

## Teachers' value orientations in urban and rural school settings

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### **Abstract:**

The purpose of this research was to describe physical educators' value orientations for curricular decision making in urban and rural teaching settings. The revised Value Orientation Inventory (Ennis & Chen, 1993) was used to collect data from 495 physical educators in urban and rural districts. Data were analyzed descriptively using a full-design and a nested MANOVA model. Results indicated that teachers in urban school districts placed a higher priority on self-actualization and social responsibility than did teachers in rural school districts. Conversely, teachers in rural school districts placed a higher priority on disciplinary mastery and learning process than did their colleagues in urban schools. The discussion focused on differences in school contexts in urban and rural schools. Teachers appeared to shape their curriculum to reflect the opportunities and constraints within their school settings.

**Keywords:** value orientations | beliefs | context | school location

### **Article:**

Value orientations describe educational belief systems that influence curricular decision making. They form the rationales that determine, in part, how practical educational decisions are made (Eisner, 1992). Within physical education, teachers make a significant number of important educational decisions. Decisions include what content to teach, how to teach it, and the extent to which the content will be learned by students. Although physical educators have ideal or preferred sets of goals or objectives for their students, they often must modify their expectations based on constraints or limitations within the educational context. Constraints may include characteristics of students, the school context, and the teacher's level of expertise.

Differences between urban and rural school districts are most evident in funding level, cultural diversity of the students, and the learning-readiness skills that students bring to schools (Kantor & Brenzel, 1992). Often urban school districts are larger than rural districts with more layers of administrative and supervisory personnel. In large, urban schools, constraints occur in the form

of students who may not value the educational process, facilities and equipment that are outdated or in need of repair, and administrators and teachers who may have difficulty focusing on educational goals because they are distracted by threats of violence and student-teacher confrontations.

Jackson (1968) was one of the first researchers to document the complexity of teaching in actual urban settings. His descriptive account of classrooms graphically portrayed the constraints that hamper teachers' efforts to design effective curriculum and instruction. Recently, Fine (1991) has described the challenges that students face when trying to learn in urban schools. In physical education, urban teachers respond to these constraints by selecting curriculum that is more specific to the school context and interests of their students. The complexity of a teaching setting in which student needs are rapidly changing, while student services are declining, may encourage urban teachers to conceptualize physical education goals differently than do physical educators teaching in rural areas.

### **The Role of Beliefs in Curricular Decision Making**

Pajares (1992) argues that "beliefs are the best indicators of the decisions that individuals make throughout their lives" (p. 307). Individuals create unique belief structures that, at times, appear to have stronger evaluative or judgmental characteristics than factual knowledge (Nespor, 1987). Evaluations and judgments are often made independently of cognitive processes typically associated with factual knowledge. Teachers make decisions based on their tacit, personal values (Schubert, 1990). These decisions range from judgments about what content to teach and how much practice time to provide to decisions about how stringent to set performance criteria.

Beliefs are difficult to examine empirically as a formal construct (Pajares, 1992). They must be studied indirectly as they influence decision making. They are thought to be influential in the decision-making process in such diverse fields as medicine, law, and business. In psychology, beliefs in the form of attitudes and values have been researched under the terms self-efficacy, self-concept, and self-esteem. Subject-specific beliefs held by teachers and students in reading, mathematics, and science have been associated with the nature and extent of student learning (Clark & Peterson, 1986). Ernest (1989), for example, examined teachers' knowledge of mathematics. He found that two teachers may have similar mathematics knowledge but use different methods to convey it to children. He reasoned that teacher beliefs about what students should learn and how they should learn influenced how teachers conceptualized and presented knowledge for teaching.

Paris, Lipson, and Wixson (1983) discussed beliefs as a third form of knowledge in addition to the traditional conceptualizations of declarative (factual) and procedural (process) knowledge. They described beliefs as conditional knowledge that includes understanding when, why, and under what conditions declarative and procedural knowledge should be used. Garner (1990) extended the concept of conditional knowledge to describe the decision-making process associated with teaching strategy selection. Garner described conditional knowledge as context specific. In other words, decisions about when, why, and under what conditions a strategy is selected are often linked to a specific subject matter, school, student, or classroom event.

### *Descriptions of Value Orientations*

The term "value orientation" has been used in the curriculum literature by Eisner and his colleagues (e.g., Eisner & Vallance, 1974) to describe educational beliefs or curricular ideologies that appear to influence programmatic decisions. He originally identified five value orientations to describe dominant perspectives in curricular design: academic rationalism, technology, cognitive process, self-actualization, and social reconstruction. In physical education curriculum, Jewett, Bain, and Ennis (1995) also used value orientations to describe philosophical perspectives influential in curricular decision making. They described five orientations--disciplinary mastery, learning process, self-actualization, ecological integration, and social reconstruction--as the basis for several curricular models currently in use in physical education.

Each value orientation describes a philosophy or ideology for constructing curriculum. The disciplinary mastery and the learning process orientations place transmission and learning of factual and process knowledge as the focus of the curricular decision-making process. Disciplinary mastery advocates encourage students to master information from the body of knowledge. Often in physical education, the traditional body of knowledge is described as fundamental movement, exercise, and sport (e.g., Rink, 1993). Learning process orientation advocates focus on teaching students how to learn independently. In physical education, they may encourage students to solve movement and exercise problems using concepts from the knowledge base that cross many sports or activities (Carr, 1987).

The self-actualization, ecological integration, and social value orientations describe affective curricular goals that use disciplinary knowledge as a means of accomplishing personal or social goals rather than as an end in itself. Self-actualization is based on the work of Maslow (1979). In physical education, students use knowledge of fundamental movement, sport, or fitness concepts to develop a personal plan that is consistent with their own needs and interests. The ecological integration orientation is based originally on the work of Dewey (1916). Advocates seek a balanced curriculum focusing on subject matter mastery, sensitivity to students' concerns, and the role of society in shaping cultural expectations.

The social value orientation can be conceptualized within several ideological perspectives, including social reconstruction and social responsibility. Social reconstruction advocates (e.g., Apple, 1982) place the curricular focus on reforming the school and society. Students are encouraged to become aware of inequities and to develop strategies to reform the school and society. Social responsibility advocates (e.g., Wentzel, 1991) design curricula to encourage students to interact positively with others. This may include the goals of cooperation, respect, or leadership. In physical education, students use movement, sport, and fitness tasks as opportunities to practice positive interactions.

### *Physical Education Research Examining Teacher Value Orientations*

Ennis and her colleagues (e.g., Ennis & Chen, 1993; Ennis & Zhu, 1991) designed a series of research studies to articulate and describe teachers' value orientations in practical physical education settings. Although some teachers would prefer to include many curricular goals within their programs, the reality of most physical education programs suggests that time limitations

and large class sizes constrain the number and the extent to which goals can be accomplished. Researchers examining teacher value orientations in physical education have used the Value Orientation Inventory (VOI) to describe teacher perspectives (e.g., Ennis & Zhu, 1991). Additional in-depth ethnographic research has examined teachers' goals and content tasks for physical education within the framework of their value orientation profiles. This research has used observation, interview, and stimulated recall protocols to describe the complex settings, student characteristics, and teachers' perceptions of their teaching settings.

Two studies (Ennis & Zhu, 1991; Ennis, Chen, & Ross, 1992) used the VOI to examine physical education teachers' value orientations in both Midwestern and Eastern regions of the United States. Results indicated that 97% of physical educators could identify priorities or value orientations for their programs (see Ennis & Zhu, 1991). They were able to select and rank items as either a high or a low priority consistently across item sets. Ennis, Chen, and Ross (1992) replicated this research in a large Eastern urban school district (enrollment > 110,000) with a minority population exceeding 69%. Findings indicated that 56.8% of the physical educators placed a high priority on social reconstruction, while only 7.6% placed a high priority on disciplinary mastery. Follow-up research in the district (Ennis, Ross, & Chen, 1992) found that teachers with a high priority for social goals described the importance of teaching their students to cooperate and respect others. Interestingly, this VOI research indicated that teachers' social goals for physical education were not consistent with a social reconstruction value orientation (Ennis, 1994). Instead of focusing on social reconstruction goals of social reform and students as change agents, teachers identified goals of cooperation, respect for others, and social responsibility as the principal social goals in their physical education programs. The VOI was revised in 1993 to replace the social reconstruction value orientation with the social responsibility value orientation (Ennis & Chen, 1993). The revised inventory, the VOI-2, used quotes and comments from teachers to design the inventory items and better reflects the physical education teachers' perspective on all value orientations.

The purpose of the current research was to describe physical educators' value orientations for curricular decision making in large, urban and in small, rural teaching settings. The significance of the study lies in the examination of teacher belief systems that determine, in part, critical aspects of the physical education curriculum. The diversity of teachers' value orientations reflects both the changing environments in schools and physical education and the evolving strategies that teachers are using currently to cope with and perform effectively within these environments. The results contribute to our information about teacher diversity that is useful for educational policy makers, instructional specialists, supervisors, teachers, and scholars.

## **Method**

### *Subjects*

All full-time physical education teachers (N = 620) in six school districts participated in the study. Data describing each school district is reported in Table 1. Rural districts A, B, and C enrolled between 11,000 and 19,000 students. Each district was located at least 40 miles from a major metropolitan area, and all towns within each district had less than 15,000 residents. Urban districts D, E, and F enrolled between 34,000 and 113,000 students. They consisted of districts

that served major metropolitan areas. District physical education supervisors and teachers were informed of the purpose of the research and that their district's scores would become part of a VOI-2 data bank for research purposes.

**Table 1.** Descriptive data for school districts

Location	School district	Student enrollment	Student racial diversity (%)				
			African American	Asian American	Caucasian	Hispanic American	Native American
Rural	A	11,209	2.4	0.6	96.7	0.02	0.001
	B	18,701	5.4	1.1	92.6	0.9	0.04
	C	17,389	14.1	6.5	77.9	1.4	0.1
Urban	D	34,846	11.6	0.2	84.5	0.2	0.001
	E	48,126	20.9	5.1	62.8	9.2	1.9
	F	113,400	68.9	4.2	21.9	4.6	0.4

### *Data Collection*

Representatives of school districts (e.g., instructional specialists, supervisors, or teachers) attended one of two presentations given by the first author describing physical education value orientations. One presentation was given at the Maryland State Department of Education Briefing for school district physical education supervisors in April 1992. The second presentation was given at the annual conference of the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance in Washington, DC, in April 1993. Both presentations described the value orientations and provided results from VOI research. An effort was made to interpret the results meaningfully for physical education supervisors. In other words, specific suggestions were made for better understanding of teacher goals and facilitating teachers' efforts within each perspective. Examples were given of how the VOI data had been used to design in-service presentations to reflect both the priority and the diversity within particular school districts.

At the completion of the presentations, 14 supervisors indicated an interest in obtaining information about their teachers' value orientations. An introductory letter and a sample VOI were sent to these supervisors within one week of each presentation (six in Maryland and eight nationally). Physical educators in four school districts in Maryland and two nationally completed the VOI-2 within 6 months of the introductory presentations.

### *The Revised Value Orientation Inventory (VOI-2)*

The revised VOI (Ennis & Chen, 1993), the VOI-2, is a 90-item instrument specifically designed to examine the value orientations of physical educators. Each item reflects goals and objectives for physical education within one of the five orientations. There are 18 items in each value orientation subscale. Alpha coefficients for the subscales range from .65 to .82. Teachers rank items reflecting each of the five orientations using a 5-point Likert-type scale (5 = *highest priority*; 1 = *lowest priority*). Composite scores of item rankings are presented for each value orientation. The teacher's value profile includes one score for each orientation (Ennis & Zhu, 1991). Priority is based on a 0.6 standard deviation above or below the mean. In other words, scores of 0.6 standard deviation above the mean of the value orientation reflect a high priority,

while those of 0.6 standard deviation below the mean reflect a low priority. Teachers must rank items consistently across the 18-item sets to achieve a high or low priority score.

### *Data Analysis*

Data were analyzed descriptively for each value orientation. Value profiles for each teacher, graphs of school district means, and the percentage of teachers placing a high priority for each orientation were used to describe the sample. This information, with detailed written explanations, was returned to the school districts.

Data were analyzed statistically using a full-design and a nested MANOVA model. Because of the interrelated nature of the value orientations, the full MANOVA factorial design was used with the value orientations as dependent variables and respondents' characteristics as factors to examine the interaction and main effects of the independent variables on value orientations. The independent variables included in the analysis were school location (urban/rural), teaching level (elementary/middle/high schools), years of teaching experience (< 10/10-20/> 20), and gender. Race was dropped as a factor because the number of minority teachers was small (< 11%) and would produce empty cells in the MANOVA distorting the results (Freund, 1980). Teaching level was selected as an independent variable because of the differences in curriculum philosophy and content between elementary, middle, and high school programs. Teaching experience also is a critical consideration because teachers' value orientations are forming during the first 10 years of their careers. Value orientations of teachers with 10 to 20 years of teaching experience appear to be more stable and less susceptible to change. Veteran teachers with > 20 years of teaching have a firmly established value profile and are often unwilling or unable to change. Gender was included as a variable because of the historical differences in programs designed separately for males and females. Many teachers in this sample were educated within a men's or women's physical education program, and thus may have different belief structures consistent with their educational training.

The use of a nested MANOVA model allowed the researchers to examine simultaneously the effects of teachers' characteristics on their value orientation priorities in terms of their different educational settings (urban/rural). The interaction effect in a full-design MANOVA, however, may not necessarily reflect the parallel hierarchical (urban/rural) nature of the data. Therefore, based on the theoretical framework guiding this study, a nested MANOVA model was used to examine the impact of different school locations on teachers' value orientations. Univariate follow-up and Scheffe post-hoc analyses were performed to determine which value orientations were different between levels of independent variables found to be significant in main and interaction effects.

## **Results**

### *Descriptions of Teachers' Value Orientations*

A response rate of 79.84% (495/620) was achieved for the sample (school district response rates: A = 86%, B = 84%, C = 88%, D = 79%, E = 59%, and F = 83%). The demographic characteristics of teachers who completed the VOI-2 are described in Table 2. Teachers

represented elementary ( $n = 179$ ; 37.5%), middle ( $n = 179$ ; 37.5%), and high school ( $n = 119$ ; 24.6%) teaching levels. Respondents were equally divided between males ( $n = 239$ ; 50.42%) and females ( $n = 235$ ; 49.58%). Twenty-four percent ( $n = 110$ ) had been teaching for less than 10 years, while 27.2% ( $n = 127$ ) and 49.3% ( $n = 230$ ) had taught for 10-20 years and more than 20 years, respectively. More than 88% ( $n = 420$ ) of the teachers who completed the inventory were Caucasian, while the remainder were African American ( $n = 50$ ; 10.5%) and representatives of other minorities, primarily Hispanic and Asian Americans ( $n = 2$ ; < 0.5%).

**Table 2.** Teachers' demographic data by value orientation

Variable	$n^a$	DM		LP		SA		EI		SR		
		$M$	$SD$	$M$	$SD$	$M$	$SD$	$M$	$SD$	$M$	$SD$	
Location												
Urban	295	55.82	11.25	51.81	8.79	52.84	8.25	50.22	7.28	59.39	11.10	
Rural	186	57.85	11.52	54.67	8.9	51.40	7.99	49.58	7.06	56.63	10.73	
Teaching level												
Elementary	179	55.41	11.53	54.03	9.36	52.37	7.79	48.45	7.2	59.87	11.54	
Middle	179	57.42	11.18	53.00	8.47	50.48	7.79	50.60	6.88	58.50	10.73	
High	119	57.21	11.54	50.97	8.69	54.84	8.67	51.44	7.0	55.75	10.47	
Teaching experience												
< 10 years	110	56.96	11.97	53.26	9.17	51.12	8.19	48.76	6.81	60.11	11.54	
10–20 years	127	56.18	11.67	52.16	8.67	52.56	8.01	49.95	6.9	59.16	10.54	
> 20 years	230	56.69	10.85	53.08	8.95	52.71	8.32	50.74	7.35	56.88	10.84	
Gender												
Female	235	56.65	11.65	53.77	9.33	52.14	8.25	49.52	6.93	58.04	10.6	
Male	239	56.53	11.21	51.95	8.48	52.4	8.17	50.44	7.28	58.78	11.49	
Ethnicity												
Minorities	52	58.9	10.93	52.37	9.43	52.12	9.83	50.42	7.07	56.23	10.29	
White	420	56.3	11.45	52.94	8.91	52.33	7.99	49.93	7.16	58.62	11.11	

*Note.* DM = disciplinary mastery; LP = learning process; SA = self-actualization; EI = ecological integration; SR = social responsibility.

<sup>a</sup>  $N = 495$ ; Missing cases for Location = 14, Teaching level = 18, Teaching experience = 28, Gender = 21, and Ethnicity = 23.

Of particular interest to the school district physical education supervisors was the frequency of teachers who placed a high priority on each of the orientations. These data provided an overview of teacher priority useful in planning teacher-supervisor conferences and in-service presentations. Figure 1 presents an overview of the frequency of high priority orientations for the sample. Social responsibility (SR) was the orientation with the highest frequency of teachers who placed it as a high priority (26.5%). All orientations were placed as a high priority by at least 20% of the teachers. There were no significant differences between the frequency of teacher preferences in each of the value orientations.

**FIGURE 1 OMITTED FROM THIS FORMATTED DOCUMENT.**

**Figure 1.** Percentage of all teachers with a high priority in each value orientation on the revised Value Orientation Inventory (VOI-2). DM = disciplinary mastery; LP = learning process; SA = self-actualization; EI = ecological integration; SR = social responsibility.

When the data were disaggregated by school district, preferences of teachers within each district (A, B, and C = rural; D, E, and F = urban) became evident. Data presented in Figure 2 indicates

that 47% of the teachers in rural district B placed a high priority on the disciplinary mastery (DM) orientation. Conversely, 48.3% of the teachers in urban district E placed a high priority on the self-actualization (SA) orientation and 45.7% of the teachers in urban district D placed a high priority on the SR orientation.

**FIGURE 2 OMITTED FROM THIS FORMATTED DOCUMENT.**

**Figure 2.** Percentage of teachers with a high priority in each value orientation on the revised Value Orientation Inventory (VOI-2) disaggregated by school district. School districts A, B, and C are rural; D, E, and F are urban. DM = disciplinary mastery; LP = learning process; SA = self-actualization; EI = ecological integration; SR = social responsibility.

*VOI-2 Data*

The alpha reliabilities were DM = .82, learning process (LP) = .75, SA = .69, ecological integration (EI) = .65, and SR = .80. The overall alpha for the 90-item VOI-2 was .80.

The correlation matrix for the VOI-2 data reported in Table 3 indicated a significant moderate correlation (.37) between the DM and LP orientations. A slightly stronger correlation between these orientations had been identified in research using the original VOI (.49: Ennis & Zhu, 1991; .48: Ennis, Chen, & Ross, 1992). The common emphasis on the knowledge base in these two orientations may explain this relationship. Moderate, negative correlations were found between DM and SA (-.55), DM and EI (-.38), and DM and SR (-.57). Low-to-moderate, negative correlations were found between LP and SA (-.40), LP and EI (-.38), and LP and SR (-.53). This suggests that the knowledge base and the affective orientations have an inverse relationship. Self-actualization, EI, and SR had low correlations with each other suggesting the independence of these orientations in curricular decision making.

**Table 3.** Correlation matrix for value orientations ( $N = 495$ )

Value orientation	LP	SA	EI	SR
DM	.37*	-.55*	-.38*	.57*
LP	—	-.40*	-.38*	-.53*
SA	—	—	.24*	.17*
EI	—	—	—	.04

*Note.* DM = disciplinary mastery; LP = learning process; SA = self-actualization; EI = ecological integration; SR = social responsibility.

\*  $p < .001$ .

*Effects of Teachers' Characteristics*

The results of the covariance homogeneity test for the data indicated that the assumption of homogeneity of covariance for MANOVA was violated, Box's  $M = 1,404.12$ ,  $F(150, 8047) = 1.54$ ,  $p < .01$ . Therefore, the Pillai's Trace statistic was used in the MANOVA analysis because it provides a robust criterion when homogeneity of covariance in the data has been violated and still maintains the power to detect existing differences (Olson, 1976).

There were no factorial interaction effects on teachers' value priorities. Main effect analysis indicated that physical educators teaching in different school locations (urban/rural),  $F(1, 409) =$

4.66,  $p < .001$ , and at different levels (elementary/middle/high schools),  $F(2, 409) = 3.57$ ,  $p < .001$ , demonstrated different value priorities.

Univariate follow-up and Scheffe post-hoc analyses were conducted to identify specific differences in teachers' value orientation priorities. Results indicated that urban and rural teachers' value priorities differed on the DM, LP, SA, and SR value orientations. Teachers in urban school districts placed a higher priority on the SR and SA value orientations than did teachers in rural school districts. Conversely, teachers in rural schools placed a higher priority on the DM and LP value orientations than did their colleagues in urban schools. Teachers at different teaching levels differed on the EI and SR value orientations. Elementary teachers placed a higher priority on the SR value orientation than did high school teachers. Middle and high school teachers placed a higher priority on the EI value orientation than did elementary teachers. Means and standard deviations for all variables by school location and teaching levels can be found in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Multiple comparison by location and teaching level

Variable	$n^a$	DM $M$ ( $SD$ )	LP $M$ ( $SD$ )	SA $M$ ( $SD$ )	EI $M$ ( $SD$ )	SR $M$ ( $SD$ )
Location						
Urban/Rural	295/186	55.82/57.87* (11.25/11.52)	51.81/54.67* (8.79/8.9)	52.84/51.4* (8.25/7.99)	50.22/49.58 (7.28/7.06)	59.39/56.63* (11.10/10.73)
Teaching level						
Elementary/Middle	179/179	55.41/57.42 (11.53/11.18)	54.03/53.00 (9.36/8.47)	52.37/50.48 (7.79/7.79)	48.45/50.6* (7.20/6.88)	59.87/58.50 (11.54/10.73)
Middle/High	179/119	57.42/57.21 (11.18/11.54)	53.00/50.97 (8.47/8.69)	50.48/54.84 (7.79/8.67)	50.60/51.44 (6.88/7.0)	58.50/55.75 (10.73/10.47)
Elementary/High	179/119	55.41/57.21 (11.53/11.54)	54.03/50.97 (9.36/8.69)	52.37/54.84 (7.79/8.67)	48.45/51.44* (7.2/7.0)	59.87/55.75* (11.54/10.47)

*Note.* DM = disciplinary mastery; LP = learning process; SA = self-actualization; EI = ecological integration; SR = social responsibility.

<sup>a</sup>  $N = 495$ ; Missing cases for Location = 14 and Teaching level = 18.

\*  $p < .05$ .

*Value Orientation Differences Between Urban and Rural Teachers (Nested MANOVA Results)*

The MANOVA nested analysis permitted a parallel examination of the effects of teacher characteristics on their value priorities (e.g., comparing urban male with rural male, urban high school with rural high school). Results indicated that no significant differences were found when comparing value orientations of urban and rural teachers with the same gender,  $F(2, 409) = 1.15$ ,  $p = .325$ , and years of teaching experience,  $F(4, 409) = 1.23$ ,  $p = .219$ . However, a significant difference was identified in the value orientations with teaching level,  $F(4, 409) = 3.96$ ,  $p < .001$ . The results of a follow-up analysis indicated that urban elementary and high school teachers placed a higher priority on the SA value orientation than did their rural colleagues. Urban middle school teachers placed a higher priority on the SR value orientation than did their rural counterparts. Rural middle and high school teachers placed a higher priority on the LP value orientation than did their urban colleagues. Table 5 depicts the means and standard deviations for the value orientations stemming from these significant effects.

**Table 5.** Parallel comparison by teaching level and location

Teaching level	<i>n</i> <sup>a</sup>	DM <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	LP <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	SA <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	EI <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	SR <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )
Elementary						
Urban/Rural	104/75	54.28/56.99 (11.29/12.15)	52.91/55.57 (9.30/9.54)	53.23/51.51* (7.41/7.95)	48.85/47.88 (7.24/6.98)	60.75/58.64 (11.79/11.19)
Middle						
Urban/Rural	119/60	57.12/58.03 (11.36/10.82)	52.10/54.78** (8.03/9.24)	50.09/51.25 (7.29/8.30)	50.49/50.82 (6.66/7.0)	60.13/55.23** (10.70/9.85)
High						
Urban/Rural	68/51	55.94/58.9 (11.27*11.93)	49.27/53.20** (9.28/7.66)	57.02/51.94** (7.92/7.89)	52.08/50.61 (7.51/6.28)	56.06/55.35 (11.04/10.49)

*Note.* DM = disciplinary mastery; LP = learning process; SA = self-actualization; EI = ecological integration; SR = social responsibility.

<sup>a</sup> *N* = 495; Missing cases for Teaching level = 18.

\* *p* < .05. \*\* *p* < .01.

## Discussion

Results from this study indicate that there were differences in the way that rural and urban physical educators at different grade levels conceptualized their goals for physical education. Urban teachers placed a higher priority on social responsibility and self-actualization orientations than did rural teachers, while rural teachers valued disciplinary mastery and learning process orientations more than their urban colleagues. In other words, urban teachers placed a higher priority on affective curriculum goals associated with cooperation, respect for others, self-efficacy, and self-concept than did rural teachers. Rural teachers indicated a stronger emphasis on knowledge-based goals associated with the development of skills and fitness content.

These findings suggest that the school context is influential in teachers' curricular decision making. Talbert, McLaughlin, and Rowan (1993) defined context as the environments or conditions in which teachers work. These can include the school, subject area, department, teaching level, or district. Although each school or district represents a unique combination of context effects (values, beliefs, norms, policies, structures), there appears to be some common characteristics that shape similar educational beliefs.

Students in rural areas may not experience the level of violence and crime experienced by urban neighbors (National School Boards Association, 1993). Rural students are more likely to sit quietly, listen to the teacher, follow directions, and work cooperatively with others. Physical educators in rural areas are more likely to select content that utilizes these skills to learn knowledge-based information about skills, sport, and fitness. Although teachers must interact with difficult students, the number of disruptive students and the frequency and intensity of disruptions are less frequent in rural schools than in urban schools (National School Boards Association, 1993).

Students and teachers who attend and work in urban schools are subject to increasing levels of violence in the form of student fighting, outside intruders, and weapons in schools (National School Boards Association, 1993). Students, both Black and White, who experience "severe and enduring educational difficulties are the ones with little or no money, who most often live in neighborhoods with high concentrations of other poor families" (Strickland & Ascher, 1992, p. 609). Approximately 60% of all African Americans live in urban areas. This is a higher percentage than any other ethnic group (Bureau of the Census, 1987). Within urban areas, one of every two Black children is poor, while two thirds of single-parent Black families live in poverty (National Black Child Development Institute, 1989).

Urban physical educators teach disproportionately large numbers of poor African American students. They often work in schools where violence, confrontation, and student resistance to traditional curricula present major barriers to educational programming (Kovaleski & Wheeler, 1994). In the present study, physical educators in urban elementary and high schools placed a higher priority on student-centered curriculum goals associated with self-actualization than did their colleagues in rural areas. Curricula based on self-actualization use movement, sport, and fitness content to help students develop a positive self-concept. Urban middle school physical educators placed a high priority on social responsibility. They may have designed their physical education programs to assist their students to use sport to teach positive social interaction skills. Advocates of this orientation teach students to work together as a group or team and resolve conflicts verbally rather than physically.

In this study, middle and high school physical educators in rural school districts placed a high priority on learning process skills in their physical education curriculum. Advocates of this orientation typically use sport and exercise content to create problem-solving situations in which students apply the body of knowledge in physical education to solve real problems they find relevant and meaningful. Learning process curricula often require students to follow directions, work independently, and use critical thinking skills, such as problem framing, knowledge retrieval, and experimentation, to identify solutions. Teachers may perceive the knowledge-oriented or the affective-oriented value orientations as consistent or inconsistent with particular teaching contexts. In urban schools, teachers may be using a self-actualization or a social responsibility curriculum to provide the personal guidance and social skills they perceive many students need (Strickland & Ascher, 1992). The knowledge base is used as a means to the end of building self-esteem, self-efficacy, cooperation, and respect for others.

Teachers in urban locations selected affective rather than knowledge-based goals for their students, many of whom were African American. An alternative reading of these findings might conclude that urban teachers may be racist in their selection of curriculum goals for physical education because they deprive Black students of the opportunity to learn important skills taught in knowledge-based content. This interpretation assumes that knowledge-based content is the content of most worth for all students, including poor, Black children. Failure to provide the opportunity for these children to learn skills, sport, and fitness content is limiting the opportunities of one particular ethnic group and, therefore, is racist. This interpretation of the data values or places a high priority on the disciplinary mastery value perspective.

Advocates of other value perspectives argue for alternative approaches to curriculum that often reflect affective value perspectives. In this research sample, only 25% and 24% of the teachers placed a high priority on disciplinary mastery and learning process orientations, respectively. This suggests that many teachers in both urban and rural locations did not place the highest priority on knowledge-based value orientations. Discussions with teachers in the affective orientations (Ennis, 1994) suggest that they believe their students can learn skills, sport, and fitness activities outside of school, but depend on the school to teach skills such as cooperation, respect, and personal and social responsibility. Many of these teachers place a high priority on the affective orientations because they believe they are most important for students and not because they feel students are unable or unwilling to learn knowledge-based content.

Research with urban teachers (Ennis, in press) suggests that some believe they are unable to teach curriculum with an emphasis on skills and fitness. These teachers argue that students cannot or will not conform to the learning behaviors required to learn knowledge-based content. Critics (e.g., Bain, 1988) argue that curricula based on a disciplinary mastery orientation may not address the needs of African American students. Instead, they reflect a White, male, middle-class perspective on physical education. In this alternative reading, the disciplinary mastery perspective may be problematic for ethnic-minority students. Advocates of this perspective argue that affective approaches to curricula, such as those found in a self-actualization or social responsibility perspective, are more consistent with the learning preferences of some minority students.

In summary, teachers in urban and rural schools placed different priorities on content goals associated with value orientations. When teachers have different values and beliefs, students appear to experience different educational opportunities. It is likely that some of these differences (in both values and opportunities) also reflect the context and teaching level in which the teacher works. These results suggest that teachers have shaped their curricula to respond to the characteristics of their school and to address the specific needs of their students. In each instance, curriculum is developed within a particular context and reflects the opportunities and constraints within the community and the school setting.

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