conform. Those that do are tacitly viewed as "deserving" of on-going support. Those who do not



are punished and often times removed from the helping practices designed to support them. As Ms. Scott noted:

Well we have had some children in the past, who have just literally caused headaches... And you hate it. The way I look at it is I gave them the opportunity but when they are affecting the learning of themselves and the other children then it's time to remove them from the situation. I can think of several that have been removed and things are much better. You hate to do that but sometimes it's for the best.

Ms. Scott elected to remove children from their classrooms or the school building itself as opposed to maintaining a flexible setting and promoting student problem solving to reduce behavior management occurrences. This practice all-but eliminates the opportunity children have to learn from their mistakes and in so doing, creates an environment that readily appears as social-control-oriented and need thwarting (Sheldon & Filak, 2008). This extended further in discussions related to the afterschool program. When asked what the program could improve, Ms. Scott provided input:

Sometimes children have a hard time with self-discipline. And so, of course, you all gave them every opportunity possible. I guess sometimes maybe they had more opportunities than they should have...I think that some of our children just do not respond to anything unless it is...I hate to use the term yelled at, but maybe a very firm voice. I tell them all the time in the mornings...I say, 'I didn't come in here this morning to get on to you but you make me have to.' It's like you give them an inch, they're going to take a mile.

The language utilized by Ms. Scott indicates that she is aware that the advice she is giving may not be best practice because she does not want to say the word she means (e.g. 'yell') but she is firm in her beliefs that said practices are the most effective. The power dynamic is extreme,

students, teachers, and program personnel need to follow the principal's hard and steadfast rules or else suffer the consequences.

### *The Trickle-Down Effect*

The principal's authoritative expectations not only impacted the students, but also placed fear in the teachers regarding potential repercussions if they step outside of the disciplinary guidelines. The teachers altered the environment to better suit their own needs than those of the students as they needed the children to follow the rules to maintain their own reputation in front of the principal. In one situation in which a child brought a soda to school, the following field note was taken, "the teacher said it was a rule enforced by Mrs. Scott and if she allowed him to have it 'who would get in trouble?' He said, 'both of us.' She said, 'that's right, I would and you would.' It is clear that school leadership set a tone within the school that promotes sanctions as the norm and everyone else works to avoid the disciplinary actions she may take if they fall out of line (Blase & Blase, 2003).

When creating an environment to meet the needs of students, it is important to consider each of their needs at the time (Reeve, 2006). Further, student's strengths must be placed at the forefront of SEL. The approach within the school, however, was based on preconceived notions regarding the collective student population. The teachers often made assumptions about the students based on the fact that many of them come from homes affected by poverty. Mr. Rice said, "I feel like the biggest obstacle at a school with... poverty is just everything is competitive. Like if there's breakfast stuff left, everybody wants it. Even if they don't necessarily want it. Just because it's there." This deficit-based view is present throughout the day as most of the teacher's developed activities that incorporated a sense of competition, such as an electronic behavior point system that displays who gets the most positive points or negative points in the classroom

each day. The teachers believe that because their students' families are low income, the children collectively thrived on fighting for what they want or need as opposed to identifying the strengths of the collective group or individual students and building them further.

Students' socio-economic backgrounds appeared to contribute to other kinds of deficit-oriented assumptions about children. One of these assumptions was directed toward the quality and characteristics of children's home environments. Teachers spoke about the children's family structures and their perceptions of what their children are experiencing from the families at home with complete disregard for evidence or considerations for each child's reality. For example, the boundary spanner, Ms. Adele, explained how she feels a need to yell to control behavior in the program at times because: "sadly, our children are used to the yelling, because that's what they get at home...so sometimes our older children will not listen to us unless we raise our voice." The children were quick to respond to yelling by immediately being quiet and doing as they were told. Though the teachers believed that this was because it was what they were used to experiencing at home, the reason described by the children was that yelling invoked fear and that they did not learn from the experience aside from they shouldn't get caught doing the behavior again or they would suffer the consequences.

The deficit-based views of children's home lives and cultural mores appeared to directly shape children's actions and reactions to the school (Ogbu, 1995). These assumptions could be traced to a shared root in the power assertion that was planted by school leadership. The associated behaviors were prominent in the field notes. The children were prompted to follow the teacher's demands without question. They were observed saying "yes ma'am" or "yes sir" when referring to adults and were expected to walk quietly in a single file line. The children were often referred to collectively, as opposed to considered on an individual basis. They were a herd of

cattle, viewed and operating as one unit as their fate was determined by another. They were tasked with making the school and the teachers “look good.” The deficit-based views created an environment in which children appeared constantly “othered” by their teachers and this othering process appeared to erode the potential for enhanced school belonging and relatedness for children. This kind of ‘us vs. them’ dynamic was further evident when teachers talked about the school’s prior academic record. For example, in one class, Mr. Cole said:

Our school last year failed our test, those of you in third grade contributed to us getting an F. That means that our school is under watch. Every grade we put in, how we spend our time, all of that is constantly being watched. Some of you don’t seem to care, I have been doing my job the way I am supposed to all year long so nothing is going to change for me, it has to change with you.

The immediate take-away from this quote is profound. Rather than view academic improvement as an institutional responsibility, the school teachers appear to place to the blame for low-achievement on students. The result is a clear message that the difficulties experienced by children are because of their own deficits, not the school’s deficits (Sheldon & Filak, 2008). This message appears to have dire implications for students’ abilities to develop a sense of competence and belonging about the school and its practices.

### *The Authoritative Teachers*

As the teachers sought to fulfill the expectations of Ms. Scott, they adjusted their language to mimic hers. Much like Ms. Scott proudly shared the positive behavior program that she had integrated into the school, the teacher’s engaged in discussion regarding focus on creating an autonomy supportive environment for their students. Following this model, their examples consistently promoted “social control” instead of SEL-based social development. In

interviews, school teachers emphasized their desire to promote an environment and circumstances that encouraged SEL development and practice. The teachers spoke about their desire to give every child: “an equal opportunity to learn and to be loved, make sure that they know that they are cared for and they know that they can succeed in my classroom” (Ms. Ross interview).

As if to support this notion, teachers provided their students with jobs to fill and responsibilities within the classroom. These tasks, however, were based on teacher control. For example, a role that students may have fulfilled included checking desks for cleanliness at the end of the day or acting as line leader by standing in the front quietly with one hand up to indicate readiness to walk in silence so the rest of the class would follow suit. Student responsibility was noted in field notes, such as, “Kingston has the responsibility to tell everyone to line up once they have all cleaned up.” Kingston’s job was to make sure his classmates were following the strict regimen of quietly lining up as dictated by the teacher. Leadership roles typically meant that they assisted in ensuring their classmates were following the rules. This concept reinforces the idea that the children’s perspectives were not valuable nor were they welcomed in the school environment, only those of the teacher could be reinforced and practiced (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Programs based in SEL development emphasize the following indicators of social and emotional learning: self-awareness and management, social awareness, relationships skills, and responsible decision making (CASEL, 2018). The teachers here, however, tend to view it more narrowly. In particular, these teachers appear almost exclusively to view SEL as learning how to resolve inter-personal conflicts among the children, particularly violent students. The interactions observed and discussed with the teachers regarding their exchanges with students further

supported this belief. Here, one fifth grade teacher Mr. Cole discussed conflict resolution techniques, saying:

When I get two children that have a problem with each other like, for example, if I'm teaching a lesson and I'm writing on the board and all of a sudden two children behind me are fighting with each other... I may take those children right outside the door and get one child to share their side and I ask the other children to listen. Then I'll get the other children to share their side of the story and we try to find middle ground in between that.

Student interactions during the school day were frequently tense as students would yell at or act in a physically menacing manner. Strategies to promote students calmly handling their emotions were present at times. For example, while observing a class receive their grades, notes were taken on frustration being present as one student, Jaleon, made fun of another, DeShawn, for the score he received: "DeShawn says Jaleon had better back up, Jaleon leaves. DeShawn is frustrated because Mr. Cole gave someone else a point for behavior. DeShawn clenches his fists and Mr. Cole says, 'it's okay DeShawn, just take a deep breath.'" The teachers provide techniques for students to calm their behavior in order to ensure that the teacher maintains control of the setting. The focus on SEL being utilized to handle conflict is a method of behavior management as opposed to a strategy for developing its associated competencies.

#### *Within Setting Variation*

At times, teacher's messages were conflicting as they supported SEL based concepts but expressed them in a detrimental way. The avenue for sharing positive messages plays a key role in determining the outcome. The children, therefore, were unable to absorb the positive message being shared because the relatedness concept was thwarted (Reeve, 2006; Skinner et al., 2005). This was evident when observing Mr. Rice's class during a group math activity:

Only one kid got [the question] right, Mr. Rice is frustrated by this visibly. Several of the kids are going, “Oh my god, oh my god.” He starts to yell, “oh my god! Why do you yell that? What does that do for you? Did god mess that up for you?! Or did you mess it up?! That’s your instinct to make other’s think that you don’t care about it when actually if you are doing that you do! Turn to someone and say it’s ok to mess up!” He places his face close to the faces of two kids and yells, “it’s ok to mess up, it’s ok to mess up!”

This quote is important for two reasons. First, it illustrates an important trend in the data—namely that teachers are often genuine in their attempt to create a positive, need supportive environment. However, as is evident here, the delivery frequently appears to create harmful effects. Indeed, instead of creating support for mistake-driven learning, this teacher’s actions and reactions left children wide-eyed and recoiling. The opportunity to develop relatedness and competence with this teacher was missing.

The challenges with developing enhanced competence and relatedness in the classroom were further indicated by classroom practices that could be labeled as “consistently inconsistent.” For example, the expectations of the children were erratic as children could behave a certain way at one point but would be disciplined for the same behavior another time. This occurred both by the same teacher throughout the day and by different teachers the children interacted with across the school. Terrance recognized this contradiction when he described the different responses between two teachers: “Ms. Rose comes to me and asks me what’s going on and my other teacher may just take a point away from me.” These kinds of inconsistencies appear to exact untoward consequences on children’s sense of security and agency (Phelan et al., 1991). Lacking a firm idea about what kinds of behaviors are acceptable, children often times

appear to live in fear of adults and their surrounding environments. To the extent that this fear predominates, SEL may occur unevenly, if it does at all.

Further, there were elements of the school day that crossed over with elements of the program as noted by the children. There were numerous times that the children indicated that the program leaders and the classroom teachers had comparable behavior expectations. Both settings espoused rules that were focused on compassion and creating a positive climate. Asia recognized that both settings expected “respect, listening to others, being nice, using kind words.” This indicates that the language utilized between the two, such as the seven habits focus laid out by Ms. Scott and the TPSR goals, frequently overlapped providing similar verbal and visual messages. It is clear, however, based on the messages observed during the school day that the ways they were delivered appeared to vary dramatically, and this variation appears to be a source of considerably confusion for kids (Phelan et al., 1991).

The sharing of autonomy-supportive needs across settings is also a key component to children comfortable navigating their experiences from one setting to another. A few of the children believed that the teacher’s responses to undesirable behaviors were similar to the afterschool program leaders at times. Much like the program leaders elected to focus on each individual’s contribution to the group and personal attributes, there were times that the teachers did so as well. For example, Terrance spoke about his fifth-grade teacher saying, “[you and Ms. Rose are] similar because you don’t yell, you have a private conversation, you not yelling and tryin’ to let everyone else know what happened and stuff.” These rare moments during which teachers approaches matched those of the program leaders likely led to even more confusion for the children. This overall lack of a consistent support structure across settings appears to erode



the likelihood that students will develop the needed senses of autonomy, competence, and relatedness they need to thrive (Gordon & Doyle, 2015; Phelan et al., 1991).

Needs-thwarting is present for student autonomy, competence, and relatedness consistently and altogether. This contextual surrounding is instrumental in describing the student's actions, reactions, and orientations to the TPSR program.

## **The Social Ecology of the Program**

### *Social and Emotional Development in the Program*

As was previously described, the SEL components align well with the TPSR model (Wright, 2017). Both models require a needs-supportive environment to allow for their competencies to develop. Lessons in the afterschool program were guided by the TPSR goals. Each session of the OST program began with the students sitting in a circle as group, discussing a goal each day. Students would provide insight into how they or their peers can utilize that objective and a physical activity would be set in motion in which the whole group would learn a movement skill while also practicing the goal. The data indicate that some of these activities promoted the autonomy, competence, and/or relatedness needs targeted by SEL program advocates. For example, the goals were referenced by the youth in the program consistently, such as when Kiara said the program focused on: “respect[ing] others... effort, helping others, stuff like that.” When asked to explain how these goals are a part of a lesson, she said, “like helping others when they fall or if they are really mad or sad, like mad help them calm down, or sad just be there for them.” These kinds of comments were consistent in the data. They indicated that children internalized the primary tenets/pillars of the program. The children's actions, however, did not always fit with the descriptions of the goals provided. This is likely due to the fact that

the message and the environment the program was providing were so alien to the children compared to their experiences throughout the school day (Gordon & Doyle, 2015).

For SEL competencies to be planted and truly thrive, the three needs associated with a needs-based environment must be met and then maintained over time (Reeve, 2006). Providing the needs at one point and then thwarting them at another will reduce their effectiveness. The program found opportunities to maintain elements of the positive environment over time. As an example, writing journals were implemented to provide children with an outlet for reflection and open conversation with the program leader. The school staff, such as Ms. Adele, did not have access to the journals. Initially, the kids were hesitant to openly share their thoughts and would write very basic responses such as when Asia wrote about showing respect, “I did what she said to do and played all the time and stop when she said to stop.” Over time, as the children continued to write weekly and get thorough responses from the program leader that provided encouragement instead of correction, they began to write more and would include personal components as well as SEL reflection. Towards the end of the semester, Asia wrote, “I showed teamwork by helping the leader with her game. I hope you have a good day. My day was good I did not have fun but on the bus was fun. I have one dog.” When asked to write about the journaling process, Kiara wrote, “I like writing in my notebook because it help me share my feelings.” The journals appeared to provide a platform for relatedness to be developed between each child and the program leader, autonomy was present as they shared their goals and preferences. This platform was possible largely because it was an experience exclusive to the program. If public conversations occurred during the program, caution was shown by the children due to the setting being a part of the broader need thwarting school context.

Despite being within the school setting, the afterschool program was able to vary from the authoritative structure as the children were afforded chances to display autonomy and competence through contributions within the lessons. For example, the children were consistently asked to share their thoughts regarding how games can be modified, and at times were asked to: “be the teacher of the day and make up our own games” (DeShawn interview). The children sat in a circle when discussions were led to promote equality and inclusion, and they were prompted to listen respectfully to whomever was speaking, adult or child. Students interacted with the program leaders in a way that focused on their own unique characteristics within the program setting. They were encouraged to regularly self-assess and share their ideas, they felt: “it was a good time to reflect on what we've been taught and have learned” (Terrance interview).

The children were also allowed social interactions as they regularly intermingled with one another and with the program leaders, and they were encouraged to resolve conflicts in a calm and rational manner. Children reported that several important competencies followed these practices. For example, Javion indicated that he felt “safe and free” working with the program leaders and said the leaders “help me believe in myself” (Javion Interview). The program’s emphasis on providing calm discussions, opportunities to contribute, and sense of equality between the adult leaders and the youth participants in the program Appeared to diverge—at times radically--from the practices and overall institutional ethos of the school. Often times students would resort back to the school structure by saying “yes ma’am” and indicating that respect meant, “listening while the teacher is talking” as opposed to mentioning its many other applications. The program provided the children with ample opportunities to experience a needs-based environment and they did lean into their opportunities more over time. The program,

therefore, varied from the school setting and leadership in that instead of making sanctions the norm, it seeks to develop positive norms in order to avoid sanctions. It was evident, however, that the children struggled to remove themselves from the authoritative standard that dictated the much larger portion of their day (Gordon & Doyle, 2015; Jacobs et al., 2017).

### *Approaches to Addressing Behavior*

In order for SEL competencies to develop, the environment must be grounded in student strengths whenever possible (Ryan & Deci, 2002). While managing behavior, leaders opted to allow some off-task behaviors in order to focus on praise. As the children became more comfortable with the positive environment being provided, behaviors such as excessive talking and not listening during discussions or instructions challenged the structure at times. The children elected to, and were at times permitted to, push the limits in order to see the associated consequences (e.g. loss of activity time) and prompt a discussion to then learn from mistakes. The program, therefore, varies from the school setting and leadership in that instead of making sanctions the norm, it seeks to develop positive norms in order to avoid sanctions.

Beyond the concept of focusing on strengths, SEL competencies are developed when relatedness allows for open but caring relationships regarding behavior issues (Ryan, 1995). Further, the inclusion of autonomy through setting goals for improvement related to behavior was also important. These concepts were evident in the program when praise proved ineffective. Program leaders elected to sit children out followed shortly by a one on one conversation on how the behavior could be changed in the future. During an interview, Asia was asked what happens when children misbehave in the gym and she said, “you sit us out, we talk about what we did wrong, how we can fix it, and you get to go back in.” The program leaders had developed a routine for behavior management that allowed the students to think critically about their choices

and be thoughtful about their steps moving forward. This was in direct contrast to the school's authoritative response to behavior management that focused on controlling students. In moments the children were with the program leaders in the gym without school staff present, the children were comfortable as they knew they would be given the opportunity to learn from their choices, both the positive and the negative.

### **Result of Conflict between Social Ecologies**

#### *School's Sanctions over the Program*

The autonomy supportive environment was a conflicting point between the program and the school staff. Even in the afterschool hours, the needs thwarting environment was heavily relied upon by those working with the school. Thus, though there was an element of admiration for the approaches taken by program leaders, there was also distrust. For example, Ms. Adele mentioned during an interview, "you are so good at ignoring when they are talking when you are talking and you are good at focusing on all of the other positive things, and that's good...you don't concentrate on the discipline part very much." Ms. Adele's praise appears to be encouraging of the program leaders' behaviors and endorsing the management styles the program espoused. Her behaviors, however, would appear unsupportive as they were entirely focused on sanctions and, therefore, rendered the program's approach as inadequate.

The needs-thwarting approach was still present within the program setting, despite the constant SEL supportive behaviors present with the program leaders. This was because of the way Ms. Adele responded to behavior that she did not consider acceptable. She reacted with an authoritative approach by having children sign a behavior book in order to give 'strikes' following physical activity sessions. The book kept a record of children's misbehaviors and having three entries led to a strike. Three strikes led to removal from the program. There was

tension between the program personnel and the school personnel as it was unclear who's rules were to be followed. Ms. Adele eluded to this when she said, "It'd be easier if y'all were... I don't want to say tougher, but just a little firmer. Not accepting that talking back and talking while y'all are talking. It'd be easier if you would follow the school guidelines." Ms. Adele's role as the boundary spanner was one sided as she elected to promote the discipline and sanctions set by school leadership as opposed to finding ways to merge them. The children were placed in the middle of the two approaches and were forced to make a decision regarding which option to follow (Lee & Martinek, 2012). Ms. Adele's option was accompanied by a punishment, making avoidance of the school's sanctions a greater need than thriving within the program's autonomy support.

#### *Children Cannot Navigate Varied Messages*

Children seek relationships that are supportive with the adults that become key personnel within their lives, such as teachers. Therefore, relatedness is an essential component of the program (Ryan, 1995). Relatedness needs were met in ways by the program leaders that were unconditional, but Ms. Adele made it clear that misbehavior would result in a relatedness thwarting. Terrance made a comment that illustrated the children's experiences, "she nice to you until you... well, not really get on her bad side but until you do something wrong." The strike concept makes 'learning from mistakes' in the program less powerful because the children are "scared of getting a strike and getting kicked out of the program" (Deshawn interview). There was no room to grow as any chances a child takes is met with harsh criticism and punishment. The environment created did not support the children's personal perspectives, knowledge, or positive relationships as the degree of control was too high (Reeve, 2006).

Feeling safe is essential for comfort within an environment and growth in SEL. If at any point a child does not feel safe, the willingness to place themselves further at risk by challenging themselves outside of their comfort zone is eliminated (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The program personnel did not utilize fear as a tactic, but the school personnel did. This was supported when DeShawn said in an interview that when Ms. Adele is not present and it is just the program leaders, he does not feel scared: “because you don’t have the book. I just learn to be better. [From the book] I just learn I can’t get no strike, or sign the book, again.” The children were aware that the two approaches were different, and expressed preference for the program leader’s method because, “if you just sit there and holler at us, we gonna get mad, and we don’t know the right thing to do like when we talk about it” (Kiara Interview). The children display anxiety around leadership based on these scare tactics, which overrides any comfort teachers or program leaders may attempt to instill in them to act as autonomous individuals that are capable of asking questions and making suggestions.

Developing SEL competencies requires adults to give up some of their power and allow children to take on that power (Hellison, 2011). This is not easy for practitioners of any kind initially, and it can be viewed as weakness when observed. This was apparent in the satisfaction Ms. Scott took in her authoritative approach she utilized within the program, with the support of Ms. Adele. When discussing the strike system related to the program during her interview, Ms. Scott proudly stated, “signing the book, that originated from me... I say, ‘you’re in this program so it can help you and you need to do everything you can to stay. You do not need to be acting up.’” Mixed messages regarding the environment being provided can dramatically reduce the positive impact of an autonomy-based setting (Gordon & Doyle, 2015). Regardless of the SEL progress made in a positive setting, the hard work can be lost if the environment becomes

inconsistent at best or need thwarting at worst. This tendency for need thwarting behavior was evident when Ms. Adele and Ms. Scott elected to use behavior management strategies outside of the program setting, punishing students during the school day for behaviors in the gymnasium afterschool. Both the children and the teachers referenced this occurrence. Ms. Adele described one particular day during snack time:

So, it's just me and the children and the teachers were in there and I just plainly told them how disappointed I was... I said program leaders will put you in timeout and then get time and go and talk to you. Where when I'm talking to you, you know there's going to be an automatic consequence. You're going to sign the book or there's about 15 of you that are fixin' to be dismissed strictly on how you behave. I said right now, usually, their goal is to have our field trip at the end of the year, if we've had a good year. Right now, that field trip has been suspended because of basically how they act with you in the gym because they just don't show the program leaders the respect that I feel they deserve. So, I try to go in there when the program has a bad day to remind them strongly.

The school is projecting the message that the decisions made on a macro level are more important than those of the program and, therefore, take precedence. This greatly reduces the potential impact the program may have on the children. Further, these actions continue to portray the message that adults deserve respect simply because they are older and they demand that the children provide it without question. Children must follow the rules in order to be taught. Finally, the message provided to the teachers from the principal and boundary spanner was that the TPSR model is ineffective, limited trust and the potential for a future partnership.



## Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the social-institutional conditions that frame children's actions and reactions to the practices that guide their social-emotional learning and overall healthy development. The words and image put forth by members of the school indicated that it should be an ideal setting to model after SEL development and would be a smooth and cohesive partnership with an SEL-based afterschool program. By looking beyond the surface, however, the many contributors within the school setting were causing a high degree of psychological needs thwarting (Reeve, 2006, 2009). The children's needs were thwarted as their teachers and principal coerced them to follow a set of behaviors as opposed to encouraging their ideas and choices plus fostering relationships (Bartholomew et al., 2010).

Further, needs thwarting was present in the realm of competency. Due to the sanctions dictating the structure of the school setting and interactions, the children's faults were consistently the focus of reaction and discussions (Sheldon & Filak, 2008). The children's moves were heavily supervised and guided, limiting their opportunities to utilize and practice their own capabilities – directly opposing a positive competency-supportive setting (Ryan & Deci, 2002). In addition, the sense of relatedness was frequently absent between the children, their teachers, and the administration. As opposed to feeling connected, they were immersed in hostility through the surrounding adults' words and actions (Skinner et al., 2005).

An autonomy-supportive environment is an essential component to the development of SEL competencies. Program leaders sought to allow the children the opportunity to make choices, share their preferences, and set personal goals (Katz & Assor, 2007). The children's assets were the prime focus within the afterschool program with opportunities provided for them to share and display their cognitive and behavioral strengths (Curran, Hill, & Niemiec, 2013).

The program leaders also took steps to increase relatedness, making the space an open forum for communication and developing a sense of togetherness and comfort during the time in the gym (Ryan, 1995). Ms. Adele's interactions with the children during their time in the gym, however, meant that psychological needs thwarting was present during the program as well. Despite the program leader's efforts to incorporate the positive environment, the fear of repercussions from school leadership was still present. The school essentially acted as the program's 'big brother' in determining what freedoms the program, and the children participating in the program, had. The journals provided a safe space where the children could be open and honest rather than sharing audibly with Ms. Adele nearby to hear their input and potentially utilizing the children's words against them at a later time, the children expressed themselves solely to program leaders and could be open without fear of repercussions.

The most pivotal individual in determining the children's experiences throughout the school day and within the afterschool program was the school principal, Ms. Scott. Her belief in authoritative discipline informed the children's experience, as well as the teachers (Bartholomew et al., 2010). All parties were subject to the consequences of opposing her decisions and regulations. Even if the teacher's wanted to develop an environment that promoted SEL elaboration for children, their own environment was psychological needs thwarting to the degree that they could not comfortably do so without fear of repercussions. The principal could best be described as a dictator when in the school environment.

Ms. Adele was in the best position as boundary spanner to encourage the program's pursuit towards creating the best possible environment for SEL development and connecting the school and the program in ways that would promote child development (Williams, 2002). She elected to develop a one-sided system that reinforced the school policies and rendered the

program's discourse powerless to the children as they regularly intervened, incorporating sanctions without program leader's presence or knowledge.

The children constantly felt watched within the school, and the teacher's and administration's actions promoted a continuation of systemic racism and classism (Schutz, 2006). Though the message the school sought to foster among outsiders was that their setting promoted a caring supportive environment, the children were being primed to be fearful of authority and were anticipating discipline at all times as a collective group. Through actions taken based on biases maintained regarding the student's home lives, the message was consistently 'you are less than.' Being quiet, listening, and accepting negative treatment were prevalent during the school day, teaching the children that sanctions are the norm for them within structured settings. Fear of crossing lines has the potential to carry over to life outside of the school, prolonging a broken system in which white authority figures determine what behaviors are acceptable in order to maintain their power over people of color, particularly those of a lower socioeconomic status (Bonilla-Silva, 2001). This concept directly violates the tenets of SEL, focused on building confidence, self-worth, and more.

As school's continuously progress towards adding SEL concepts into their school wide approach (Jacobs & Wright, 2014), the findings from this study are critical. This school has openly claimed that SEL components are the guiding force within their academics and behavior management, but conversations and observations indicated that the environment created rendered these claims as false. The use of SEL in schools will be nothing more than surface level discourse if schools maintain a similar approach to this study's setting. The atmosphere of school structures needs to change drastically and school leadership must be actively pursuing the development of autonomy-supportive environments for parents and community stake-holders to

trust that SEL competencies are actually being utilized throughout the school day and during the time spent in afterschool programming.

Much like Lee and Martinek (2012, 2013) articulated, if the school setting does not support children sharing their voice and expressing themselves then it is likely that those behaviors will be unacceptable, making it difficult for SEL competencies to be applied in alternative settings. Children cannot incorporate SEL components during the school day rendering the program's efforts ineffective as the children were forced to navigate the conflicting messages they were receiving (Buckle & Walsh, 2013; Jacobs & Wright, 2017). One message was based on encouragement to share, grow, and be themselves from afterschool program leaders and the other was that they will quietly go through the motions ordered by school leaders. There was a degree of mental exhaustion present in the children, as there was no preparation for handling the affective dilemma (Phelan et al., 1991; Varnham, 2005).

This study incorporated the suggested step of gauging school support and awareness in order to begin incorporating strategies to increase transfer across settings (Martinek & Lee, 2012). With the current school leadership in place, however, it is unlikely that the school and the program will be able to develop the cohesive and collaborative partnership necessary to increase SEL development for the purpose of creating highly thoughtful and contributing citizens. The next step, therefore, would likely be to incorporate methods for training program participants in the best times to utilize the lessons learned during the program. The children may be encouraged to use the skills during the program and potentially home and community settings while avoiding their use during the school day. This process could occur within the TPSR lesson format, as conversations regarding the goals and the appropriate ways to utilize them are a key component to model fidelity and success (Jacobs et al., 2017). Teaching children to be aware of their

surroundings and selective about where they utilize the SEL competencies may reduce the possibility that they will render the skills impractical when they receive no benefits for their use (Pugh et al., 2010).

A key partnership the program could seek to develop in order to promote transfer is with the families of the children (Jacobs et al., 2017). Developing relationships and gauging interest in promoting SEL competencies with the children's guardian's and siblings may offer more support and decrease the internal conflict felt based on mixed messages. The program could also encourage parental involvement in their child's school and overall education, developing a sizeable united front to combat the needs thwarting behaviors within the school (Alameda-Lawson & Lawson, 2016). These relationships could be fostered if a program promotes engaged community experiences that create public spaces that accept SEL behaviors and alter the norms of the setting (Jacobs et al., 2017). Gathering children and their friends and families in these environments may enhance the degree of togetherness and promote the SEL competencies in alternative settings. Research focused on the development of partnerships with families is limited and needed.

Further research should also be conducted on the potential for transfer to occur from programming to school settings. The present study was conducted in a school in the southeastern region of the United States where racial undertones and old school teaching styles are highly prevalent. Future studies may be conducted in alternative regions, in urban or rural settings, and with varied demographic settings to continue testing for and addressing the degree of autonomy-supportive environments versus those that are needs thwarting. Research focused on strategies to assist youth in navigating multiple messages from varied settings would also be a valued contribution. The education system has many flaws that have deep roots, challenging the system

as a whole on a regular basis is important and needed, but enacting large scale change is a slow and drawn out process. Developing strategies to support children's SEL development despite the system they were placed in is, therefore, a timely and necessary stipulation.

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## APPENDIX A

Table 3.1

*Connections between the TPSR model and SEL competencies.*

<u>SEL Competency</u>	<u>TPSR Connection</u>
Self-Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Consistent reflection built into the format (Ivy &amp; Jacobs, 2017)</li> <li>➤ The goal of self-direction (Hellison, 2011)</li> <li>➤ Increases in self-confidence and self-efficacy (Escartí, Gutiérrez, Pascual, &amp; Llopis, 2010; Wright, White, &amp; Gaebler-Spira, 2004)</li> <li>➤ Ability to identify emotions and self-assess behaviors (Gordon et al., 2016; Wright &amp; Burton, 2008)</li> </ul>
Self-Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The goal of respect (Hellison, 2011)</li> <li>➤ Self-motivation and self-direction towards setting goals and practicing achieving them in physical activities (Gordon et al., 2016)</li> </ul>
Social Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The goal of respect (Hellison, 2011)</li> <li>➤ The goal of caring for others (Hellison, 2011)</li> <li>➤ Opportunities for peer feedback, modeling, and leadership (Hellison, 2011; Wright &amp; Burton, 2008)</li> </ul>
Relationship Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Social interactions are integral through participant empowerment and children centered approach (Wright &amp; Craig, 2011)</li> <li>➤ Teamwork, communication, and relationship building (Gordon et al., 2016)</li> <li>➤ Overcoming negative social pressure through the goal of self-direction (Hellison, 2011)</li> <li>➤ Conflict resolution through the goal of respect (Hellison, 2011)</li> <li>➤ Seeking out and providing help through the goal of caring for others (Hellison, 2011)</li> </ul>
Responsible Decision-Making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Discussions throughout the lesson format (Hellison, 2011)</li> <li>➤ Problem solving, situation analysis and evaluation, and choice reflections throughout physical activities (Gordon et al., 2016)</li> </ul>

The notion of transfer to classrooms, schools, homes, and communities is present in the TPSR model and SEL framework.

*Note: created based on Wright's (2017) conference paper titled, "Using social and emotional learning as a conceptual framework to support the teaching personal and social responsibility model."*

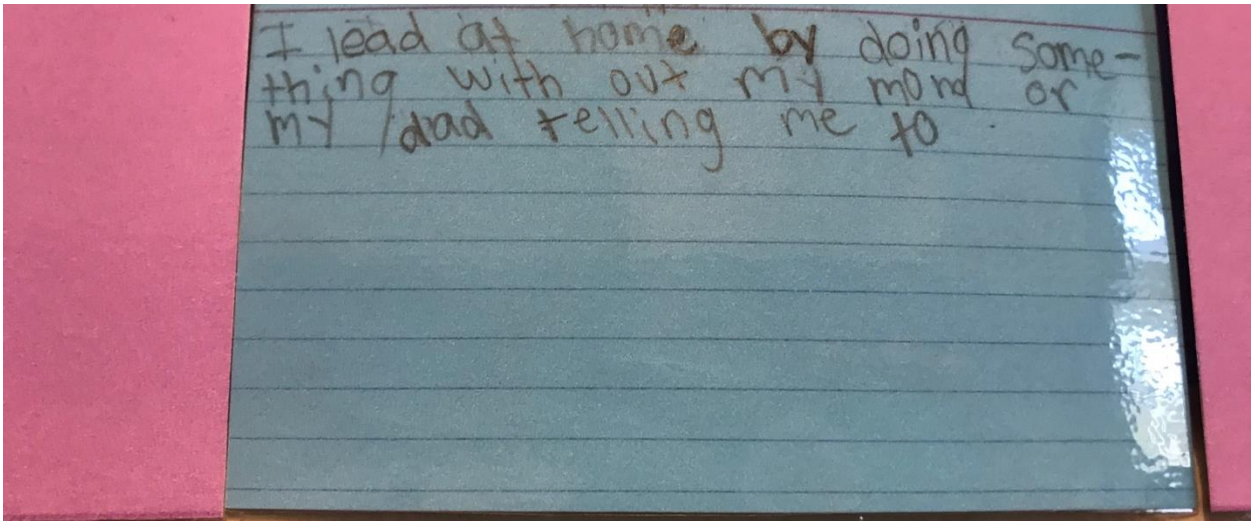
APPENDIX B

Table 3.2

*The participants within the study, including all school personnel and children participants.*

<u>Name</u>	<u>Race</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Time in Education</u>	<u>Highest Degree Earned</u>	<u>Grade Level</u>	<u>Children Name</u>
Mr. Rice	White	Male	6 years, 5 at current school	Bachelor's	4 <sup>th</sup>	Kingston
Mr. Cole	White	Male	2 years at current school	Bachelor's	4 <sup>th</sup>	DeShawn Jaleon Aaliyah
Ms. Ross	White	Female	3 years at current school	Master's in progress	4 <sup>th</sup>	
Ms. Rose	White	Female	2 years at current school	Master's in progress	5 <sup>th</sup>	Asia Kiara Terrance
Ms. Page	White	Female	17 years, 13 at current school	Master's	5 <sup>th</sup>	
Ms. Adele	White	Female	22 years in the district, 12 at current school	Bachelor's	Pre-K, Afterschool leader	
Ms. Scott	White	Female	37 years in the district, 13 as principal at current school	Bachelor's	Principal	

APPENDIX C



*Figure 3.1:* Kiara's notecard describing how she can show leadership. The notecard was placed on the wall outside of the library along every other child's in the school.

## APPENDIX D

THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**ALABAMA** | Office of the Vice President for  
Research & Economic Development  
Office for Research Compliance

September 25, 2018

Michael Lawson, PhD  
ESPRMC  
College of Education  
Box 870231

Re: IRB#: 18-OR-351 "Alabama TOPS: A Community-Based Participatory Approach for Improving Educational and Social Outcomes in Low-Income School Communities. Phase 3: Child Outcomes Research"

Dear Dr. Lawson:

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board has granted approval for your proposed research.

Your application has been given expedited approval according to 45 CFR part 46. Approval has been given under expedited review category 7 as outlined below:

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies


Your application will expire on September 23, 2019. If your research will continue beyond this date, complete the relevant portions of the IRB Renewal Application. If you wish to modify the application, complete the Modification of an Approved Protocol Form. Changes in this study cannot be initiated without IRB approval, except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to participants. When the study closes, complete the appropriate portions of the IRB Request for Study Closure Form.

Please use reproductions of the IRB approved stamped consent form to provide to your participants.

Should you need to submit any further correspondence regarding this proposal, please include the above application number.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,

  
Carmelo T. Myles, MSM, CIM, CIP  
Director & Research Compliance Officer

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205-348-8461 | Fax 205-348-7189 | Toll Free 1-877-820-3066