

Teachers' Responses to Noncompliant Students: The Realities and Consequences of a Negotiated Curriculum

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Abstract:

This research examined the context in urban high school physical education classes that influenced 10 teachers' conceptualizations of realistic educational goals for their students. Ethnographic data in the form of field notes and interviews were analyzed using constant comparison. Teachers reported that many students were unwilling to participate and were becoming progressively more difficult to teach. Teachers actively sought explanations for this behavior both in the students' backgrounds and their lack of interest in school. They identified inconsistencies between the school's educational mission and the students' aspirations for the future. Teachers reported substantial changes in their programs over their careers. Although they had begun their careers teaching skills and other knowledge-based curricula, the diversity and difficulties associated with teaching urban students had forced them to move from a curriculum of skills to a "curriculum" of motivation and order. Many of these programs exhibited characteristics of an elitist, discriminatory, and decontextual approach to curriculum.

Article:

Historically, urban public schools in the U.S.A. have been designed to educate and assimilate large numbers of students from diverse backgrounds into an eclectic culture described as "American" (Kantor & Brenzel, 1992). They have met this challenge with some measure of success (Metz, 1978). The majority of students have moved through the educational system, received a diploma, and found some form of employment. Today, however, urban school personnel are required to teach students in antiquated facilities, with minimal staff development, and decreasing budgets. The public and private sectors are intensifying their focus on schools as the place where low income, minority students are educated, remediated when necessary, and provided with the services and emotional support that their families may be unable or unwilling to provide.

In the current atmosphere of mounting social violence and concomitant pressures to address a perceived deterioration in society, the initial reaction is to blame someone else for social problems. In many urban school districts, this response may preserve the self-respect of some school personnel, but probably does little to improve the relevance of education for students. Like many politicians, bureaucrats, and private citizens, school personnel are overwhelmed with the complexity and magnitude of the social problems facing urban neighborhoods and communities. The reality of poverty for many low-income students is often limited access to supportive adults and limited opportunities to experience innovative, challenging curricula. Students also may not have access to an environment with high expectations for well-paying, meaningful employment (Kantor & Brenzel, 1992; Page, 1990).

Often the anger and hopelessness of this situation is brought to school and manifest in student behavior. Students may not see concrete connections between the educational system and the promise of economic security and social mobility (Brantlinger, 1991). Although many students accept the connection between a high school diploma and future employment, they are less sure of the long-term value of the academic knowledge and skills instrumental to graduation (Erickson & Schultz, 1992; Fine, 1991, 1993).

Teachers may see the student as one of a steady stream of individuals who enters and exits their classes (Powell, Farrer, & Cohen, 1985). They find increasing numbers of students who are difficult to motivate and engage in education (Wehlage, Rutter, Smith, Lesko, & Fernandez, 1989). Teachers may become less interested and motivated to reach students who appear increasingly more distant and unteachable. As teachers adjust to some students' diminished educational expectations, they, in turn, may lower their expectations for their own teaching and design of the educational process. Traditionally, students have listened, followed directions, and participated in school tasks because they acknowledged and accepted (at least to some extent) the notion that education would prepare them for a future that was interesting and rewarding. Currently, however, teachers report that increasing numbers of low income, minority students, many of whom are African-American, are uninterested in education and are unmotivated to participate in more than the social aspects of school. They perceive school as a social gathering; a place in which to find companionship and perhaps a spouse (Peshkin & White, 1990).

Student disinterest, at times, is manifest as noncompliance. Noncompliance is demonstrated in a persistent unwillingness to participate in managerial and educational tasks. Students may choose not to comply by simply ignoring teacher directions, school rules, and policies. They may refuse to engage in educational activities or, in more difficult cases, verbally or physically confront teachers and administrators.

The context of schools and classrooms in which teachers and students work is viewed as a pivotal factor in the success of educational programs. Context can be defined as

any of the diverse and multiple environments or conditions that intersect with the work of teachers and teaching.... The term *context effects* implies the influence of particular context conditions—values, beliefs, norms, policies, structures, resources, and processes—on teaching practice and, in turn, students' educational outcomes. (Talbert, McLaughlin, & Rowan, 1993, p. 46).

Most school contexts are unique combinations of factors that reflect the values and beliefs of the participants and influence their perspectives on education. In urban high schools, contexts reflect the diversity of neighborhoods, ethnic cultures, and personal beliefs. Although diversity has always been part of the context of urban American high schools (Kliebard, 1987), it continues to present a challenge to school personnel and to the communities that support their efforts.

Physical educators, like teachers of other subject matter, face these situations when attempting to teach in urban schools. While some educators may disregard the importance of physical education within the hierarchy of school subject areas, physical educators' perspectives reflect many of the same concerns voiced in other disciplines (e.g., Fine, 1991). Traditionally, physical education has been an area in which many students have experienced enjoyment while learning. Some students disenfranchised in traditional academic classrooms have found a safe haven where they could excel. Currently, however, it appears that physical educators in urban schools are experiencing many of the same problems with student noncompliance as teachers in traditional academic areas.

Physical educators seem unprepared to reflect on the reasons for student noncompliance, instead blaming students and administrators for disinterest and nonsupport. Because textbooks are rarely used in physical education, teachers control most of the curricular decisions in their classes. Thus, in theory, they can make content adjustments and changes to respond to student characteristics and the social context more easily than teachers in other subjects. In reality, teachers' willingness to equate student noncompliance with curriculum content and their own expertise limits their opportunities to respond to the perceived crisis. In this research I examined physical education teachers' perceptions of events in the gymnasium associated with student motivation and willingness to participate. Two research questions guided the study: How did teachers explain student noncompliance in their classes? and To what extent and in what ways did teachers change their curricula to respond to student noncompliance?

Methods

Setting and Participants

This research was conducted in 10 urban high schools in a metropolitan area in the eastern U.S.A. These schools were selected because they enrolled a high percentage of ethnic minority students who were taught by predominately European-American teachers. This juxtaposition of minority students and majority teachers is prevalent in many urban school districts. This scenario presents particular challenges to both teachers and students in their ability and willingness to frame a positive working relationship. Students were bused to achieve racial balance. The enrollment included African-American (69%), Hispanic (5%), Asian (4%), and European-American (22%) students. The school district enrolled approximately 110,000 students, most of whom lived in lower to middle class families. The majority of the teachers in the school district were European-American (80%). The 10 teachers who participated in the study were experienced, though probably not expert. Years of teaching experience ranged from 18 to 34 years ($M = 25.9$ years). Four teachers were African-American (2 males and 2 female). Five teachers were female. Five teachers reported they had worked at their school since it had opened in the mid-1960s. Six teachers lived in the school district, while the remainder lived in surrounding suburban areas.

The district had been operating under court-ordered desegregation since 1972. It used a highly developed magnet school program at elementary, middle, and high schools to entice European-American and high-ability students to travel voluntarily to minority and low-income areas of the district. By 1993, when these data were collected, most students bused to schools outside their neighborhood were African-American. Minority enrollments at many schools in the district were greater than 75 % with some school enrollments approaching 98 % African-American. Schools that reported minority populations in excess of 95 % African-American received supplemental funding for additional personnel, instructional materials, and computers under a special judicial agreement. Four of the 10 schools in this study fell in this category.

I requested entrance to these schools to examine the content and teaching methods used in urban physical education programs. Teachers indicated they were coping with serious problems of student noncompliance and verbally expressed their hope that my findings would encourage administrators to be more openly supportive of physical education. Teachers perceived that I was an ally who both could understand their predicament and could be influential in procuring much needed resources in the form of additional teachers and equipment.

Data Collection and Analysis

I observed and took field notes using procedures described by LeCompte and Priessle (1993) in each teacher's classes for approximately 20 hours over a 6-week period. Observations were conducted in classes that teachers considered to be their "best, average, and most difficult." Field notes focused on describing the curriculum, daily management routines, and student behaviors in these classes. I also described administrative policies and examined their apparent effects on the programs. I have worked in this school district (although not in these 10 schools) for the last 5 years collecting ethnographic data and providing staff development workshops. I was aware that some teachers were working very hard to provide a positive learning environment for students. Others, however, appeared to have lost interest and energy and were simply going through the motions. They did not structure the environment for learning, instead, permitting open recreation activities that were not consistent with efforts to create quality physical education programs. Both the engaged teachers and the less motivated teachers were included in this sample. Their programs reflected a continuum of quality that may be typical in many school districts. An effort was made to present and interpret the perspectives of each teacher and to understand their work context and the rationale for their level of engagement.

I interviewed teachers on three separate occasions: during the observation period, at the conclusion of the observation, and 2 months following the last observation. Concrete references to situations observed in the teachers' classes formed the basis for the interview questions. Interviews were semistructured to include both demographic information and teachers' perceptions of events and rationales for specific content selection. Because most teachers had been employed in the district prior to desegregation, I asked them to reflect on changes that had occurred over the 21-year period (1972—1993). Specifically, I asked about changes to

curriculum content and organization, teaching strategies, and student characteristics. As differences were identified, I asked follow-up questions to examine teachers' perspectives and concerns regarding these issues. Probing questions were used to encourage teachers to assess their own effectiveness and to reflect on their successes and limitations. Interviews were audiotaped and transcribed for analysis.

I analyzed the data both during and following the data collection process. Field notes were reviewed using constant comparison for tentative assertions, common themes, and discrepancies (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). At the conclusion of the observation and second interviews, I wrote 10 case studies organizing the data into broad categories. Categories differed across high schools and demographic areas of the district. Participants reviewed their case studies and responded to additional questions in the third interview. Teachers were generally supportive of the factual and descriptive nature of the case studies, and encouraged me to develop a more evaluative perspective, particularly in regard to administrator support of physical education. To better understand my perspective, readers should know that I am an experienced curriculum teacher and physical education teacher educator. I have taught in public schools and universities in three regions of the U.S.A. I had applied to this school district as a first-year teacher in 1975; but had accepted a teaching position in a different school district. In 1975, this school district and its physical education programs were well known for their quality and touted for outstanding levels of student achievement. By 1993, both the school district and the physical education program were known publically to be struggling to educate a majority African-American population with limited resources and success. My subjectivity is evident in my concern for the teachers and students who work in urban high schools and in my interest in identifying contextual factors that promote or limit student learning in physical education.

Descriptions of Urban High School Physical Education

All 10 of the high school physical education programs I examined used a multiactivity approach to teach ninth-grade physical education and a single activity approach to structure elective classes. The physical education graduation requirement consisted of two semesters of daily physical education (50 minute class) at the time data were collected. The high school requirement has since decreased to one semester of daily physical education. This means that some students receive their last formal, structured opportunity to learn about and experience the benefits of active, healthy lifestyles as a first-year high school student at age 14.

My observations of students indicated that they were not involved in curricular decision-making in any of the classes. I observed that they occasionally were allowed to select team members or the station to begin working. Teachers rarely prepared lesson plans. They posted workouts for physical and weight training or tournament schedules on the wall. They told me that they relied on years of teaching the sport to know how to organize tasks and manage students.

Observations of 73 different classes identified several forms and degrees of noncompliance. Students appeared to use noncompliant strategies in most of the physical education classes, with more instances observed in the classes teachers identified as "average" and "most difficult." Salient examples were those in which students did not dress in their physical education uniforms (as required for participation by the district). Participation was higher in elective classes than in general physical education. More boys dressed during the basketball units than during volleyball or individual sport units. Girls dressing patterns also fluctuated depending on the activity. Most dressed for dance and physical training electives, while fewer girls dressed for sport activities that formed the basis for the general physical education classes.

Other forms of noncompliance occurred when enrolled, but nonparticipating, students roamed the gym during class and refused to sit on the bleachers. Unless the gym doors were locked during class, students who were not enrolled entered and exited the gym throughout the period despite repeated warnings from the teachers. A few students also "disappeared" on the walk outside to the athletic fields. They did not arrive at the field or came and left the field during the class period. A more subtle form of noncompliance was exhibited in the low energy levels of students who had dressed to participate. Except for boys enrolled in basketball and flag football, students rarely ran or jogged. They usually moved slowly to follow directions or to retrieve a ball. Teachers

rarely confronted students who were making an effort to comply, instead waited for them to move into position or to complete the directions.

At times, it appeared that students influenced the curriculum that was offered in these classes. There were certain activities in which students refused to dress or participate. For instance, when teachers attempted to provide instruction in skills associated with some sports, students either did not listen to the teachers' explanations or wandered around the gym or field until game play began. Traditional forms of direct instruction in physical education encourage teachers to provide demonstrations and skill instruction followed by drills that break the game into components to facilitate learning. Effective teachers are described as those who provide specific skill analysis and opportunities for students to participate in practice that is consistent with game or sport strategies. Many students in the observed classes refused to listen to the teachers' explanation or participate in drills to enhance skillfulness. They refused to get up from their seats when asked and ridiculed students who complied with teachers' directions. Teachers presented abbreviated versions of the demonstration and skill practice segments of the classes, moving quickly to game play. Traditionally, coached games or scrimmages provide opportunities to receive instruction as students participate in the game. Teachers stop the game frequently to explain player positioning and effective offensive and defensive strategies. In these classes, however, students refused to stop at the teachers' request. Instead, play continued until a goal was scored. Teachers then made an effort to offer suggestions, often with little student response.

Teachers expressed frustration with students and wrote reports of insubordination that were directed to administrators. Teachers indicated, however, that these reports were a waste of time because administrators were more concerned with "real" problems such as student fighting and use of weapons. Teachers also withheld activity from students by preventing them from participating in their favorite sports, such as basketball. This was also non-productive, because students wandered around the gym, verbally teasing and harassing students and teachers. Noncompliant behaviors, such as these, were evident to the teachers and a topic they discussed at length during the interviews.

Teachers' Rationales for Student Noncompliance

The teachers in this study reacted to the situation or context in which they taught. Over the years they had observed changes in their students and responded by modifying their goals for physical education. They explained that their students were becoming progressively more difficult to teach. Although some students simply dressed for participation less often and followed directions more slowly, others were noncompliant and confrontational. Teachers actively sought explanations for these behaviors both in the student's background and their lack of interest in school. Some teachers reported that they now expended less energy and were less motivated to care for and teach their students.

Teachers' rationales for student noncompliance primarily focused on lack of student motivation. They believed that many students did not care about education in general. Others explained students' lack of motivation as a product of living in dysfunctional families. They suggested that students who lacked emotional support were less likely to care about educational goals. Other teachers focused on the contrast between the schools' educational and physical education goals for students and the students' own aspirations for their future. They argued that a mismatch existed, resulting in student disengagement from school and from physical education. The teachers' rationales for student noncompliance placed the responsibility for engagement and learning with the student. Most were unwilling to accept responsibility for analyzing their teaching practices or curriculum. By deflecting the problems in this way, they insulated themselves from issues of accountability for designing and teaching a meaningful curriculum.

Students' Lack of Interest in the Educational Process

Every teacher I interviewed expressed concerns that increasing numbers of students were generally not interested in school or not interested in participating in physical education. They described how student interest had declined in the last 5-10 years. This was especially disconcerting to them because physical education teaching positions were assigned based on student enrollment. As teachers retired, new teachers were not hired

to energize the program. When enrollments dropped substantially, physical educators certified to teach grades K-12, were reassigned to elementary or middle school programs. Teachers reported that with the advent of the magnet school program, the academically advanced students had transferred to magnet programs, leaving a vacuum of student leadership and positive role models in comprehensive (non-magnet) high schools. Cynthia Lawrence' described the situation at her school:

It's just that the general attitude of the students has changed to not caring, for the teachers or the school, or themselves. The ones who do are a minority and they don't have any influence. The positive leaders of the school don't have any influence on the rest. We have a lot more negative leaders they are willing to follow.

Cynthia explained that her teaching had gradually deteriorated since 1972, with the greatest decline in the last 10 years:

We used to group students, teach skills, get into the game, run tournaments, the whole deal. Now, if you want any success at all, it's on a one to one basis. There is no way I can work in groups. Their attention span is so short. I can't sit them down for any length of time to introduce any skills. To give them a task to do on their own, they may last a minute and then they'll be off playing. You can't teach anymore. They don't have the attention span. They just don't want to learn anymore. What can you do?

She reported that she could no longer find ways to control and motivate students using traditional team sport units in her girls' physical education classes. Part of this she reasoned was associated with students' lack of concern for grades. She reported that most girls did not focus on how education could help create a better future, instead they focused on their present situations:

The girls aren't inclined to play anything. Once it starts getting hot, up into the 80s, we won't go out at all because they can't take the heat. They'll just not do anything. Right now, I can get them to run the track, ...let me rephrase that, walk the track. Some will play tennis, some volleyball, that's about it. But a good number will decide that they won't do anything. They just go and sit. They know it reflects on the grade, but they don't care about that so much. They don't worry about spending an extra year in school. There is really no difference between an A and a D. If they pass, that's great. That's all a lot of them really want to do. A lot of them have jobs; a lot of them have babies, so sometimes they're absent because the baby's sick, or they're tired from being up all night.

Mac Stewart also reported problems in motivating students to become involved in traditional physical activity. He revealed the emotional strain it placed on him:

I have 200 students in a day. That is a lot of kids to deal with. Even if only half of them have a problem during the day, that is still a hundred kids, kids that come late, forget their uniform, can't remember their [locker] combination, talk when you are talking. That gets to you by the end of the day. You feel that you are spending a lot less time teaching. You are spending a lot less time doing the things you enjoy, the reason that you came into this field in the first place.

Four teachers explained students' lack of motivation as the manifestation of personal needs that were not being met in their homes or communities. In essence they said, students don't care because they are not cared for. Ben Jordan described the background of students in his school:

It used to be children came from families that at least gave the outward impression of being intact in terms of giving their kids enough emotional support that they could come to school and do the best they could do. Now I feel the kids who come to this school are isolated from the networks that have stabilized their lives in the past.

Gloria Evans linked students' lack of caring with their generally low self-esteem. She explained that students need to be cared for within the class. She reported several instances in which teachers were taking the place of parents for some students:

Right now we should be teaching and we are not teaching. We are disciplining. Right now we should be teaching skills, the fundamentals. Not only that, but self-esteem. A lot of kids don't have self-esteem. They don't even know who they are. They are just here, and I don't think they have someone to tell them how much they love them. That's what they are looking for. You would be surprised how many come to you and put their hands on you. They want you to touch them and tell them something, something good. They don't get that at home.

These teachers suggested that they were trying to continue to care for their students as well as care about the extent to which they complied with class and school policies. Noddings (1984) suggested that schools must assist teachers to focus on the interpersonal relationships that effective teachers have always been able to develop with students. This is especially difficult as class sizes increase and as students' cultural backgrounds are different from their teachers. In this study, a few teachers realized the importance of caring for their students as suggested by Ben Jordan's comment:

I want the kids to come and talk to me. I want them to know that there is someone here who cares about them. I care about kids and that's why I'm here. I do the very best I can with what I have. But I don't have a set [lesson] plan. I have a unit plan. I have a quarter plan. I know what I want to achieve, but I don't get upset if I don't get it done. Before, I used to push the panic button. There is hardly ever a day that we have a normal school day here. There are so many interruptions. You can't teach a regular curriculum in a situation like this.

Some teachers expressed amazement at the extent to which their jobs had changed over their careers. The energy and effort necessary to care for students had become more time consuming:

I am also teaching things that I thought I would never have to be involved in. I am teaching manners now. I am teaching youngsters that when you ask for something you respond with a thank you. Of if someone is talking, you don't just butt in. These are things that I never dreamed that I would have to do. I am teaching hygiene more than I ever did. I find that even with my boys, it is necessary to take them aside and give them a little bag of soap, toothpaste, and deodorant. I have never had to do this before.

Inconsistency Between the Schools' Educational Mission and the Students' Aspirations

Other teachers argued that the school's educational purpose was different from some students' goals. They perceived that the primary mission of the school was to educate students in the traditional knowledge of the subject area. Teachers explained that it was their responsibility to teach students to play a variety of sports, just as it was the English teachers' job to teach students to speak and write correctly. However, they perceived that their students did not want this knowledge. Instead, they believed that students used the school and physical education class as a social club where they could meet friends and develop relationships. Gloria Evans explained this perspective:

The main issue that we see here is a disinterest or a lack of understanding of what school is for. Some see it as totally a social environment. They are here for girlfriends and boyfriends, parties and having a good time. School and learning are not a part of their lives except to provide a place to meet socially. Discipline is definitely lax. Students do not know limits. I spend most of my day in the class with discipline, trying to set limits and boundaries.

Angela Johns and Mac Stewart echoed this sentiment:

They are very self-centered, looking out for themselves. Whatever they can get, however they can get it. The girls care a lot about boyfriends and babies. That is their whole life, I think. They live for the present. You don't hear too much talk about going on to further their education, wanting to be somebody. I don't think they see a future for themselves. This reflects in everything they do. (Angela Johns)

We did a lot more activity in the past than we do presently, because the students were teachable. We had goals, we had written assignments. We had a better curriculum. Now, in order to get them to do things you are almost beating your head against the wall because they want to do what they want to do. If it is badminton, which isn't one of their fancies, they want to play basketball or football. Then you almost have to change your whole attitude to accommodate them. Just make it easier on the whole entire environment. (Mac Stewart)

Noncompliance with Authority

My observations of these classes and the teachers' comments indicate that teachers were unwilling to accept responsibility for students' lack of interest and involvement in their programs. The multiactivity skills and sport curriculum with its preoccupations with regimented drill did not appear to be interesting to these students. The focus on the disciplinary knowledge base of sport as the primary focus for physical education was not meaningful to some students. Sport was associated with recreational activities in which individuals established their status in neighborhood groups. It was not a viable school activity in which one received a grade or was denied promotion or graduation based on poor performance. Critics of this form of curriculum point to its roots in European, male, middle class sporting models of physical education and athletics (e.g., Bain, 1988; Fernandez-Balboa, 1993). Cooperative games in which individuals learned player positioning and teamwork through regimented drills and controlled games, reflects the sporting model developed in the U.K. and the Commonwealth Nations as well though the European heritage that dominates sport in the U.S.A. Although these models had great meaning for skilled males in single sex physical education, they appear to hold less interest for African-American and European-American women (Vertinsky, 1995).

Stinson (1993) suggests that students connect to content in which they can identify a sense of purpose and a feeling of affiliation and inclusion. Teachers observed in this study seemed unwilling to share ownership of the content with students. They felt threatened by students' questioning of their authority and worked to defend their actions. Instead, students established their ownership of the content by rejecting the teacher's directions. They transformed the rigid skill/drill format to a game in which dominant players (because of size or skill) controlled the speed and organization of the game. Further, they removed the content from the teachers' ownership, disavowing their moral authority to control the game and the physical education class.

Metz (1978) described a similar situation in recently desegregated junior high schools. She pointed out that some African-American students appeared to question the moral authority of the school to educate within a traditionally European-American curriculum and culture. She described moral authority as an authority given to an individual to carry out the policies and rules of the society. Authority entails the superordinates' right to command and the subordinate's duty to obey. Moral authority is intact in schools in which both the teacher and the student acknowledge the teacher's authority to teach knowledge and students' obligation to learn that knowledge.

Most teachers enter the teaching profession believing they have an obligation to contribute to the educational goals of the school. In most schools, however, goals are varied and diffuse, often leading to confusion for both teachers and students. Although school administrators state publicly that educational goals are at the forefront of their agenda, in daily operations they must have the cooperation and compliance of teachers and students to be successful. Secondary goals evolve from a need to maintain control. These focus on teaching students appropriate, interpersonal behaviors to permit them to learn within the present school structure. When students are unwilling to comply, however, managerial goals created to force compliance absorb energy and resources that would normally be focused on educational goals. Metz (1978, p. 17) explained that, "For schools, the most

difficult instrumental goal is the maintenance of order among the student body which is only half socialized, comes and remains by legal compulsion, and frequently includes persons with radically different educational and social expectations."

When students, as members of the society that creates and supports schools, question the moral authority of the teacher or school to select knowledge of most worth, then the integrity of the teaching and learning process is jeopardized. Often authority is enforced effectively because subordinates never seriously analyze the character of their own role or status in relation to their superordinates. In schools, for example, students usually accept the definition of curriculum supplied by the teacher and the school. They have been assigned the role of student and taught from an early age to comply with the expectations of this role and behave appropriately. When adolescents reach high school, they are more inclined to question the role that adults have assigned. In the best of circumstances they receive adult guidance to express cogent positions that contribute to their own developing sense of worth.

In situations in which students of color question both the role of adults in selecting the curriculum and the role of a predominantly European-American society in shaping educational goals and appropriate school behavior, students may follow one of two strategies (Metz, 1978). They may either become actively involved in school-sanctioned efforts to change the curriculum or disengage from the educational process because they perceive it to be inconsistent with their future goals. In the former situation, students confront teachers and educational goals when they feel they have a stake in the outcome. They understand the relationships between their own actions, the program or the policy, and their own welfare. In the later situation, they may continue to comply at a minimal level with minimal effort. In the process, student noncompliant behaviors may negatively shape teachers' perceptions of student motivation and ability, leading to limited efforts to maintain educational programs.

Burbules (1994) points out that legitimate teacher authority has clear limits. He suggests that teachers can exceed their authority by making arbitrary demands on students, allowing themselves privileges not available to students, or selecting topics because they are consistent with the teacher's interests and expertise (but inconsistent with those of students). Historically, teacher authority has been justified based on knowledge, status, age, and maturity. In the classes examined in this study, however, the moral authority of the teachers was placed in doubt by the noncompliant and at times rebellious behaviors of students. Burbules (1994) argues that teachers' authority has declined in recent years as their public status has diminished. Teachers often are required to earn the respect, support, and trust of students to create an environment for teaching in urban schools.

The perception that education provides an opportunity to better oneself is a fleeting hope for many poor and students of color. Students complain that they are unprepared for success on standardized achievement tests necessary for college or that, if accepted, they must take remedial courses to qualify for course work in academic majors. Ellsworth (1989) argues that teachers may no longer have any legitimate claim on moral authority. Because knowledge and learning are shared constructions, both the learner and teachers must work more as equal partners to design an environment conducive for meaningful learning. Burbules (1994, p. 3) maintains that for teachers to guide students and organize learning experiences, they must be able to "teach." In other words, students must respect and "at least, provisionally, cooperate in activities." It is this tension that must be accommodated between teachers and their students if learning is to occur.

In this study, teachers characterized many of their students as disengaged from most activities in the physical education program. If students were interested in the sport activity, such as basketball (boys) or dance (girls), they participated. If they did not find it meaningful, they did not dress, become involved, or expend effort. They challenged the moral authority of the school and the physical educators to select content for them to learn. By deflecting the responsibility for student noncompliance away from their teaching styles and curriculum, teachers denied their opportunity to change the curriculum content to make it more meaningful to students. They, furthermore, denied students' legitimate ownership of the curriculum. Instead, they focused on curriculum changes that addressed students' extrinsic motivation and teachers' control of student behaviors.

Curricular Changes: The Realities

Teachers in this study reported making substantial changes in their physical education programs over their careers. Most teachers reported they had begun their professional careers teaching skill and sport-based curricula. The diversity and difficulties associated with teaching in urban schools, however, had encouraged them to move from a curriculum of skills to a "curriculum" of motivation and order. Most recently these changes had focused on efforts to engage students in physical activity. Teachers were no longer interested in discussing curricula based on the skill, knowledge, fundamental movement, or fitness concepts currently discussed in professional physical education curriculum texts (e.g., Jewett, Bain, & Ennis, 1995). They resisted these changes as a return to the past. They were convinced that these programs would not be successful in the current school setting.

From a Curriculum of Skills . . .

Although researchers (e.g., Cuban, 1992; Faucette, 1987; Sparkes, 1991) have documented teachers' resistance to curricular change, the teachers in this study reported that their curricula *had* changed substantially over the last 15 years. They had moved progressively away from a skills-based curriculum. Staff development efforts by professional organizations, the school district, and by consultants to encourage them to return to a skills-based or knowledge-oriented curriculum was perceived as unrealistic in their current teaching situations. Melba Reed described the changes in her program:

We used to teach skills in sports like archery, golf, things like that. It is easier now to stick to playing team sports that involve a number of kids and don't require so much individual skill or personal attention. The kids are not motivated enough to work on their own or even to listen. It takes a lot of time to get them quiet. A lot of times you give them instruction and then when you monitor skill, they are not doing what you showed them to do. They are doing what they want to do. You can only control that to an extent.

In programs in which teachers reported that they still tried to teach skill-based sport programs, the barriers to success were substantial. Mary Hernandez described her teaching situation:

Most of them have very little skill when they get here. Like basketball ... I have to teach my [ninth grade] girls how to dribble the ball. It is like teaching middle school all over again. I am not blaming the middle school people. Their situation, having been there myself... it is unbelievable what they have to contend with. Their numbers [student enrollments] are getting incredible at this point. They are so limited. I don't mean to be blaming them, it is not necessarily their fault. But [at the high school] we do have to start with one and go to five. You can't start at five and go to ten with most of these kids. Now [the state] is cutting [required high school physical education] back to half a year. So what can we give them in a half a year?

. . . To a Curriculum of Motivation ..

Nine teachers interviewed for this study discussed the importance of extrinsically motivating their students to become more involved in their program. The focus appeared to have changed from a curriculum of skills to a curriculum with the primary emphasis on motivating students to participate. John Butler explained how he worked to motivate students in his classes:

Many of the students in my general PE classes are not so bad, they are just lazy. I don't know any other way to put it. You feel that they want something for nothing. They want a grade, but they don't want to have to do the work. You have to push, push, push every minute to get something out of them. For lack of a better word, this is tiring. Sometimes by seventh or eighth period, by the end of the day after you have done this for six classes, you feel like you have nothing left to give. You have had to push, and coax, and cajole all day long to get kids active. That's pathetic, really. It is always too hot or too cold; too this or too that. They are tough to please. So we coax them a little bit, we promise them a free day here and there where they can choose the activity to get them to do what they have to do. But even in a

structured situation, unless you are on them every minute, watch what they are doing, they tend to do what they want to do instead of the prescribed activity, or the way you want it done.

The curriculum of motivation relied heavily on extrinsic, concrete rewards. Teachers used candy, banners, and choices to prod students into participating. Melba Reed and Angela Johns indicated that they were spending larger amounts of time entertaining students and rewarding students who agreed to participate:

You really have to sell your program to them and reward, reward all the time. I mean positive reinforcement, even if it is no more than say a pencil. Giving a girl who runs the fastest that day a pencil. They don't work that much for grades, but material things. Even if it is a ribbon, something that you have made yourself. But if you have it there, it motivates some students...there is no difference between boys and girls. They will work for that more than anything (Melba Reed).

You have to make everything fun, first of all, and that's not just in physical education, it is everywhere. You have to entertain more. Attention span is real short. I do less teaching now than I ever did. It is more recreational than it is educational. Before we had more education going on. We would teach skills, rules, history, terminology. I would test on that. I still test, but not like I used to. We would play the games, we would even have referees from the class and scorekeepers. We did much more. I haven't been able to do that in the last ten years (Angela Johns).

... And a Curriculum of Order

Teachers reported that they had moved from a skills-based curriculum to focus on content that would motivate students and assist teachers to maintain order in their classes. The need for order appeared to go beyond the normal requirements for class management. An ordered classroom was predictable. Students were compliant. Teachers could anticipate how students would react to school and physical education activities. Mac Stewart explained his efforts to maintain order in a difficult teaching situation:

I spend a lot more time maintaining order now than I did even 5 years ago. There is a need for more order. In every aspect of teaching, whether you are in the gym, teaching basketball or gymnastics, or outside. You have to maintain strict control, no funny business. Students need to be supervised constantly to prevent them from fighting or leaving the gym. We also chain the gym doors closed during each class to keep students from wandering the halls or stealing the balls.

Order appeared to mean control and predictability to teachers who dealt with the unexpected as a routine part of their day. When the setting was predictable, teachers could focus and concentrate on more typical class management concerns (taking roll, leading exercises, etc.) rather than on policing student behavior. Cynthia Lawrence described her efforts to maintain order in her elective physical training class:

[In elective classes] there is still disruptive behavior, just fooling around. Even though they have signed up for physical training, the kids want to play basketball. So if there is any class in the gym that has a basketball, they are going to try and sneak out of my class. You can't go chasing kids all period, although I do it to some extent. I'll take away some of their free time in return for that.

Mary Hernandez described an ordered environment as one in which students understood the rules and agreed to work within the system. She felt that being able to live within the rules required self-discipline and an understanding of others' rights and responsibilities.

I think the idea of boundaries are somewhat foreign to them. They are very rebellious about standards and limits. I think they do not have much experience with boundaries outside of school. They have so little supervision at home. I think they interpret class rules and policies as something negative. To me it means something positive. I am here to help you work your way through this world. If you have no self-discipline ... then it's really a problem.

The order sought by many of these teachers involved trade-offs in discipline and content. Activity was seen as a way to distract students from the strong pull of disruptive peer and social pressures. Once students were involved in activity, teachers reported that they were more willing to comply with the class rules and boundaries. Bill O'Donald described this perspective:

Right now our goal is to control them and keep them active, keep them participating and hopefully to come out with a passing grade. We give them a break, we give them so many times of being unprepared and they can still have a decent grade. I used to get angry with their behavior, vulgar language, and lack of interest in my class, but now I try not to take it personally. I try not to get on them and neglect the ones who are there for participation. But now I just slough it off, get my class started, and try to handle them individually.

Most teachers reported that they had not worried about maintaining order as a young teacher. They learned quickly to manage classes effectively and teach sport activities. Over the last few years, however, the typical class management procedures were simply not effective in dealing with the intensity of student noncompliance and the difficulties they faced in enticing students to become engaged in any form of physical activity. John Butler's comments about the need to teach new teachers to maintain order were reflected in the remarks of several other teachers:

I think maybe new teachers aren't aware of what they are going to deal with outside of their subject matter in urban schools... and what they are going to deal with outside of their subject matter can be 75% of what they deal with in their day. That is what is causing problems.

Teachers felt that they had been forced by their students to change from a respected curriculum to one in which students shaped the curriculum content. Teachers argued that without support from administrators or parents they had no recourse other than attempting to entice students to participate in activities in which they were interested to maintain class control and order. Some teachers appeared to no longer care whether students learned the knowledge-based curriculum as long as the class setting was orderly. They sought to avoid student confrontation over content (Ennis, in press). They had adjusted the costs and rewards framework for students to the point where there were both minimal costs and minimal rewards. All seemed to be going through the motions: the students to complete the course and the teachers to reach one year closer to retirement. The majority of teachers had few coping strategies for student noncompliance. Some permitted students to control the activity to minimize the need to argue with and cajole them to participate.

Noncompliance was perceived by these teachers as an indicator that the school and society had lost control of a "generation of African-American students" (Melba Reed). In their assessments of an uncaring, unsupported student population, they described students who had emotional needs that schools (and society) seemed ill-prepared to handle. The typically large numbers of students enrolled in classes made it difficult, if not impossible, for teachers to reach out and get to know their students. Teachers had relied for most of their careers on the moral authority given to them by the school and the community. They reported that students seemed uninterested in learning and less willing to listen quietly and follow directions. Teachers negotiated with students to maintain order. They promised them a voice in selecting the content during "free play" at the end of class or a "free day" at the end of a week in exchange for compliant behavior.

Although teachers resisted formal curricular change, they *were* willing and capable of changing their program to reflect the characteristics they valued most in a chaotic environment: motivation and order. They usually tried to gain order through greater control. Teachers, who established order by permitting student choice (Cummins, 1986), were pleased with the calm, ordered atmosphere in their class, but simultaneously felt guilty because students only wanted to participate in one or two activities (basketball for the boys and dance for some of the girls). Those teachers who allowed male students to control the curriculum and play basketball in every class increasingly were chastised by principals and supervisors.

By blaming the students for the failure of their programs and resorting to a custodial curriculum, teachers had forfeited the opportunity to make voluntary changes to address the needs of their predominately African-American students. Efforts to shape curricula that reflect Stinson's (1993) characteristics of meaning and relevance to students are difficult in an atmosphere in which administrators are focused on stemming violent acts, while teachers are left to cope with less serious problems of noncompliance in the classroom. Teachers and students seemed unable and unwilling to negotiate a shared vision in which both groups contributed to an educational approach to physical education. Teachers reported that students preferred specific activities. Students confirmed this through their participation patterns and, in essence, shaped the curriculum through noncompliance. Teachers were skeptical of professional efforts from supervisors and consultants to assist them to recreate a skill or knowledge-based curriculum. They viewed these suggestions through eyes riveted on the necessity for student motivation and class order. They resisted a return to the knowledge-based curriculum of the past as an unrealistic expectation for urban physical education.

Negotiated Compliance

Teachers often placed the blame for their difficulty in teaching on their students. They deflected the problem. They believed that they were attempting to teach a long-accepted curriculum of sport that has been the mainstay of physical education programs for over 50 years. Observations of these classes suggested that by deflecting the problem to the students, teachers created an environment in which they either confronted students in an effort to teach a range of individual and team sports or they permitted African-American males to dictate the content (basketball) and the way the game would be played (individually oriented dominance by the most skilled players). In the first case, teachers argued that sport was important for all students to learn. They assumed that all sports were equally valuable and contributed equally to the students' physical education. They required students to participate in individual sports such as golf, tennis, table tennis, soccer, and badminton. They bribed them to comply with promises to play basketball during the last 10 minutes of class or by devoting the entire class on Friday to basketball.

These teachers had not analyzed the cultural origins and identities of the sports they were advocating. Many individual and dual sports trace their origins to white, male, middle class, northern European settings (e.g., Sparkes, 1987). The games were played for the purposes of social affiliation. Many of those sports such as golf and tennis are still used extensively for that purpose. Teachers argue that all students need skill in these activities to function socially in a European-American, male-dominated business environment (Fernandez-Balboa, 1993). Conversely, many African-American students do not conceptualize a future that depends on this kind of networking and sealing contracts on the golf course.

By assuming that the multiactivity sport curriculum is important for all students, regardless of race and gender, teachers did not acknowledge the ethnic relevance of these activities for their students. When teachers segregated sport from culture, they denied the enculturating nature of affiliative sporting activities. This is true not only for European-American male students, but also for African-American male students' involvement in basketball. Basketball in the black community is a socializing, stratifying activity. Black males who are skilled in basketball dominate the social settings in neighborhoods and community centers. Individuals are stratified into social niches based on their basketball prowess and ability to dominate the game. Placing African-American students into games created by European-American males in which they have little skill, opportunity to participate outside of school, or see little avenue for engagement in the future sets the stage for confrontation. Stinson (1993) points out that students are willing to engage in activities that they find meaningful. It is not surprising that students are confrontational and noncompliant when forced to participate in activities considered to be irrelevant. Teachers are forced to coerce students using grades, free time, and basketball to bribe them to participate in the prescribed sport curriculum.

Conversely, in this study teachers who acquiesced to student demands for a "basketball" curriculum also compromised their educational responsibilities to establish an orderly educational environment for all students. Observations of these classes suggested that when students are permitted to shape the curriculum to reflect the stratification and dominance of a neighborhood basketball game, dominant, vocal students control the setting

while less aggressive students accommodate. Dominant males selected teams based on neighborhood status, skillfulness, and body size. The 10 dominant players in the class of 35, for example, played basketball on the regulation size basketball court. Less dominant African-American players played basketball on smaller half-courts that overlapped and ran perpendicular to the full regulation court. They moved off their court each time the dominant players came into their area. African-American girls, and Hispanic-, Asian-, and European-American students did not have access to the court area. The teacher did not help them to participate in an activity they found interesting. When teachers abdicated their responsibility for curriculum, they also gave up their ability to protect lesser skilled players and provide an atmosphere for learning. The environment deteriorated to recreational activities such as those found in community programs.

The Consequences

Many of the programs examined in this study exhibited characteristics of elitist, discriminatory, and noncontextual curricula. The elitist nature of the programs continued to perpetuate the dominant group within the skill hierarchy. In the instance in which teachers were attempting to teach sport with an historically European heritage, the curriculum was elitist in that it required all students to accept the male, European-American, middle class curriculum of individual and dual sports as appropriate and essential to lifetime athletic and recreational goals (Andrews & Loy, 1993). Student noncompliance was dismissed as the students' problems and were not associated with the content of the curriculum. Likewise, when teachers abdicated their responsibility for the curriculum, elitism took on a distinctly different, but no less sinister form. In these basketball classes, elitism was measured in skill. Dominant players selected skillful players for their teams, and developed and enforced the rules. Less skilled players or individuals who wished to participate in other sports that were equally culturally bound (e.g., soccer) were excluded from the opportunity to participate. In this instance, the elite maintained order through their own code. Individuals who wished to exert their own form of control had to confront the dominant students, not the teacher, for authority. This solution protected the teacher from confrontation. Teachers, however, were less able and often less willing, to intervene on behalf of the less-skilled students, resulting in an elitist student-dominated curriculum.

The sporting curriculum when defined as a range of typically European-American, male, middle class activities discriminates against students of color, female, and poor students (e.g., Dewar, 1993). Because some students of color still do not have the opportunity to learn skills in a range of sports that require special instruction or access to facilities (golf course or tennis courts), they enter the physical education environment at a distinct skill disadvantage. Often minority members do not aspire to gain expertise in these activities, and therefore, do not support them as valuable at home or in the community. Interestingly, these are the very reasons that sport advocates use to argue for teaching these activities in physical education. These curricula provide opportunities for all students to have access to facilities and equipment and quality instruction to enhance their skills. They forget, however, that skill and expertise is sought only when it is valued by the individual, the family, or the community. The skill must be perceived to be a viable avenue for advancement. From this perspective, sport is culturally identified and bound. It is meaningful to the extent that it is connected to culturally acknowledged values. Although both perspectives on sport (opportunity for all and culture identified and bound) have merit, it is clear that the parameters of a sport curriculum must be negotiated with a sensitivity to the opportunities, heritage, and aspirations of each participant.

The multiactivity sport curriculum is also a decontextualized curriculum in which many people of color and low skilled girls and boys are unable to connect. Students of color often find the European-American sport curriculum to represent a different world from their neighborhood. The act of changing clothes to be active or the requirement to follow externally set, arbitrary rules when playing a sport may be alien to the way the game is played in the neighborhood. Just the requirement to play sports they have never seen or had any previous desire to play may serve to decontextualize this experience. Although these activities may be important to expose students to alternative worthwhile pursuits, the process of introducing the activity and presenting the content should be sensitive to the cultural nature of sport. In other words, some sports are very important to African-American and Hispanic students and teachers, while others are very important to European-American

students and teachers. Contextualizing the content to be sensitive to the culture and neighborhood may help students to connect and engage in a meaningful curriculum.

Low skilled students also experience a decontextualized curriculum. Although low skilled students rarely confront teachers, they often demonstrate their dissatisfaction through failure to bring their activity clothes, lack of enthusiasm, and unwillingness to exert energy to engage physically, cognitively, or emotionally in sport. Their lack of skill limits their ability to find enjoyment in these activities and, thus, they are less likely to participate in sports for social reasons. Sport for unskilled players is often a miserable experience and one which they attempt to avoid. There is little relationship between the sport that they must perform in class and social activities such as hanging out at the mall, talking with others in the neighborhood, and watching television, MTV, and "the Box." Low skilled students' world outside of physical education, does not include sport. Physical education may be an irrelevant activity that has little application in daily living.

In physical education, teachers control most of the curricular decisions. They can make changes on a daily, weekly, or yearly basis to address student interests ... without permitting the curriculum to be dominated by a few vocal and confrontational individuals. Many alternative curriculum models exist in physical education. For instance, teachers can select from programs based on personal fitness that include information on appropriate exercise, nutrition, and weight management. There are also carefully designed sport education models that focus on skill development and positive affiliation (Siedentop, 1994). Teachers can select from curricula that help students to use physical activity to enhance their self-control, self-direction, and ability to help and care for others (Hellison & Templin, 1990). Likewise, teachers can use personal meaning curriculum (Jewett et al., 1995) to help students experience a range of physical activities that focus on learning skills necessary to engage in active, healthy lifestyles across their lifespan. Each of these curricular models provides an alternative approach to physical education that can provide a more equitable environment consistent with the values and culture of diverse students. Formal curriculum models are not easy to learn. They require sustained interest and effort from teachers to understand the model and then adapt it to their teaching setting. Unfortunately, physical educators rarely receive sustained, formal inservice training, such as that provided to reading, mathematics, or science teachers. The status of their subject area as non-academic, often precludes both administrative support and financial funding required to initiate and sustain widespread, permanent curricular change.

Teachers described in this study had made major adjustments in their curriculum. The changes, however, were custodial in nature and did not address the cultural issues associated with traditional, European-American, male, middle class conceptualizations of sport. When students were not compliant or enthusiastic, the goals of motivation and order had become the foundations of programs that had historically been based on instruction in traditional knowledge and skills. Students' time was occupied in activities designed to require little effort and provide few physical or intellectual rewards. Physical education exhibited characteristics of an elitist, discriminatory, and decontextualized curriculum. Programs reflected a European-American, male, middle class perspective on sport and were not modified to enhance the learning of minority and low skilled students, some of whom were female. These programs were often elitist, discriminatory, and decontextualized, contributing to student dissatisfaction. In the high school physical education programs examined in this study, teachers admitted they no longer taught the knowledge base of physical education. Student grades were based primarily on dressing in the physical education uniform and participation in prescribed activities. They appeared to design a custodial physical education curriculum consistent with their perceptions of the low motivation and noncompliant behaviors of their students. Some physical educators attempted to engage students in activity and keep order in their classrooms. There was little effort, however, to stimulate learning through a curriculum that responded to the needs and interests of their students.

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