

University of Alberta

Experiences of Grade 10 Males

in High School Physical Education

by

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To Kelli

Abstract

Research focused exclusively on the participation trends of male high school students in physical education is limited (Allison et al., 2005). The purpose of this study was to investigate the physical education experiences of Grade 10 high school males to explore their decisions to either enroll or not enroll in elective physical education in Grade 11. Semistructured focus group discussions elicited information on the experiences of Grade 10 male high school physical education students. Eight major themes emerged from the findings: value of physical activity, engagement in physical activity, disengagement from physical activity, Physical Education 10 status, teacher as leader, program knowledge, program status, and disenchantment with Physical Education 10 experience. The thesis discusses these themes and comments on the educational significance of the findings as possible impetus for future investigations into the programming needs of male high school students and their lifelong pursuit of physical activity.

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Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
Context and Purpose of the Research	1
Definitions of Terms	3
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE	6
Overview	6
Review of the Literature	8
Physical Activity Trends of Canadian Youth	8
Physical Education Professionals	12
Physical Education Curriculum Status	15
High School Physical Education Students	20
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN	26
Overview	26
Theoretical Orientation	28
Methodology	30
Methods	35
Participants and Data Collection	39
Data Analysis and Interpretation	44
Ethical Considerations	45
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	49
Overview	49
The School's Story	49
The Students' Voices	53
Physical Education 10 Experiences	53
Value of Physical Activity	54
Engagement in Physical Activity	56
Disengagement From Physical Activity	62
Physical Education 10 Status	65
Teacher as Leader	68
Reasons for Choosing to Enroll in Physical Education 20	69
Program Knowledge	69
Program Status	70
Reasons for Students' Decisions Not to Enroll in Physical Education 20	74
Program Knowledge	74
Program Status	75
Disenchantment With Physical Education 10 Experiences	76
Discussion	79
The Research Questions Revisited	79
The Research Findings Revisited	80

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION	86
Educational Significance	86
Insights for Future Directions	88
Concluding Remarks	91
REFERENCES	92
APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW FORMAT AND SAMPLE QUESTIONS	98
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW FORMAT AND QUESTION SHEET	101
APPENDIX C: SAMPLE CODING PROCEDURES.....	105
APPENDIX D: INVITATION LETTERS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY, CONSENT AND ASSENT FORMS	106
APPENDIX E: LETTER TO THE DEPARTMENT HEAD/TEACHER AND CONSENT FORM	112
APPENDIX F: DATA-GATHERING AND RESULTS-ANALYSIS PROCEDURES.....	115
APPENDIX G: EMERGENT THEMES AND SUBTHEMES	117

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Context and Purpose of the Research

With many years of professional teaching come the gifts of experience and new knowledge. That is, teachers are continually in a position to acquire new knowledge simply from being present and passionately engaged in teaching and learning. With the understanding that knowledge is constructed from our experiences, it is not coincidental that an enthusiasm to gain an understanding of such occurrences has evolved. Aoki (1991) spoke of a dwelling place that situates a teacher in two positions in teaching curriculum. He called these locations “curriculum-as-plan” and “curriculum-as-lived” (p. 159). That is, teachers dwell in a position as they deliver a provincial curriculum, and yet they are also positioned in a location where the delivery of curriculum becomes a lived experience between teachers and students, with numerous factors that affect teaching and learning (Aoki, 1991).

Multiple secondary physical education teaching experiences have granted me a dwelling place for the thoughtful pursuit of potential answers to the participation trends of high school males in elective physical education. Many researchers have investigated the physical-activity trends of high school students, seeking connections to the physical-education tendencies of youth and possible long-term patterns for leading a healthy active lifestyle (Fairclough, 2003; Fraser-Thomas & Beaudoin, 2004; Gibbons, Wharf Higgins, Gaul, & Van Gyn, 1999; Gibbons & Gaul, 2004; Humbert, 1995; Lowry et al., 2005; Mandigo et al., 2004;

Robinson, 2009; Spence, Mandigo, Poon, & Mummery, 2001; Spence et al., 2004). As I will demonstrate, a great deal of the research has explored the trends of high school female students and has greatly assisted physical educators in developing programs that support the unique learning needs of girls (Gibbons & Gaul, 2004; Gibbons et al., 1999; Humbert, 2006). With this awareness has come an observed need to enhance the research by focusing on the engagement of male high school students in elective physical education programs.

The specific purpose of this study was to explore and understand the possible reasons for these choices. Thus, the research focused on the experiences of male high school students in required physical education and the factors that male students consider when they choose either to enroll in or not enroll in elective physical education. The core research questions were as follows:

1. What are the experiences of male high school students with regard to Physical Education 10?
2. What are the reasons that male high school students enroll in Physical Education 20?
3. What are the reasons that male high school students do not enroll in Physical Education 20?

Humbert (2006) acknowledged the importance of physical educators listening to the voices of students and critically reflecting on the information that these voices are sharing. This critical reflection can lead to enhanced physical education programs that assist physical educators in promoting physical activity both in and beyond the physical education environment for female and male

students (Humbert, 2006). The research documented in this thesis represents my sincere effort to capture the voices of high school males as they contemplated the importance of physical education to their well-being.

An understanding of the context of the research requires an understanding of the following terms used in this study.

Definitions of Terms

Activities: “Busy or energetic actions or movements [as in group activities and individual activities]” (Stevenson, Elliot, & Jones, 2002, p. 8)

Belief: “A feeling that something exists or is true” (Stevenson et al., 2002, p. 57)

Competition: “The activity of competing against others” (Stevenson et al., 2002, p. 135)

Curriculum (program of studies): “The legal document in Alberta that prescribes the physical education program rationale and philosophy, and general and specific outcomes” (Alberta Learning,¹ 2000, p. 289)

Disengagement: “Released or detached” (Stevenson et al., 2002, p. 199) from physical activity in physical education

Elective: “Chosen, not compulsory [optional]” (Stevenson et al., 2002, p. 223)

Engagement: “The state of being involved in something [e.g., physical activity in physical education]” (Stevenson et al., 2002, p. 230)

Experience: “A stream of private events, known only to their possessor, and bearing at best problematic relationships to any other events, such as

¹ In 2004 Alberta Learning changed its name to Alberta Education.

happenings in an external world or similar streams in other possessors”

(Blackburn, 2005, p. 125)

Fitness: “The ability of the body to respond or adapt to the demands and stresses of physical effort [as in physical fitness]” (Alberta Learning, 2000, p. 289)

Health behaviors: Behaviors that affect an individual’s overall health either positively or negatively; they include “not only observable, overt actions but also the mental events and feeling states that can be reported and measured” (Glanz, Rimer & Lewis, 2002, p. 11)

Inclusion: “The act of including [as in involving everyone in an activity]” (Stevenson et al., 2002, p. 353)

Observation: “The ability to notice important details [as in the data]” (Stevenson et al., 2002, p. 475)

Perception: “A particular understanding of something” (Stevenson et al., 2002, p. 510)

Physical activity: “Any movement of the body that expends energy” (Robinson, 2009, p. 10)

Physical education: “The physical education program emphasizes active living, with a focus on physical activity that is valued and integrated into daily life” (Alberta Learning, 2000, p. 1). The program of studies is based on the four general outcomes of activity, benefits to health, cooperation, and daily participation (Alberta Learning, 2000).

Well-being: “Personal growth to maximize our potential—physically, mentally, emotionally and socially; being able to function and enjoy life, and having a personal zest for living” (Alberta Learning, 2000, p. 290)

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Overview

Physical educators are charged with the promotion of lifelong physical activity and well-being through physical education curriculum delivery (Alberta Learning, 2000). The research connected to this professional obligation is immense and diverse. To position the research in relation to the research questions requires a focus for the literature that I reviewed. However, a quantity of research is available that identifies key areas of concern that may be linked to the enrolment trends of high school students in elective physical education programs and the consequent lifelong physical activity pursuits (Fairclough, 2003; Fraser-Thomas & Beaudoin, 2004; Gibbons et al., 1999; Gibbons & Gaul, 2004; Humbert, 1995; Lowry et al., 2005; Mandigo et al., 2004; Spence et al., 2001; Spence et al., 2004). Understanding that there may be connections between the experiences of high school physical education participants and lifelong physical activity highlights the importance of researching the experiences of high school physical education students. Researching the current physical activity and physical education trends of high school youth can assist in curricular development and the delivery of quality high school physical education programs that promote lifelong physical activity.

These considerations have led to a literature review that begins with the general issues pertaining to the physical activity trends of Canadian youth and concludes with a review of the literature on the trends in male high school

students' participation in elective physical education programs. I present the literature review on four topics: (a) the physical activity trends of Canadian youth (b) physical education professionals (c) secondary physical education curriculum status, and (d) high school physical education students.

Of particular importance to the outcome of the literature review process is the observation of the dearth of literature on the participation of male high school students in high school physical education programs. A significant quantity of the existing research on adolescent high school physical education participation trends has focused on females (Gibbons et al., 1999). Physical education for female students has been the subject of research for 20 years as a result of the low-enrolment trends of female students in physical education (Gibbons et al., 1999).

In the literature review process I found many research studies that reported on male and female high school students' participation in physical education (Cloes, Motter, Ledent, & Pieron, 2002; Fairclough, 2003; Fraser-Thomas & Beaudoin, 2004; Gibbons et al., 1999; Gibbons & Gaul, 2004; Humbert, 1995; Lowry et al., 2005; Mandigo et al., 2004; Robinson, 2009; Spence et al., 2001; Spence et al., 2004). In contrast, qualitative research focused exclusively on the participation trends of male high school students in physical education programs is difficult to locate (Allison et al., 2005). The shortage in available research was apparent following my completion of the review of the published literature. The focus of this chapter then is a review of the literature that led to an inquiry into the experiences of male high school students in physical education and how these

experiences may have affected their decision to participate in elective high school physical education courses.

Review of the Literature

Physical Activity Trends of Canadian Youth

Active Healthy Kids Canada (2005) is a national organization dedicated to providing expertise in research and policy decisions to improve the physical activity and subsequent positive health behaviors of Canadian children and youth. The agency published *Dropping the Ball: Canada's Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth* (Active Healthy Kids Canada, 2005). In 2005 the self-reported physical activity levels of Canadian children and youth received grades of C to F (Active Healthy Kids Canada, 2005). In 2010 the situation has not changed dramatically. Active Healthy Kids Canada (2009) has given the current physical activity levels of Canadian Youth a grade of F. Upon reviewing the report, one can surmise that the situation is worse; however, the more objectively based research is believed to be a truer representation of the physical activity levels of Canadian youth, and there is evidence that the levels of physical activity of Canadian youth are improving (Active Healthy Kids Canada, 2009). With this initial information, two questions come to mind: How are physical activity levels and positive health behaviors of Canadian youth improved? And is the concern of poor physical activity levels solely the school's issue?

While pondering these questions, it is reasonable to consider that students raised in communities that promote active living may be more inclined to participate in physical education programs with enjoyment. Humbert and Chad

(2003) illustrated the positive outcomes of a community- and school-sponsored Active Living Schools project, but the researchers admitted that it is not designed specifically to observe a change in the activity levels of the students while they are in school, but rather to develop the leadership necessary to promote an active living school. Mandigo (2002) commented on the belief that a quality physical education program is the foundation of an active living school. If this is true, there may be a connection between an active living community and physical education enrolment in high school. Research evidence has shown that when adequate school and community facilities and resources are available, high school physical educators feel supported in being able to offer a greater variety of activities within their physical education programs (Mandigo et al., 2004). Schools in which physical activity and health and well-being are promoted as a community and school responsibility appear to be successful in assisting adolescents to engage in positive health behaviors that may lead to lifelong patterns of such behavior (Humbert & Chad, 2003; Mandigo, 2002).

With an apparent connection established between the promotion of positive health behaviors in the school and community and the establishment of lifelong physical activity pursuits, one can ask the question on the role that physical education can play in these positive health behaviors. Information and research are available on the benefits of physical activity for youth and therefore the value of active living as the focal point of a quality physical education program (Spence et al., 2001). Alberta's *Physical Education Guide to Implementation* (Alberta Learning, 2000) states that "physical activity is vital to

all aspects of normal growth and development, and the benefits are widely recognized” (p. 1). Even though such statements are not likely to be contested, empirical information reveals that the physical activity levels of youth are not adequate (Active Healthy Kids Canada, 2005, 2009). A study of Canadian children and youth aged 5 to 17 illustrated that three out of five (57%) of these young people “are not active enough for optimal growth and development” (Craig, Cameron, Russell, & Beaulieu, 2000). In addition, according to Craig et al., teenage girls are less active than teenage boys (30% of girls and 40% of boys) to the most favorable of health outcomes.

Further, in a position paper Craig et al., (as cited in Canadian Council of University Physical Education and Kinesiology Administrators [CCUPEKA] and the Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance [CAHPERD],² 2005) reported the current status of physical education and physical activity in Canadian schools: “At the secondary level, 20% of parents surveyed across Canada indicated that their adolescent child received no physical education at all and this percentage increases as students advance through secondary grades” (p. 4). In addition, once physical education becomes an elective course, enrolment rates decrease substantially, and female enrolment rates are lower than those of males (Cameron, Craig, & Paulin, 2004; Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1996; Spence et al., 2001, as cited in CCUPEKA & CAHPERD, 2005).

² In 2008 CAHPERD changed its name to Physical and Health Education Canada, but I refer to it throughout this thesis as *CAHPERD* to avoid confusion.

Of note is the observation that students enrolled in physical education are more likely to participate in extracurricular and community sport programs (Spence et al., 2001). Furthermore, physical education appears to shape positive attitudes for activity post-high school participation and equips students with the knowledge base to access community program resources and apply the skills that they have learned to make healthy behavior choices (Spence et al., 2001).

From the documented literature, the issues are clear: Many high school adolescents are not active enough for optimal growth and development, and some of this inactivity is related to not enrolling in high school elective physical education (Cameron et al., 2004; Craig & Cameron, 2004; CCUPEKA & CAHPERD, 2005; Lowry et al., 2005; Mandigo et al., 2004; Melnychuk, Robinson, & Stogre, 2007; Spence et al., 2001; Spence et al., 2004). Regionally, “in Alberta, 78% of males and 79% of females take PE in Grade 10, while 38% of males and 37% of females take PE in Grade 11” (Spence et al., 2001, p. 100). These alarming statistics are even more pronounced when students move from physical education in Grade 11 to Grade 12, where “gender differences are more noticeable with 57% of males and only 37% of females enrolling in PE” (p. 100). Of importance is the knowledge that this trend towards lower physical education enrolment rates is not solely a Canadian predicament. In the United States the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention reported that the proportion of students who attend physical education classes daily declined significantly between 1991 and 1995 and did not change between 1995 and 2003 (Lowry et al., 2005).

The research on youths' physical activity and physical education participation rates is important to understand the trends in high school elective physical education participation rates. According to Spence et al., (2001), decreased enrolment in high school elective physical education may be linked to schedule conflicts, school cutbacks, and a lack of satisfaction with physical education. The researchers cautioned against using the term *dropping out* in referring to students who are not currently taking Physical Education 10 because some students may wish to take the required course but will do so in another grade (Spence et al., 2001). For example, in some school districts physical education is taught in summer school, and the overall number of Physical Education 10 students enrolled in the school year is lower than it might be if summer school Physical Education 10 is eliminated (Melnychuk et al., 2007). That is, enrolment rates in Grade 10 physical education are directly linked to participation trends during the school year (Melnychuk et al., 2007). Clearly, important work in many areas must continue to be able to enact positive changes in the health and well-being of adolescents (Lowry et al., 2005). How is the role of the physical education specialist woven into such positive change?

Physical Education Professionals

If a quality physical education program can be the foundation for lifelong physical activity pursuits, physical education teachers are certainly the bricklayers. Robinson (2009) established that ensuring quality physical education courses requires that physical education teachers be perceived as supportive and fair while providing quality programs that utilize the teachers' expertise and

knowledge. Further, exceptional physical educators relate positively to their students, engage enthusiastically in student learning, continue to learn through reflective practice and experience, and have a passion for the field of physical education (Chorney, 2009).

Research has suggested that the majority of secondary school physical educators are specialists who have physical education degrees in addition to teacher-education training (Mandigo et al., 2004; Spence et al., 2004). Quebec is the only province in Canada whose school boards have policies on the hiring of physical education teaching specialists who are qualified to teach physical education (Cameron, Craig, Coles, & Cragg, 2001). Further, elementary schools in Canada are less likely than secondary schools to hire physical education specialists (Cameron et al., 2001). There is support for the belief that the lack of qualified physical education specialists in elementary schools negatively affects skill development and the delivery of quality physical education programs (McKenzie, Alcaraz, Sallis, & Faucette, 1998).

Moreover, research findings also suggest that physical educators have a masculinized teaching perspective (Hopper & Sanford, 2006). That is, most physical educators have been trained in a traditional masculine sport development approach, which influences pedagogical practice (Hopper & Sanford, 2006). Ultimately, the masculinization of physical education can alienate some students from physical education (Singleton, 2003). At the secondary school level the majority of physical education specialists are male (Mandigo et al., 2004; Spence et al., 2004). Physical education teachers who are nonspecialists tend to be female

and are more likely to teach at the elementary level (Mandigo et al., 2004; Spence et al., 2004). Furthermore, many physical educators seem to enter the profession following an athletic or coaching experience with a male-teacher role model, which underlies their motivation to teach physical education (Hopper & Sanford, 2006). This dominance of male role modeling may lead to an emphasis on sport development in physical education programming (Hopper & Sanford, 2006). The researchers noted that teachers' athletic attitudes affect the delivery of curriculum and result in a sport-delivery emphasis rather than an emphasis on the benefits of physical activity. Knowing this, many female physical educators find themselves having to perform in these masculinized environments to survive the teaching experience (O'Reilly, 2000). If female physical educators do not fit the stereotypical masculinized role model, they can be viewed as not credible physically, sexually, or pedagogically (O'Reilly et al., 2000). How then do students perceive this masculinization of teachers, and do their perceptions affect the enrolment in optional high school physical education courses?

Research into the perceptions of females in high school physical education courses has shown a strong perception that teachers value only athletic students and do not spend equal time with their less-athletic peers (Gibbons et al., 1999). It is interesting to note that some male students have identified male physical education teachers' ability to define rules, show strong discipline, and be approachable as important teaching skills (Cloes et al., 2002). Hopper and Sanford (2006) echoed these perceptions, and their findings reveal that male physical educators are viewed as having high expectations and strong physical

competence, being easygoing, and demonstrating general caring about their students' learning. Female students taught by female physical education instructors have also commented that female physical education instructors appear to care about their students' learning (Hopper & Sanford, 2006). Physical educators must be aware that "the ongoing hegemonic masculinity that shapes sport perpetuates competition, elitism, physical prowess, and narrow focus, while excluding balance, inclusion, cooperation, and lifelong involvement" (p. 270). In a recent qualitative study Streat (2009) found that failing to pay attention to some factors can hamper lifelong participation in physical activity significantly as a result of negative experiences in the physical education setting. Streat noted that physical education instructors can unknowingly damage their students' motivation to continue with lifelong physical activity pursuits. How then do physical educators become sensitive to the needs of students, positively change the enrolment of high school students in elective physical education, and, ultimately, promote lifelong participation in physical activity?

Physical Education Curriculum Status

"Embedded within every provincial curricula are general outcome statements associated with assisting children and youth to develop the necessary attitudes, skills, and knowledge that lead to a healthy and active lifestyle" (CCUPEKA & CAHPERD, 2005, p. 4). Schools are critical locations for the promotion of positive health behaviors (Lowry et al., 2005). The curriculum outlines the process in formative schooling through which students gain the skills, knowledge, and the positive attitudes necessary to lead healthy, productive

lifestyles in school and into adulthood (Alberta Learning, 2000). Most provinces in Canada require physical education only at the Grade 10 level for a high school diploma (Spence et al., 2001). In fact, until 2007 Quebec and Nova Scotia were the only provinces or territories that required physical education after Grade 10 (Luke, 2000). In the fall of 2007 Manitoba joined this group with new legislation that requires all current Grades 9 and 10 students to complete mandatory physical education through all four years of high school (Province of Manitoba, 2007). It is important to note that only Physical Education 10, and not elective physical education, is required for a high school diploma in Alberta. Elective physical education in Alberta refers to Physical Education 20 and Physical Education 30 (Alberta Learning, 2000). However, Alberta is currently building the framework to implement a new high school wellness education curriculum (Health and Physical Education Grades 10-12) that will require all students to complete mandatory Grade 11 health and physical education as diploma requirements (Alberta Education, 2010).

From the curricular and program changes that are occurring to improve physical activity participation rates, it appears that school personnel are attempting to promote the concept of active school behaviors by creating formalized programs to assist school staff (Mandigo, 2002). For example, Alberta's Ever Active Schools Program encourages schools to make a cultural shift by promoting physical activity, fitness, and nutrition within the framework that connects them to the core activity model of active education, activities everywhere, activities for everyone, and the active environment (p. 5). Schools

register for the program by filing a detailed two- to three-year plan that details how they will address these areas (p. 5). In addition to the physical education program, increased physical activity is supported through the K-9 daily active school projects, increased intramurals, extracurricular activities, community events, and special activity measures (Mandigo, 2002). In Alberta, Ever Active Schools is currently implementing a program in one school division that utilizes a health promotion school framework that connects all schools in the division with health promotion professionals in a collaborative three-year plan aimed at encouraging positive health behaviors of students (Gleddie & Melnychuk, 2009).

In another national voluntary registration program, CAHPERD's Active Living School Program and Quality Daily Physical Education Program have combined to promote the concept of active living in school and physical activity throughout the school, including the valuable work being done in physical education (Humbert & Chad, 2003). These programs are examples of educators' positively addressing the physical activity and positive health outcomes of students within the entire school community context.

Even though supplementary physical activity programs are offered, students appear to have physical education curricular concerns with the delivery and lose interest over time in physical education (Spence et al., 2001). For example, Gibbons et al., (1999) conducted a qualitative study with high school females in which students were able to voice their concerns with the curriculum content. A thematic analysis of the interview data revealed that the females felt the curriculum needed to change to include a greater number of activities that

encourage lifelong participation and even more academic information on certain topics such as nutrition and personal fitness (Gibbons et al., 1999). More recent studies have indicated that such a shift in curriculum delivery encourages female high school students to participate in physical education (Fraser-Thomas & Beaudoin, 2004; Gibbons & Gaul, 2004). In Cloes et al.'s (2002) European study, the males seemed less concerned with variety and more concerned with task-oriented priorities (e.g., adherence to rules and enjoyment in more game-like situations), but some students preferred a nontraditional or less sport-oriented approach to curriculum delivery. Mandigo et al., (2004) proposed offering a diverse program as an effective strategy to attract and retain high school students in elective physical education; that is, a program that contains group and individual physical activities that are both traditional and nontraditional (Mandigo et al., 2004).

Further, the relatively low enrolment levels in elective physical education, compared to those in compulsory physical education, may also be attributed to the co-educational delivery of Grades 11 and 12 physical education. Several studies have revealed that female students spend less time on task in co-educational situations than they do in girls-only situations (Felton et al., 2005; Humbert, 1995). Less structure and practice time hinder skill development and decrease students' enjoyment and confidence levels in physical activity, which Felton et al., and Humbert found is particularly true for females. Some studies have also found that teachers can take a diverse approach to programming for students if they are aware of the use of important strategies for teaching in a co-educational

setting (Humbert, 1995; Shimon, 2005). These strategies include, for example, providing students with more gender-specific programming choices, which may also increase the participation rates in optional high school physical education (Gabbei, 2004).

Of note is the lack of unanimous agreement in the literature that co-educational physical education is a negative factor in female participation in high school and support for the issue of female role modeling at the secondary level (Fraser-Thomas & Beaudoin, 2004; Humbert, 1995; Lirgg, 1994; Singleton, 2003). Some girls seem to enjoy co-educational physical education at the high school level, whereas others are intimidated and feel uncomfortable in the surroundings (Gibbons et al., 1999). Researchers have agreed that if co-educational physical education is to be pedagogically appropriate, the voices of both males and females need to be heard, and thoughtful processes must be followed in developing programs that are applicable to a wide range of student interests and abilities (Fraser-Thomas & Beaudoin, 2004; Singleton, 2003).

In addition to the issue of choice, physical education teachers must be aware that assessment, evaluation, and demonstration of student learning are critical to meeting the aims and objectives of the physical education program (Alberta Learning, 2000). Robinson (2009) advocated an emphasis on formative assessment, in which students and teachers collaborate on assessment to improve learning. The literature supported such a practice, which illustrates that students feel that skill evaluation is an unfair method of assessment, and at the secondary grade levels it may actually be detrimental to students' success in physical

education (Robinson, 2009). Some students consider participation and effort more important than skill for some aspects of evaluation (Gibbons et al., 1999).

However, Covey, Mandigo, O'Reilly, Rutledge, and Romanow's (2000) analysis demonstrated that focusing on skill practice and assessment in a same-gender class supports such an approach and leads to the skill enhancement that is believed necessary to adopt an active lifestyle.

The literature appears to have supported the notion that assessment that is communicated in a "continuous, collaborative and comprehensive" (Alberta Learning, 2000, p. 47) manner is deemed pedagogically appropriate. Assessment should be formative and summative to be appropriately comprehensive and fair to physical education students (Alberta Learning, 2000). What then do physical education students find important for a quality physical education experience?

High School Physical Education Students

In the context of required physical education courses, many females are losing interest in physical activity at a time when it is critical to develop lifelong patterns of behaviors to lead healthy adult lives (Mandigo, 2005; Mandigo et al., 2004). In addition to the issues of curriculum choice and control, females are struggling with issues of accessibility in the timetable, the value of physical education as a subject area, and the relevance of physical education to their lives (Fraser-Thomas & Beaudoin, 2004; Gibbons et al., 1999; Gibbons & Gaul, 2004). High school females may be interested in enrolling in elective physical education, but there is a gap between how they perceive the course and the value that they feel is placed on physical education (Gibbons et al., 1999). Fraser-Thomas and

Beaudoin found specific research support for the area of female students' enjoyment of physical education: "Activity type was a primary factor contributing to students' enjoyment of their PE classes Girls preferred individual recreational activities such as swimming and interval running rather than competitive team activities" (p. 49). Furthermore, "There were also a few activities that girls did not enjoy, mainly because they found them boring" (p. 50). It is important to understand that females have unique program-design needs that deserve critical consideration from teachers and school administrators (Fraser-Thomas & Beaudoin, 2004; Gibbons & Gaul, 2004). The motivation for quality participation seems to be enhanced when there are many units with a variety of team games, individual games, alternative environment activities, dance, and gymnastics types of activities (Fraser-Thomas & Beaudoin, 2004; Gibbons & Gaul, 2004; Spence et al., 2001).

Although choice is important in high school physical education, the choice of summer school physical education is controversial. Melnychuk et al., (2007) discussed the issue of Grade 10 physical education in summer school that was taught in a large, urban school district. Although the researchers did not examine female and male responses separately, it is interesting to note that the most common reason that students gave for taking the course during the summer was that they wanted to open up scheduling opportunities for academic or elective courses in the next school year. It is hard to argue with the authors' contention that provincial education and school district authorities are leading students to believe that two weeks is all that is necessary to fulfill the credit and course

requirements for physical education. Further, Melnychuk et al., exposed the illogical nature of this program by recognizing that a quality physical education program that promotes continuous and ongoing physical activity cannot be offered in a mere two-week period in summer school. It is not a large leap to assume that with physical education summer school, the message that females and males are covertly hearing is that physical education is only a course, not a lifelong pursuit (Melnychuk et al., 2007).

Research has also indicated that when physical education is no longer a required school subject, enrolment levels drop substantially, particularly among female students (Gibbons, Gaul, & Blackstock, 2003; Hardman & Marshall, 2000; Luepker, 1999; Mandigo et al., 2004; Spence et al., 2001; Spence et al., 2004). Scantling, Strand, Lackey, and McAleese (1995; as cited in Gibbons et al., 1999) commented on previous studies that had “reveal[ed] program content, administration, delivery and social barriers to taking PE” (p. 12) as real issues that females face in high school. Gibbons et al., determined that young women will make a positive choice to participate in elective physical education classes if they “feel safe, find value, and feel valued” (p. 12) in both participation and their choice to participate. Gibbons and Gaul (2004) extended the research in these areas and found that females will increase their participation in elective physical education courses if they feel respected and supported. Indeed, if female students have an opportunity to choose from a variety of physical activities and feel a sense of accomplishment, they are inclined to participate in elective physical education (Gibbons et al., 1999).

According to Fraser-Thomas and Beaudoin (2004), girls' "dream classes would be more frequent, make use of more outdoor facilities, and have a greater diversity of activities" (p. 53). However, Spence et al., (2001) pointed out that in Alberta efforts are being made to meet such student desires. "The new Alberta PE curriculum does not claim that all previous PE programs failed; . . . quite the contrary It is simply attempting to capture the positive outcomes that PE has demonstrated for decades" (p. 103). Spence et al., explained that an outcome-based program may benefit all students but still specifically address issues pertaining to female participation. As Gibbons et al., (1999) emphasized, administrators and teachers in decision-making positions need to validate physical education choices as valuable when female students establish their personal class schedules. Administrators still have the attitude that physical education is not as valuable as academic choices (Gibbons et al., 1999; Mandigo et al., 2004; Spence et al., 2004).

As noted, low enrolment of female adolescents in elective physical education has been researched for over 20 years (Gibbons et al., 1999). Statistics illustrate that males and females are not physically active enough, whether at school or in the community (Cameron et al., 2004; CCUPEKA & CAHPERD, 2005; Craig & Cameron, 2004; Lowry et al., 2005; Melnychuk et al., 2007; Mandigo et al., 2004; Spence et al., 2001; Spence et al., 2004).

There is, however, little qualitative information on the thoughts of males concerning their experiences in high school physical education and physical activity (Kehler, Wamsley, & Atkinson, 2009). Gathering information on male

students is relevant to understanding their perspectives; however, it does not appear to have been translated into the type of research conducted with females. For example, in one study the information gathered on males' intrinsic motivation to participate in physical education involved rating scales on perceived attitudes and enjoyment (Cloes et al., 2002). The information is relevant, but the qualitative information reduced recorded conversations to simple statements such as "He should be less fussy about the rules" (p. 9). Humbert (2006) showed that if males are allowed to reveal more information, the results are more introspective and informative. For example, a male student commented:

"Well, in school we sit most of the time It is so nice to have one period where we get to do something instead of sit around Phys-ed is great because we get to move and you feel so much better after."
(Humbert, 2003; as cited in Humbert, 2006, p. 11)

In recent research Robinson (2009) reinforced the need to continue studies that give adolescent males an opportunity to have their voices heard. Although Robinson conducted a mixed-methods study, the qualitative information is rich with insights into the voices of the male high school participants. Even though males tend to enroll in elective physical education more than females do, the majority (38% in Grade 11 and 57% in Grade 12) of males in high school do not take physical education once it becomes elective (Spence et al., 2001). Why is this? How are male students making decisions to either enroll or not in elective physical education? The answers to these questions highlight the importance of continuing to conduct research with males in high school.

Humbert (2006) made a strong case for listening to students and responding to their concerns: "I believe that if we listen to students and respond

with programs that meet their needs and desires, we can help young people lead healthier, more physically active lifestyles” (p. 21). Educators are morally responsible to listen to students and provide diverse programs that will meet all students’ needs. As a group, males have a story to tell regarding the reasons for their low enrolment rates in elective high school physical education. We must continue to listen.

CHAPTER 3:

RESEARCH DESIGN

Overview

Although a novice investigator, I feel that I was well positioned to study the central phenomenon and core research questions. Academically, I have been educated as a physical education specialist, with degrees in both physical education and education; and, as a professional, I have had multiple secondary physical education teaching experiences in four schools and three school boards/districts, from small to large urban secondary schools. Furthermore, I have attained a wide variety of teaching and leadership experiences in 15 years of physical education teaching opportunities. I have taught physical education specifically to girls in Grades 7 to 9 and 10 and 11, to boys and girls in Grade 12, and to boys in Grade 10. For 8 of the 15 years I was also the physical education department head in a large urban high school. Throughout my professional career I have acquired a great deal of knowledge and many diverse skills, yet this unique experience as a researcher greatly extended my professional growth and development. Regardless of my professional position, roles, and responsibilities, one constant has always remained: an innate passion for the health and well-being of students. Lifelong pursuit of physical activity is essential to a fulfilling and meaningful life. I believe that it is the responsibility of physical education teachers to lead and mentor students in finding joy and excitement in physical activity both within and outside the school environment. I also recognize and acknowledge the potential assumptions and personal biases in my personal and

professional experiences. Qualitative research opens us to the criticism of bias because of the subjectivity of the inquiry process (Creswell, 2005; Gay & Airasian, 1992). However, by using approved qualitative research procedures for data collection and analysis, I hoped to keep such biases to a minimum.

Physical educators understand the important benefits of physical activity to all students and the equal value of active living as the focal point of a quality physical education program (Spence et al., 2001). Alberta Learning (2000) emphasized this awareness in the content of the *Alberta Physical Education Guide to Implementation*: “Physical activity is vital to all aspects of normal growth and development, and the benefits are widely recognized” (p. 1). However, even with all the known benefits of physical education, research findings continue to identify key areas of concern that may affect the enrolment of high school students in elective physical education courses and their consequent lifelong pursuit of physical activity (Fairclough, 2003; Fraser-Thomas & Beaudoin, 2004; Gibbons et al., 1999; Gibbons & Gaul, 2004; Humbert, 1995; Lowry et al., 2005; Mandigo et al., 2004; Spence et al., 2001; Spence et al., 2004).

As I noted in the review of the literature, a significant portion of the existing research on adolescent high school physical education participation trends has focused on female students. That is, physical education for female high school students has been the subject of research for the past 20 years as a result of the low enrollment trends of female students in physical education (Gibbons et al., 1999). In contrast, research focused exclusively on the participation trends of male high school students in physical education is difficult to locate (Allison

et al., 2005). Following the completion of a comprehensive review of the published literature, this research dearth was very apparent to me.

It is important to mention that elective physical education is not required to receive an Alberta high school diploma, and for the purposes of this research I defined elective physical education as the optional Physical Education 20 course in Alberta high schools. I recognize that Physical Education 20 is not the only elective high school physical education course in Alberta; however, it is the only elective physical education program that I investigated in this study.

The research topic therefore was the experiences and reasons for the choices that high school males make when they consider elective high school physical education. The specific purpose of this study was to explore and understand the possible reasons for these choices. Thus, the research focused on the experiences of male high school students in required physical education and the factors that male students consider when they choose either to enroll in or not to enroll in elective physical education.

Hence, the core research questions for the research were as follows:

(a) What are the experiences of male high school students in relation Physical Education 10? (b) What are the reasons that male high school students enroll in Physical Education 20? and (c) What are the reasons that male high school students do not enroll in Physical Education 20?

Theoretical Orientation

I adopted a constructivist mode of inquiry for this research. Such theoretical decisions are rooted as much in the experiences and beliefs of teaching

and learning as they are in a global understanding of the constructivist paradigm (Creswell, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 1989). In speaking about constructivism, Schwandt (2000) noted that “human beings do not find or discover knowledge so much as we construct or make it” (p. 197). Furthermore, these constructions do not take place in isolation but in many collective locations of knowledge and practice (Creswell, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Schwandt, 2000). Various researchers have supported the notion that the researcher and the participants socially construct realities in an inquiry process that involves them (Creswell, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Lichtman, 2006). This orientation can also be viewed as a more democratic practice in education and research because of the inquiry process throughout (Lincoln, 1995). I therefore chose such a strategy because of the dynamic quality of inquiry that allows the researcher flexibility in choosing methods (Creswell, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Lichtman, 2006).

The basic requirements of constructivism then include conducting the research in a natural setting, inductively probing for information, employing qualitative procedures, and accepting the knowledge of the researcher as part of the inquiry (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Pitman & Maxwell, 1992). Therefore, utilizing a constructivist orientation allowed me to work with the male physical education participants, analyze and interpret the research data together through the use of interviews and a question sheet, continually probe with questions, and search for an interpretive analysis and understanding.

Methodology

I noted in the previous section that I determined an appropriate theoretical orientation to address the research problem (Creswell, 2005; Lichtman, 2006). From conceptualization, it was therefore logical to gravitate towards a qualitative methodology for the research, utilizing the theoretical orientation that I described earlier. That is, through the use of the inquiry process, the terms of evaluation and the knowledge constructed involved the male students and me in a collaborative and reflective endeavor (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Pitman & Maxwell, 1992). The intent of the research was to explain the physical education experiences of the participants related to their decisions to enroll in Physical Education 20. Such an inquiry approach acknowledged that my values and experiences were not isolated from the construction of the descriptive analysis (Creswell, 2005). Rather, the results can be seen as more suggestive and as requiring further pondering rather than being conclusive in nature (Creswell, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

In addition to recognizing such a theoretical orientation, I should acknowledge that qualitative research is concerned with describing and understanding human interactions and lived experiences (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Lichtman, 2006). I believe that teaching is a lived experience wherein teacher and student meet in a place called learning (Aoki, 1991). Thus, for this investigation it was necessary to ask the “Why?” questions and work with male students to construct meanings for the realities that they lived and experienced within the context of high school physical education. I believe that my teaching and learning experiences have constructed my realities and teaching voice and that it was

beneficial to use that voice as I interacted with the participants and explored the central phenomenon of the research. As Lincoln (1995) articulated, “Constructivism’s particular contribution to eliciting and recreating student voices is its recognition of multiple realities” (p. 92). This was an important realization because a study that initially motivated my proposed research (Gibbons et al., 1999) highlighted the significance of listening to the voices of female high school students enrolled in physical education. Gibbons et al., addressed the “Why?” questions with regard to the trends of females’ participation in high school physical education, whereas I intended to capture the voices of male high school students in a Physical Education 10 class. Fortunately, this literature finding early in the process was particularly relevant and helped to validate the purpose and focal point of my research.

With this recognition, my plan envisioned a unique qualitative method to gather information: a case study, an important type of ethnography, in which I used semistructured focus-groups interviews and student question sheets to gather information (Creswell, 2005). Case study can be viewed as one way of doing qualitative research (Creswell, 2005; Wolcott, 1992). My study is unique because, traditionally, case studies focus on programs or events and less typically on groups of people (Creswell, 2005; Marshall, 1998; Wolcott, 1992). Further, case study ethnography is usually time intensive and requires the gathering of research information from multiple sources (Creswell, 2005). In my study I gathered data from multiple sources (two sets of separate interview transcripts and question sheets from each of the participants) within a short time period. Although the time

period and sources of information could be viewed as minimal justification for an ethnographic case study, I believe that this qualitative methodology has merit for use. Some authors commented on the compressed time for an ethnographic study (Jeffrey & Troman, 2004), but they also acknowledged that compressed time typically means spending more time (hours during the day) at a site over a shorter time period. In the case of this research I take the point that if constructivism allows latitude in the selection of methods and the reflexive nature of inquiry allows utilization of the experiences and beliefs of the participants and the researcher (Creswell, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 1989, 2005; Pitman & Maxwell, 1992), then it is appropriate to interpret the use of time as also having some latitude within the methodology.

As I have noted, I used the research framework from the initial study that addressed questions pertaining to the experiences of female participation in high school physical education to design a similar study for males (Gibbons et al., 1999). It is important to reiterate that the Gibbons et al.'s study helped to focus my research on the voices of males. The voices of students ought to be heard to reverse the troubling trends in youth participation in physical activity and physical education (Humbert, 2006).

According to Lichtman (2006), in asking these "Why?" questions, it is important to understand that qualitative research is a dynamic and ever-changing process. As a critical element, the dynamic nature of qualitative research does not follow a standard or empirical set of procedures (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, 2005; Lichtman, 2006). Thus, for this research I chose an interview process to facilitate

the collection of qualitative data, primarily because of the freedom that it allowed me to modify the interview protocols as the process unfolded (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, 2005; Lichtman, 2006). I asked questions that were fairly similar to those of Gibbons et al., (1999) as a point of entry into the interview process.

I believe that students should be involved directly in the research process because they are a valuable source of information. It is important that male high school students share information on their physical education experiences.

Because I did not know what the respondents would say, my use of a dynamic and ever-changing format was appropriate to explore the central phenomenon. This is an essential consideration because of the reflective and reflexive questioning that can occur (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Lincoln, 1995). I used both open-ended and close-ended questions to probe for thematic information (Creswell, 2005). As Appendix A shows, I structured the questions from a broad to a specific pattern that was similar to the question strategy that Gibbons et al., (1999) used in the study on female voices and participation in high school physical education.

Throughout the interview process I probed the participants for more information because the questions frequently led to other questions that I had not anticipated.

Connected to this dynamic character of qualitative research is the realization that the research problem can be approached in several ways (Lichtman, 2006). There are several ways of gathering, interpreting, and acknowledging multiple realities in the findings (Creswell, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 1989, 2005; Lichtman, 2006). Interviews are not the only method of gathering qualitative data, and it is important to remember that there are many

ways to accumulate information and that strategies for collection are often linked to the underpinnings of traditional approaches such as ethnographies and case studies (Harper & Kuh, 2007).

With such latitude comes the responsibility to inductively think about the specific information gathered (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Lichtman, 2006).

Continually returning to the data enables the researcher to interpret and identify the themes that emerge and, often, themes that have not been predicted (Creswell, 2005). It would be naïve to believe that the insights of female high school physical education students are the same as the opinions of their male counterparts without having information for comparison. With this in mind, I believed that the qualitative process would result in new perspectives on the participation trends of male high school physical education students. The research involved two interviews with each of the two groups of male physical education students over two days.

I recognized that the hermeneutic cycle would help to enrich the constructions of all of the participants in the study (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). However, I cannot truly say that I employed the hermeneutic cycle as various theoretical authors have outlined it (Erlandson et al, 1993; Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Hermeneutics can be thought of as “a technique or discipline of data analysis involving detailed analysis of transcripts and textual material” (Lichtman, 2006, p. 218). The process is not only nonlinear, but also usually time intensive in that it requires multiple interviews and returns to the respondents before the information gathered becomes redundant (Erlandson et al., 1993).

Although I can say that I returned to the data continuously during, between, and after the interviews, I also cannot say that the procedure was as time intensive as the authors claimed. However, Lichtman emphasized that it is necessary to dissect the entire research data into its many possible components to uncover the deep understandings and constructions of the data. I feel that I was true to a reflexive dissection of the research information, which did elicit such constructions of the data. I focused on the male physical education students' experiences and views to study the problem and generate explanations (Creswell, 2005).

Further, because qualitative research is holistic, there is no need to identify variables for study (Lichtman, 2006). This research addressed the broad central phenomenon in its natural setting (Lichtman, 2006). Van Maanen (1988) noted that "doing description is then the fundamental act of data collection in a qualitative study" (p. 1). Although I did not identify variables for study, I acknowledged the varied and descriptive information that I could gather from two homogeneous groups (i.e., males in Physical Education 10). Within the characteristics of ethnography, I loosely viewed this group as representing a unique culture (Creswell, 2005).

Methods

Ethnography involves cultural themes that are present, and it illustrates a general position, implied or otherwise, that serves as a global view when a researcher begins a field of study (Creswell, 2005; Wolcott, 1992). Some researchers (e.g., Wolcott, 1992) have claimed that education researchers have misunderstood ethnography, whereas others have embraced its use in education

research (Jeffrey & Troman, 2004; Van Maanen, 1988). For the purposes of this research, I adhered to Creswell's definition of ethnographic design, which uses "qualitative procedures for describing, analyzing, and interpreting a cultural group's shared patterns of behavior, beliefs, and language that develop over time" (p. 591). The broad cultural theme of the experiences of male students in choosing to enroll in elective physical education was a starting point from which my research could proceed, and I could link it directly to the research problem and central phenomenon (Creswell, 2005).

In addition to a cultural theme, the culture-sharing group that is being studied is usually at one site and includes "two or more individuals who have shared behaviors, beliefs, and language" (Creswell, 2005, p. 443). For the purposes of this investigation, the culture-sharing group was comprised of male high school physical education students in Grade 10. Creswell's description of a culture-sharing group justifies the use of this group in this instance. That is, this group of male high school physical education students in Grade 10 "interacts on a regular basis, has interacted for some time, are representative of some larger group and the group has adopted some shared patterns of behaving, thinking, or talking" (p. 443).

As I noted above, within a culture-sharing group are patterns of shared beliefs, behaviors, and language (Creswell, 2005). Researchers such as Lichtman (2006) have noted that subgroups of students with particular patterns of shared traits are an interesting focus for educational inquiry. I now realize that studying such culture sharing within a group of male high school physical education

students in Grade 10 was unique and intriguing: What did they really think and believe? Upon reading one ethnographic study (DeCorby, Halas, Dixon, Wintrup, & Janzen, 2005), I became aware that an ethnographic approach to the central phenomenon had great potential. In this study the researchers employed ethnographic methods to explore the central phenomenon of the decline in the participation rates in physical education related to the challenges of delivering quality physical education programs. This is a valuable example of how ethnography can be utilized in researching youth's physical activity and physical education trends in schools.

To respect this ethnographic process, some type of fieldwork was a necessary component of the investigation (Creswell, 2005). Because ethnographers typically spend a considerable amount of time with the group (Creswell, 2005), it was important that I commit to a reasonable research timeline. I acknowledge that my timeline was reduced and that some will take exception to it; however, I also recognized that a condensed time period can be important because an ethnographic study can actually go on for a great length of time (Jeffrey & Troman, 2004). Therefore, in "going to the field" (p. 445; even for the short time that I did), it was important to gather as much information as possible from a variety of sources (i.e., question sheets and audiotaped interviews; Creswell, 2005). I conducted the research at the end of a semestered Physical Education 10 course to ensure that the males had been together for approximately five months. Although I did not observe their behaviors in those months, the detailed and sometimes graphic information that they shared about their

experiences within the timeframe helped me to understand these specific males' experiences. Furthermore, I could not ignore my own experiences from several years of teaching and observing male high school students as sources of knowledge to conduct the inquiry and construct new knowledge.

In addition, ethnographic data are emic in nature, which means that I drew the information in this study from the male participants' perspectives (Creswell, 2005; Lichtman, 2006). Furthermore, the data were also etic, or constructed from my viewpoint, which I negotiated with the male participants (Creswell, 2005; Lichtman, 2006). In addition, the context for the ethnographic study remained constant throughout. That is, a large urban high school was the site of the research, with the understanding that the participants would share information that would become relevant as it pertained to the many facets of such a setting (Creswell, 2005; Lichtman, 2006). Therefore, the shared-culture group was not isolated from the larger school context and setting with its complex and interrelated factors (Creswell, 2005).

For the purposes of the research and with a great deal of thought, I chose an ethnographic case study, which is considered a unique form of ethnography because of its study and analysis of a program or event, but, typically, not a group (Creswell, 2005; Wolcott, 1992). As noted, case study research can be characterized by a single program or entity of study that can be, for example, as small as one individual or as large as an entire school (Creswell, 2005; Lichtman, 2006). In this research project I studied male high school physical education students in Grade 10 and their considerations for enrolling in elective physical

education in Grade 11. I have noted that shared patterns are important to ethnography (Creswell, 2005), and I researched with this in mind; however, I am acutely aware that some could interpret the study as being nonclassic ethnography because of the shortcomings of the study (it was not as time intensive as it could have been nor as rigorous as a typical hermeneutic inquiry process that characterizes pure constructivism). Nevertheless, as a novice researcher I have noted why I believe that the case-study ethnography “worked” for this research, and from this premise I conducted the research.

Participants and Data Collection

In keeping with Gibbons et al.’s (1999) study, I employed semistructured focus groups to interview the respondents. According to Creswell (2005), “Focus groups can be used to collect shared understandings from several individuals as well as to get the views from specific people” (p. 215). Preplanned questions that guided the interviews contributed to the semistructured nature of the discussion (Creswell, 2005; Lichtman, 2006). These focus-group discussions were essentially interviews that facilitated an organized discussion of the research questions.

I had originally planned that the semistructured focus groups would consist of two groups of eight males currently enrolled in Physical Education 10: one group who planned to enroll in the elective Physical Education 20 and one group who did not plan to enroll in the elective Physical Education 20. Realizing the potential for a participant’s absence, I chose groups of 10 instead. Lichtman

(2006) advocated padding the group numbers to ensure an adequate size of the groups on interview day.

I conducted the purposeful sampling of Grade 10 male high school students at a large urban high school. The rationale was the need to “intentionally select individuals and sites to understand the central phenomenon” (Creswell, 2005, p. 204). In the case of the large urban high school, the physical education department head and the Grade 10 male students’ physical education teacher were involved in choosing the initial classes from which I would seek volunteer students. Such sampling helped me to understand the concept of the choices that Grade 10 high school males make in considering enrolment in elective physical education. As Creswell stated, the researcher “selects individuals or sites because they help you understand a concept or theory” (p. 205). With regard to the sample size, although I deemed it necessary to include 8 to 10 male students in each of the two research groups, only one of the groups had that range of participation, with 9 members. The second research group had a smaller representation of 5 participants. The size of the entire sample was considered adequate by qualitative standards (Creswell, 2005). As an observation, the participants seemed to be a broad representation of the Grade 10 males in the large urban high school, and a variety of cultural and diverse interests were represented. One participant was also a student in a wheelchair. All participants self-identified as volunteers for the research.

Another key consideration with regard to focus groups is the role of the investigator (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Lichtman, 2006). In this case I assumed the

role of moderator and was responsible for all phases of the proposal and research process. Furthermore, I conducted the research in the male students' environment (the school); however, in the school I sought an appropriate venue to ensure proper dialogue and meet operational requirements such as audiotaping (Lichtman, 2006; Parsons & Servage, 2005). Initially, the interviews began in a physical education classroom, but the audio tests proved problematic because of auxiliary noise. I then chose a library classroom adjacent to the physical education wing in the large urban high school after subsequent audio tests indicated that it was an appropriate environment for the interviews. The data included collections of interview transcripts and question-sheet notes that I continuously encouraged the participants to take (Creswell, 2005). These notes followed the basic format of the interview questions (Appendix B). As I noted in the previous section, I modeled the interview questions after those in the initial study that motivated this research (Gibbons et al., 1999). I received permission for the use of the questions from the researchers through my program advisor. Further probing questions for a deeper understanding evolved from the qualitative-research process (Creswell, 2005). Excerpts from the transcripts are included in Appendix C.

Review and permission to research were required at many levels— university, faculty, and school board—and from the principal of the large urban high school, the participants at the large urban high school, and the parents of the participants. Recent legislation called the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP) has influenced the manner in which researchers gain access to schools in Alberta (Edmonton Public Schools, 2005). It is evident from the

many levels of approval required that being organized is critical because of the months of preparation necessary to gain permission to conduct research (Creswell, 2005).

After the school district granted permission for the research, the principal of the large urban high school allowed me access to the school and male students. With permission, I met with the physical education department head and the teacher of the male Physical Education 10 students. I understood the importance of gaining the trust and respect of the school leaders as well as the participants (Parsons & Servage, 2005). Once the physical education department head and the physical education teacher decided on the classes to which I would have access, I visited each class to introduce myself and explain the intentions of my study. During the visit I invited the students to join the study and dispensed consent and assent forms (Appendix D). Within a week I returned to the school to collect the permission forms and check for accuracy and completion. I then determined the participants in the two research groups: those who said “yes” to taking Physical Education 20 and those who said “no” to taking Physical Education 20. I communicated the dates for the audiotaped interviews and received a great deal of assistance from the physical education department head and the physical education teacher in setting up the interview venue and communicating the students’ participation to other teachers who would be affected.

In addition to the privacy issues, the accuracy of the research data is critical (Christians, 2005; Creswell, 2005). Researchers ensure accuracy by adhering to such principles as credibility, transferability, dependability, and

confirmability (Lichtman, 2006). Lichtman commented on the traditionalist approach of these principles, with which she did not necessarily agree; however, for the purposes of this research project, I considered these criteria to ensure the accuracy of my research. Credibility refers to the participants' evaluation of the information to ensure that I presented it as intended and interpreted; however, I also had to consider the larger context because the research affected not only the participants (Creswell, 2005; Lichtman, 2006). Throughout the interview process I repeatedly returned to questions for clarification to ensure truthful representation, and I continually asked the participants to make notes on the question sheets as a means of triangulating the data. Triangulation requires that the researcher use multiple sources of data (Creswell, 2005; Mathison, 1988), and I adhered to the principles of reflexivity and triangulation to ensure the accuracy of the data that I collected (Creswell, 2005; Lichtman, 2006; Mathison, 1988). I transcribed the data, gave the transcripts to a second reader, and we discussed the emergent themes. I added an additional step of dictating the transcription results into Dragon Speak Version 9.0. I then edited the resulting documents and once again noted codes and thematic representations. Again I gave the documents to a second reader, and we discussed the prominent themes. This extra procedure ensured the confirmability of the research data (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). That is, the findings from the data demonstrated truthfulness in that I could trace it all back to the initial research information sources (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

In summary, embedded in the qualitative research process are the ethical considerations and the importance of participant anonymity (Creswell, 2005;

Parsons & Servage, 2005). I respected these aspects of conducting research at all times, and in my role not only as a researcher, but also as a professional teacher, I understood the moral and ethical standards to which my actions would be required to adhere.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Throughout the analysis and interpretation process, I utilized a reflexive procedure to elicit the male students' voices from the data (Lincoln, 1995). Having two sets of respondents gave me an opportunity to construct meanings within each set and between the two. Erlandson et al., (1993) stressed the power of such circular constructions amongst the respondents and the researcher when the researcher also participates in the interpretation process. Throughout the interview process I found it rewarding and enriching to work with the participants in a manner that helped me to consider multiple constructions. I believe the reflective processes not only helped the respondents to find their own voices, but in the process also helped me to find a voice that spoke to the central phenomenon I was researching. Lincoln cautioned that one discovery cannot happen without the other because they are important components of the construction of meaning.

Furthermore, I revisited the transcribed interviews several times throughout the research study to obtain information (Creswell, 2005). As I organized and transcribed the data, I used them for the analysis and interpretation (Creswell, 2005), which resulted in several codes and potential themes related to the central phenomenon and research questions (Creswell, 2005). MacQueen and McLellan (1998) noted that "the coding process must include explicit guidelines

for defining the boundaries of the text associated with a particular code” (p. 33). Because of the many themes that emerged, it was important to narrow the results to a manageable number of themes while taking into consideration that I needed adequate themes to ensure that they were represented rigorously (Creswell, 2005). Therefore, I continually searched the data for common codes of information that were related to the research questions.

In addition to the interview transcripts and question-sheet data, I used public information in the analysis. Such data are in the public domain and can be considered sources of information that a researcher may find useful in analyzing the data and discussing the results (Creswell, 2005; Gay & Airasian, 1992). Sources of this public information included the school division’s demographic characteristics, the school’s handbook, the physical education department’s program guide, and the school’s Web site. I examined the various forms of data for emerging and collective themes to ensure that the study’s findings are truthful (Creswell, 2005). These processes helped to ensure that I adhered to the ethical guidelines.

Ethical Considerations

“In value-free social science, codes of ethics for professional and academic associations are conventional format for moral principles” (Christians, 2005, p. 144). I was guided by my ethical obligation to conduct the research in an acceptable and appropriate manner by utilizing sound qualitative research procedures with the respondents in mind at all times. The participants were male high school students in an education system that exists for the purpose of

educating youth in an ethical and responsible manner. I take this professional responsibility seriously because this duty is at the very core of teaching.

Keeping this in mind, it was critical that I obtain informed assent from the participants and fully disclose the means and purpose of my research (Christians, 2005). Subjects must participate on a voluntary basis and have all of the information prior to engaging in the research (Christians, 2005). Information on the project timeline, the roles of the participants, the methods, and the intention of the research must all be communicated to the participants (Christians, 2005). In the case of this research, informed consent and assent involved the parents or guardians of the participants because of the ages of the groups I studied. I included the following information on all consent and assent forms for the students, parents, and teacher involved in the study (Appendixes D and E). I conducted this study in accordance with FOIP and will use the results for educational purposes only. Furthermore, the plan for this study was reviewed for adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education, Extension, and Augustana Research Ethics Board (EEA REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions on the participants' rights and my ethical conduct of the research, I instructed the participants and their parents or guardians to contact the chair of the EEA REB.

It is important to note that researchers are cautioned to rely on their conscience (Lichtman, 2006). I acknowledge and accept that personal biases might have resulted from my teaching experiences. However, I have attempted to analyze the data primarily from the lens of a researcher, being cognizant of my

experiences in the interpretation process. In my research I endeavored to minimize deception with regard to the purpose and method, and I believe that the analysis and interpretive procedures I have outlined facilitated collaborative work with the students throughout the process.

In addition to the need to seek informed consent in research, the code of ethics stresses the importance of protecting the privacy and confidentiality of the participants (Christians, 2005; Parsons & Servage, 2005; University of Alberta, 2010). All participants have a right to confidentiality, which the researcher must safeguard at all times (Christians, 2005; Creswell, 2005; Parsons & Servage, 2005). Even acknowledging this requirement, what does a researcher do when a participant divulges information that reveals that harm has been rendered to the participant? Is this the time when the researcher must ethically wear the educator “hat” and report such harm to the appropriate authorities, or does wearing the researcher hat mean that the harm cannot be disclosed? In answering this question, it is important to acknowledge that researchers have many views on educational research ethics (Deyhle, Hess, & LeCompte, 1992). Therefore, education can be seen as a unique area for qualitative research that presents particular ethical concerns (Deyhle et al., 1992). Because I am a practitioner and an investigator, I argue that, to perform due diligence, I must report such sensitive information to the appropriate individuals. This argument is based on an ethical theory called *covenantal ethics*, which speaks to researchers who highly value their relationships with their respondents (Deyhle et al., 1992). In the end, some of the information might not be usable and the value of the research product may

be diminished, but the value of the research to the participants will be greatly enhanced (Deyhle et al., 1992).

To conclude, after much reading and many critical discussions with professors and colleagues, I believe that the research design was well thought out. I acknowledged and understood that as a novice researcher I would learn a great deal throughout the process, and I welcomed and desired such learning. Aoki (1991) spoke of dwelling places for teachers as demonstrating tensionality (e.g., between two curriculums), but I felt tensionality between being a pedagogical practitioner and a researcher. As the journey progressed, it was necessary to continually reflect on the work that I was doing, with the ultimate intention of offering some insight into the participation of male high school students in physical education—some thoughts on how we can examine and promote elective physical education as an important option for male high school students, one that could ultimately influence physical activity patterns of behavior in adulthood.

CHAPTER 4:

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview

In this chapter I discuss the results of the study and introduce additional literature to link current knowledge and understandings to the insights I have gained. I hope the findings will add to the existing body of literature and inspire future inquiry.

I structured the results into two broad categories for analysis and discussion: public information on the large urban high school and the qualitative results from the research. I reiterate the details of the high school as a point of entry and discuss my observations to foster an understanding of the characteristics and programs of the school. I also present the qualitative results in relation to the three research questions and the themes and subthemes that emerged from the analysis of the data. In this chapter I present the school's story and the males' voices in a manner that I intended to be respectful and pedagogically appropriate.

The School's Story

School-generated information was useful and informative in understanding the context of this study (Creswell, 2005; Gay & Airasian, 1992). Researchers call such information "naturally occurring data" (Gay & Airasian, 1992, p. 268) or "factual information or personal documents" (Creswell, 2005, p. 158). These authors noted that such data are in the public domain and can be considered a source of information a researcher might find useful in the analysis of the data and discussion of the results. For the purposes of this study I used the

public data to create an awareness of the programs and characteristics of the school and the students. To reiterate, the public information that I have included as integral data for such awareness are the school division's demographic information, the school's handbook, the physical education department's program guide, and the school's Web site.

The school division's sources (not cited to protect the confidentiality of the school, the teachers, and the students) indicate that the high school has a student population of approximately 1,250 in Grades 10 to 12. From a point of observation, the school is a milieu of cultural groups, as reflected in its promotional handbook, which includes pictures of students from across the school population. The first page of the promotional handbook talks about attracting students who want to develop as unique individuals in a 21st-century learning environment, with a noted emphasis on the large number of programs and opportunities that the school offers that encourage students to achieve to their highest potential. The handbook contains a large amount of color and many pictures that highlight the programs and career paths on which students can embark. The visible promotion of academic programming is book-ended between student leadership and planning for the future. The graphics include a physical activity silhouette that is fourth in a line with other figures, each of which represents a program in the school. However, the promotional handbook lists physical education in 10th place despite its higher numerical placement in the graphics.

The physical education program is in the middle section of the school's promotional handbook, after student leadership, academic core, advanced placement, international, enrichment, arts, and career and technology programs, but before language, athletic, and off-campus programs, student services, and alternative programs. The same format is used for all programs, and two pages are dedicated to each program in the glossy promotional document. The physical education program at the large urban high school lists Physical Education 10, Physical Education 20, Physical Education 30, Physical Education 20 fitness, Physical Education 30 fitness, Sports Performance 15, and Physical Education 30 Leadership as the courses offered. Within the description of the physical education programs is the bold phrase "If we can provide a healthy choice to students at school, then we're doing the right thing as educators."

Further, the school's Web site reports that the school is the fastest growing high school in the school division in which it is located, and it lists all of its program offerings alphabetically. An exploration of the school's Web site revealed more information on advanced placement and international programming than in the other program areas, and the site promotes advanced placement as an academic core subject pathway that allows students to participate in college-level learning. It describes international programming as virtual classroom programming in collaboration with international partners.

In addition to the Web site and handbook information, the physical education department program guide contains a description of the curriculum content and assessment procedures for physical education at the large urban high

school. The philosophy of the Physical Education 10, Physical Education 20, and Physical Education 30 programs is as follows:

The aim of the [large urban high school] program is to develop a physically-aware individual who has an interest in physical activity as an essential component of an active, healthy lifestyle. Through the curriculum guidelines the [large urban high school's] goal is for 100% enjoyable participation.

The general aims of the physical education program at the school are a focus on skill acquisition through developmentally appropriate activities, the growth of an appreciation for physical activity, sustained participation in physical activity, and a focus on positive interactions with others. The program guide lists a large number of potential activities—a variety of traditional and nontraditional activities—for each of the Physical Education 10, Physical Education 20, and Physical Education 30 programs. The activities are both individual and group in nature, but more group activities are listed. The physical education program guide contains a section for parents that describes the creation of a positive learning environment for students as the responsibility of the department, the parents, and the students. Parents and students are asked to complete a health form and inform the teachers of any concerns or issues that might affect students' participation in physical activity. Further, the guide includes a list of expectations for students' successful participation in the physical education courses, as well as assessment procedures and criteria and sample rubrics for daily participation and quality of effort.

The Students' Voices

As I noted in Chapter 3, the data-analysis procedures involved a continual return to the data to code and explore the emerging themes (Creswell, 2005; Gay & Airasian, 1992). In the analysis (Appendix F), I coded the data and noted the emergent themes. The following sections contain a detailed analysis of these themes and the subthemes from the data categories. The analysis is organized according to the research question framework and the emergent themes in each area of examination (Appendix G).

Physical Education 10 Experiences

The themes outlined in this section are a compilation of information from all ($N = 14$) of the participants in the study. Specific comments from the participants are identified according to their groupings.³ Therefore, the comments from the group who intend to enroll in Physical Education 20 ($n = 9$) are combined with the comments from the group who do not intend to enroll in Physical Education 20 ($n = 5$) as a source of shared experiences. The themes include (a) value of physical activity (b) engagement in physical activity (c) disengagement from physical activity (d) Physical Education 10 status, and (e) teacher as leader.

³ For reasons of anonymity and confidentiality I refer to all of the participants within their groupings. For example, Y1 to Y9 indicates that the male student is in the group of boys enrolled in Physical Education 20, and N1 to N5 indicates that the male student is in the group of boys not enrolled in Physical Education 20. Furthermore, I present the students' and my own comments verbatim. Henceforth I refer to the male students enrolled in Physical Education 20 as the *yes group* and the male students not enrolled in Physical Education 20 as the *no group*.

Value of Physical Activity

For this analysis I have defined *value* as “the importance or usefulness of something” (Stevenson et al., 2002, p. 782). The majority of the participants understood and could articulate the importance of physical activity as a significant healthy behavior in their lives, either in a physical education program or in an alternate setting. As the following dialogue between two participants from one group illustrates, they generally understand fitness as an important component of good health:

Y3: They’re tied into each other, but fitness is more like being able to do sports without getting exhausted too fast, and health is, like I said before, feeling okay and going to the doctor’s regularly and eating healthy and stuff like that.

Researcher: Okay, anybody else have anything they want to add to that? Again write it down; if you don’t want to say it, write it down, and we can speak about that again on Friday Y8?

Y8: Health and fitness are similar to each other, but fitness is more of a physical feature—physical.

Researcher: . . . The last question in this group is, “What does being healthy and fit mean to you in terms of what you do every single day?” So how are health and fitness reflected in your daily life?

Y8: Eating right, eating right amounts, and exercise once in a while.

The no group of students illustrated this same understanding of the importance of fitness in their clear sense of good health in life:

N3: It is important to be healthy and fit, because if you’re not healthy and fit, . . . you can’t do anything in your life. You can’t study when you’re not healthy; if you’re not fit, you’re able to acquire different kinds of sicknesses. Your body immune system is not working well.

A dialogue with another student revealed that he considered health as a holistic concept. He clearly delineated nutrition, exercise, fitness, and mental health:

Researcher: N2, do you have an idea of what health means to you?

N2: Eating properly and exercising regularly and also being mentally healthy and . . . being with friends and family and being in good relationships and stuff.

Researcher: So then let's look at fitness now, and what does that mean to you?

N2: Specifically, physical activities and exercise, which is part of being healthy.

Another student in the no group connected his desire to be fit and healthy to his daily physical-activity routine with his pets, which enforces his understanding that fitness activities can occur away from physical education class on a daily basis:

Researcher: N5, do you have anything you want to share to that, . . . to the importance of health and fitness to you in your daily life?

N5: Basically, it's really important to eat healthy and stuff because you shouldn't go out and buy yourself junk food every day. I kind of skip lunch every single day, because everything you can buy at lunch is unhealthy for a fair price, right? . . . As for fitness, it's just kind of important to basically be active. For instance, I take my dogs every day, and I run them around my neighborhood a bit, and then I go home. And I walk them, and that's pretty much it.

Another student in the no group clearly stated his understanding of the importance of the connections between fitness and health:

Researcher: Verbally share what you think health means to you.

N1: To me it's pretty important. Now that I'm starting figure skating, I have to eat and run a bit more, . . . eat lots of salad and whatever. I eat very healthy, and so health is very important to me.

Researcher: And is your fitness important to you too?

N1: Yes. That's why I run lots now.

It is apparent from the data that most students in both groups understood the value of physical activity as an important component of fitness and overall good health. They also seemed to understand that proper nutrition is fundamental to good health.

Engagement in Physical Activity

As acknowledged, both groups of participants demonstrated an appreciation for the need to engage in physical activity for fitness and health benefits. The analysis of the data made it apparent that both groups were motivated to engage in physical activity, whether in the physical education setting or away from it. The motivation, however, was not necessarily the same between or within the groups. That is, within the theme of engagement, the emergent subthemes illustrate some unique reasons for the participants' engagement in physical activity. The subthemes include (a) enjoyment of activity (b) variety and choice, and (c) group activities.

Enjoyment of activity. The participants in both groups talked about enjoyment of activity. Some spoke of the need for fun for engagement to have value. One participant found it difficult to articulate his motivation for fun; however, he managed to state his thoughts succinctly:

Researcher: And what about when you get to do those things that you really like to do?

Y3: It's fun.

Researcher: . . . What does *fun* mean?

Y3: I don't know—fun.

Researcher: What makes it feel like fun?

Y3: The time goes by fast.

Another student in the yes group also found it difficult to articulate why the physical activities that he likes are engaging, but he defined his feeling for the favorite activity in which he engages:

Researcher: How do you feel when you play hockey?

Y9: Good.

Researcher: Can you define *good* for me? I'm interested in what
 Y9: Happy.

Another student first commented on the need to stay busy and tied his enjoyment of being physically active to how he feels after he participates. Then, after a few more students had spoken, this student particularly noted how he feels after he participates in physical activity that he has enjoyed, but he also referred to the factor of safety:

Y7: I like to play hockey after school and when I have free time, and I like to go work out, play kick boxing in my garage and keep myself busy doing something with myself or something and not waste any hours and stuff You feel good, but you just can't do it any more. You want to keep on doing it, but you can't. It's not good for you; you don't want to get hurt.

Other participants also felt a sense of enjoyment and motivation in being physically active. Enjoyment for the following participant was clearly connected to solitude:

Researcher: The last question in this group for you, N1, is, "What about your life encourages or discourages you from being physically active?" So in your life right now, what is helping you be active? . . .
 N1: I run so I can have time to be alone and think Yes, I just like being alone.

The no group identified interesting motivations for being physically active.

Whereas one participant sought solitude, another sought inclusion:

Researcher: So, N4, what types of physical activities do you like?
 N4: Sports I can play, like basketball and stuff.
 Researcher: What about things you don't like doing?
 N4: Whatever I *can't* do?
 Researcher: . . . Can you explain really quickly why you can't do some of that?
 N4: When they do stuff I can't do because I don't walk any more.

This participant was motivated to engage in physical activity when he was included in the activities, and to be included, he needed to be able to participate in his wheelchair. When I probed further, I felt reassured when he told me that his peers in his Physical Education 10 class included him as much as possible. One of his classmates also joined the conversation to clarify what I was asking.

Researcher: There [are] quite a few able-bodied peers in that class. You're the only boy in a wheelchair; do they include you? Do you feel included?

N4: Yes.

Researcher: How do you know that they're including you?

N4: Because they're—

N1: Do they pass the ball to you and everything like that?

N4: Yes.

N1: Do they keep you involved?

N4: Yes.

Researcher: Are they respectful of you?

N4: Yes.

This dialogue illustrates that a participant confined to a wheelchair found inclusion critical to his motivation to engage in physical activity and that a peer in his class was willing to persist to ensure that he understood what I was asking him.

A few students also considered personal fitness motivation to enjoy being engaged in physical activity. Some of the comments from both groups illustrate the need for enjoyment to be connected to fitness and the benefits of being physical fit:

Researcher: Why do you like to go out there and play soccer? What motivates you to do that?

N3: What encourages me is, when I play soccer I become active, and I do my activities well and . . . study well . . . [They] make me fit and strong.

The dialogue below is an interesting discussion between a few of the yes-group participants that focused on motivational factors that appear to be connected to their desire to be healthy and fit, although one of the members conveyed it rather crudely. Two of the participants commented on illness as a discouraging factor. If it is tied to fitness, it is possible that staying healthy is a motivational factor in engagement in physical activity:

- Y9: What encourages me is seeing those really fat people on TV. Don't want to be like them, so I just stay fit.
 Researcher: And is there anything that discourages you?
 Y9: No, not really.
 Y8: What discourages me is being sick and I can't do my best to be active.
 Researcher: Is there anything that encourages you to be active, motivates you to be active?
 Y8: My personal goals
 Y6: My parents motivate me to be active. They're always do this and that and being outside.
 Researcher: And is there anything in your life that would discourage you to be active?
 Y6: No, not really; only if I'm sick or something.

Variety and choice. For some participants variety and choice appear to be important for engagement. The members of the yes group considered more variety and choice of physical activities in physical education beneficial to engagement. However, they did not assert that the current lack of variety and choice would reduce their engagement in activities in the class. The following comments focus on how the participants would encourage males to engage in physical education:

- Y3: Like Mr. Sport does sometimes—we vote on the things we want to do and give them the things they actually want to do instead of just the same old thing.
 Y7: I would first talk to them, talk to the students to see what they liked and see what sports they like.
 Y2: I don't have five things; I have one.

Researcher: I only need you to say one.

Y2: Okay, once again, an increase in variety of activities and stuff.

Another student in the yes group also felt that variety and choice are important to motivate engagement in physical education activities:

Researcher: Y6, what would you do to encourage participation?

Y6: I would see what they like to do I would get new equipment.

Researcher: Anything else?

Y6: And I would make new activities . . . like games and stuff.

Even the no group clearly believed that variety and choice are key to encourage engagement in physical education activities. The following student's well-thought-out plan justifies his agreement that variety and choice are important:

N3: I would first talk, take them and talk to them about the usefulness of participating in phys. ed. Second, I would ask all of them all different kinds of sports they like to do. Third, I would choose what kinds of games are available among the selected ones. And fourth, I would let everyone involve himself in the kind of sports he likes to do. Fifth, I would let them select or not the kind of games they are doing the whole week for their preparation.

Another member of the no group offered an equally poignant plan to increase engagement in physical education activities:

N1: I'd get new equipment and combine classes with the girls and—yes, that's awesome.

Researcher: You like that? You like that when two classes are put together?

N1: Yes.

Researcher: Why do you like that?

N1: Really?

Researcher: Yes, tell me.

N1: It's pretty obvious.

Researcher: You like having girls in your class?

N1: Yeppers. And I'd do something that everyone wants to do.

Researcher: Can you explain that a little bit?

N1: A game in gym. I'd do something that everyone would want to do.

This same participant returned to this thought later to discuss another important consideration:

N1: Oh for the last question. For the top five things, if I was the teacher or whatever, I'd make some of the activities outside.

Researcher: Why is that?

N1: I like to be outside, and I know other people do.

Both groups appear to have had well-thought-out strategies to increase the engagement in physical activities in their physical education classes. The emphasis on more variety and choice of games types of activities is also an important factor.

Group activities. Some participants connected engagement to group activities. That is, it appears that they enjoy the benefits of participating with peers. A member of the no group reported his thoughts:

Researcher: When you're playing soccer, how does that make you feel?

N3: Makes me feel better. It makes me share. I love shooting. It's a kind of interesting game It makes me feel better because I enjoy playing with fellow classmates. Like soccer. I enjoy playing it with other students.

A member of the yes group suggested that he too likes to participate in group activities and finds them engaging: "I like hockey and soccer and wrestling sometimes, if it's in a game" (Y3). Another student in the yes group commented on outside group activities as a source of engagement. The dialogue is in relation to encouraging participation in physical education class:

Researcher: Y5, what would you keep the same?

Y5: I would keep probably the teacher the same for the students. In the fall

we have some of the sports outside, and because it's snowing early, then we miss sports outside. We didn't get to some of those.

Many of the yes-group participants commented on engagement in group activities, most of which are traditional team sports:

Y6: I like playing basketball.

Y3: I like more sports where everybody is active at once, as a team.

Y4: I like to do track and field after school, and I like to play basketball too.

Y2: I like snowboarding, basketball, and sometimes baseball. It depends on how I'm feeling. That's pretty much it.

Y7: I like playing hockey, soccer sometimes, basketball.

The theme of engagement is complex. Students in both groups found enjoyment, variety, and choice to be important determinants of participation and engagement in physical education activities. The students in the yes group also considered group activities a factor in engagement.

What then are the factors in disengagement from physical education activities?

Disengagement From Physical Activity

The data analysis revealed reasons the participants in both the yes group and the no group disengaged from physical activity. However, more of the comments on disengagement came from the no group in relation to Physical Education 10. Thus, it appears that the yes group participated even if they disliked some portion of the activity in the physical education class. The no group was less optimistic and did not take that same approach. In fact, for some, their disengagement from Physical Education 10 connected directly to their decision not to enroll in Physical Education 20. The subthemes that emerged from the

theme of disengagement are (a) boredom and frustration and (b) a competitive focus.

Boredom and frustration. Students in the no group commented on their boredom and frustration with some of the physical activities in physical education class. One student particularly disliked dodge ball, and after some probing, he explained his position:

N3: I don't know why but I feel like I don't want to involve myself in playing dodge ball.

Researcher: Okay, when you're playing dodge ball, how does that make you feel?

N3: To me, I don't like playing dodge ball. By the time they start playing, I feel like I want to just sit down and watch, not playing.

Another student in the no group clearly expressed his frustration in physical activity classes, particular group activities:

Researcher: What activities do you like?

N1: Really, nothing, unless they're individual.

Researcher: So you don't like activities that would be what?

N1: In groups or anything that involves other people.

Researcher: Now, how do the individual activities make you feel?

N1: Safe, I guess.

This same student further illustrated his frustration and his willingness to fail:

Researcher: N1, what activities do you like or not like in phys. ed. class?

N1: I hate them all, because most of them involve groups and lots of people, and I don't like to do anything in groups of people, where people can see me and everything.

Researcher: How does it make you feel when you're in those situations?

N1: I don't know. I just stay out of everything even if I have to fail that day.

Two members of the no group referred to the overcompetitive nature of their peers and displayed their frustration with physical education class; their goal was merely to pass:

N5: I pretty much just do them anyway because I've got to, to pass the class, but . . . I don't give 100% when doing them.

Researcher: And what about the activities you do like? How do they make you feel?

N5: I try hard in them and everything, but usually people get too competitive or they are too good at something, and they end up screwing it up because they ball-hog or something like that.

Researcher: This is very important information that you have shared with me, so I appreciate your honesty, N5. N2, what about you? What activities do you like and then not like in school?

N2: Sort of like N5, there's a lot of activities I don't like or I'm sort of indifferent to them, and I just do them because I've got to pass the course, and I don't give 100%. But some of them we don't usually do in gym—well, skiing; we're skiing on Thursday. But yes, most of the activities I like to do you don't usually do in phys. ed.

The yes group also described triggers of boredom and frustration. For a few, boredom came from participating in activities that involve sitting:

Researcher: Y1, what would you keep the same or change about your Phys. Ed. 10 program right now?

Y1: I'd keep the same teacher, I'd keep the same activities, and I'd change the sit-down sports because not everyone is participating and it's boring watching.

Researcher: What about the activities that are the more sit-down activities, Y3, that you didn't like?

Y3: Frustrated you can't be in the game too helping out. You get kind of bored.

Another student complained that dance could be deleted because he found it boring, although he was the only student who mentioned it: "Probably get rid of the dance unit and exchange it with something else because it's boring" (Y9). A few of the yes-group students commented that running is a boring activity and one that they did not like:

Y1: Activities I don't like is running. It makes me more exhausted, and I tend not to try as hard.

Y7: Oh! [laughs]. I don't like running.

Boredom and frustration seem to be common reasons for disengagement.

In summary, the yes group did not let frustration and boredom affect their participation or engagement in physical activity, whereas the no group chose to avoid situations that cause boredom and frustration, even if there is a risk of such an action affecting their achievement in the course.

Competitive focus. Although some of the no group alluded to a connection between disengagement and a competitive focus, only one of the participants in the group commented on it:

Researcher: What sort of physical activities do you like to do in school and you don't like to do in school?

N5: I pretty much don't like most of the sports that the school does, and when I do like them, it is usually ruined by other kids because they're too competitive.

Disengagement, then, can be thought of as containing subthemes of boredom and frustration and a competitive focus. The data reveal that disengagement has had longer-term effects for the no group. Of particular concern is the boredom, frustration, and competitive focus that the participants identified.

The patterns of experiences had an effect of the thoughts of both groups on the status of Physical Education 10.

Physical Education 10 Status

I asked the students in this study to comment on the current status of Physical Education 10, on whether it should be an elective or a required subject. The majority of the students in the no group and roughly half of the students in

the yes group felt that it should be required. Some of the members of the no group discussed their perspectives:

Researcher: And why do you think it should be a required subject?

N3: It should be required [for] many reasons. When you did Phys. Ed. 10, you'd be able to know the consequences of taking it, of being physically active.

Researcher: And should Phys. Ed. 10 be an option or a required subject?

N5: I think Phys. Ed. 10 should actually be required because it's . . . just a basic thing you should have, being able to be fit.

Members of the yes group also expressed their thoughts on why physical education should be mandatory:

Y7: I think it should be required for everyone.

Researcher: And you'd have no problem taking it if it's required or anything like that?

Y7: No, I'd have no problem.

Researcher: Y9, what would you keep the same about phys. ed. right now, or what would you change if you were the boss?

Y9: Keep everything the same.

Researcher: You like it?

Y9: Yes.

Researcher: And do you think it should be optional or required?

Y9: Required.

Researcher: So there's no question about that at all in your mind?

Y9: No.

Researcher: And you think required because what?

Y9: Because everybody should do it to get active in their life.

Conversely, students in both groups also expressed their opinions on why physical education should be an elective subject. Their thoughts ranged from the need to give students choice to the belief that is not necessary for all students:

N2: I don't really know what I would change about it, but I think it should be an option because some kids some kids like it and excel at it, and then other kids don't like it or don't need it for what they plan to do in the future. Or it can be a waste of a block for them; they could be doing an academic subject or an option that would help them in the future.

Another student struggled with English, but he was able to convey his thoughts:

Y5: An option because people, when they grow up they don't want to use some; they [are] going to be lazy anyway. So I think the right to pick our option is useful for them going on instead of the option that they're not going to use if going on.

Most students who felt that physical education should be an option shared the same thoughts. The following student also struggled with English, but his meaning is clear, and the second student's thoughts are very concise:

Y4: Yes, I think it would be option too because if it's kind of forcing to take it, some people will don't. They will not do these right things, and other people who want to take it is going to be kind of angry with the people who's not doing it right.

Y8: I say it should be an option because those who don't want it won't put in a good effort, and it wouldn't matter very much.

Yet another student made an interesting comment on the status of Physical Education 10. The dialogue below indicates a considerable amount of probing to elicit the young man's opinion, but he seems to make a case for Physical Education 10 as both elective and required, depending on the outcomes delivered by the program:

Researcher: And what would in your mind make it necessary to make Phys. Ed. 10 an option? Because you said you could see how it all could still be an optional class.

N4: I think it should be because all we do is just games and stuff whatever.

Researcher: Okay, so can I ask this then? If it was more fitness and health related, could you see it being a required subject, and you'd agree with that?

N4: Yes.

Researcher: Okay, but games and those sorts of things, you don't see how that's a requirement.

N4: Yes.

The students' opinions on whether Physical Education 10 should be an elective or a required subject were well thought out, even though some found it difficult to articulate them.

Teacher as Leader

The final theme to emerge on the topic of Physical Education 10 experiences focuses on the teacher. I did not cue the students with a question on their teacher; rather, in the discussion on the current structure of their Physical Education 10 class, they shared their insights into the teacher's supervision and disposition. The following comments speak vaguely to the teacher's disposition:

Y1: I'd keep the same teacher, I'd keep the same activities, and I'd change the sit-down sports because not everyone is participating, and it's boring to watch.

Researcher: What do you like about your teacher currently? That's a fair question because you'd keep the same teacher.

Y1: He's nice.

Y3: And the same teacher would be good

Researcher: For the reasons that are what?

Y3: He's a good teacher.

Researcher: Good teacher. Anything else you want to add?

Y3: No.

Researcher: Y2? What would you keep the same?

Y2: Same teacher. I'm going to have to go with both of them.

Some of the students' comments focused on the teacher's supervision and control. Again, they made their comments in response to the question on the current Physical Education 10 program:

N5: What I would change is the fact that the teachers don't really watch when they are having us run, and they don't really have us run much. If you're running in a class, he tells us to run two times around the big field, and there's plenty of kids who just kind of do a half run, turn around and come back, and the teachers don't even notice it.

Researcher: So that's what you would change?

N5: Yes, just keeping a closer eye on it.

Researcher: So is there anything in the phys. ed. class that you would keep the same, or are you just sort of indifferent to that?

N2: I think the sports are good. Like N5 said, certain kids like them. But yes, the teacher—keeping a closer eye on kids and everything. Yes, things can get pretty crazy with pubescent males.

The data show that the students recognized the teacher as the leader. They stressed that it is important that teachers provide structure and control for learning to occur.

The combined themes of value of physical activity, engagement, disengagement, Physical Education 10 status, and teacher as leader are all factors in the students' experiences in Physical Education 10. Of interest is that these experiences did not seem to impact the students' decisions to enroll in Physical Education 20.

Reasons for Choosing to Enroll in Physical Education 20

Two themes emerged from this category. Students who choose to enroll in Physical Education 20 seem to possess program knowledge. The knowledge that the students shared did not seem to be the determining factor in their decision to enroll in Physical Education 20. Rather, information pertaining to program status appears to be more of an impetus to enroll in Physical Education 20.

Program Knowledge

The data reveal that the students in the yes group had limited knowledge of the Physical Education 20 program at their school. Most of their awareness came from another peer or from their perceptions of the Physical Education 20 program; that is, what they believed it to be. The following dialogue with a few students illustrates this observation:

Researcher: What do you know about Phys. Ed. 20 in your school? Who can answer that question? Y8?

Y8: My brother told me about PE 20. He says it's a lot more funner. A friend too.

Researcher: Anybody else tell me what they know about Phys. Ed. 20 in this school? Y2?

Y2: I think it's more competitive.

Researcher: What else? Y3?

Y3: There won't be as many people who don't want to do phys. ed. in there, so it'll be a lot better because everybody wants to be there.

Researcher: What do you mean, *better*?

Y3: Everybody'll be playing a sport instead of half the kids playing and then half the kids just sitting on the side.

Researcher: Anybody else want to share what they know about Phys. Ed. 20 already in the building?

Y4: That some activities are more intense, like the for-fitness thing that we do, the 12-minute run. You have to do it faster or for more time.

It is evident that these students did not have an in-depth knowledge of the physical education program at this large urban high school, but the males' lack of knowledge did not affect their decision to enroll in Physical Education 20. Their reasons for enrolling also focused on the program's status and their beliefs about it.

Program Status

Currently in Alberta, Physical Education 20 is an elective subject, and this program status became an overarching theme for the male students who intended to enroll in Physical Education 20. From this theme the following subthemes emerged: the elective nature of Physical Education 20, the homogeneous grouping, and the perception of competitiveness. To foster an understanding of the theme in its entirety, I will explore each subtheme separately.

Elective or required. The majority of the students who intended to enroll in Physical Education 20 thought that the course should be elective—an option

that they could choose to take. There seemed to be an underlying opinion that choice creates a sense of ownership and that their participation and engagement in the course would therefore be greater. However, their opinions frequently seemed to be assumptions from observations of their Physical Education 10 peers:

Y8: It should be optional, because if people in Phys. Ed. 10 aren't active, why should they join PE 20 if they're going to sit on their butts all day talking to their friends?

Researcher: Y5 you've made a decision to take Phys. Ed. 20?

Y5: Yes.

Researcher: What made you make that decision?

Y5: Probably like what Y8 said, because some people talk a lot, talk with their friends, and they're not going to play anything; they just stand by a wall and talk.

Another discussion with two students further emphasized the male students' perceptions that their nonengaged peers do not like physical education:

Y1: It should be optional, because if people didn't like PE 10, they wouldn't like PE 20 and might not want to participate.

Y6: I think it should be optional, because if some people didn't like it in Phys. Ed. 10, they're not going to like it in Phys. Ed. 20.

It is interesting that some students in the yes group thought that physical education should be a required subject. One student focused his thoughts, not on credits, but on fitness and health promotion:

Y9: It should be required.

Researcher: It should be required? Now that's an important opinion. Can you share why you think that?

Y9: Because everybody should stay fit. They shouldn't just take it to graduate high school; they should just keep going.

Another of this student's peers in the yes group echoed this view, and although he discussed sports, he conveyed his belief in fitness and health promotion beyond high school:

Y7: I always liked gym since kindergarten till now, and yes, I'm always going to take it until I finish school.

Researcher: And do you think Phys. Ed. 20 should be a required subject or an optional subject?

Y7: It should be required.

Researcher: Why do you think that?

Y7: Because I think everybody should be able to take sports, take gym, and know how to stay healthy and stay active and keep yourself always going.

In addition to the optional-versus-required status that the yes group discussed, they believed that Physical Education 20 would be a fun option and that the credits are easy to attain if a student enjoys physical activity. One of the students spoke of these two reasons for his decision to enroll in Physical Education 20: "It's a chance for me to exercise, and it's easy credits, and also it's fun" (Y1). Another conversation confirmed that, for some of the yes-group members, their belief that the credits are easy to attain was an important factor:

Y8: Less paperwork and fun activities.

Y7: Keep myself busy in school; always stay fit and have a good—like to stay fit in high school.

Y1: I'm taking it because it's fun, chance for me to exercise, and easy credits.

Although the opinions of the students who intended to enroll in Physical Education 20 differed with regard to the elective and optional status of the course, they seemed to agree more that Physical Education 20 is fun, an easy source of credits, and a good opportunity to be physically active.

Of interest is the information that emerged as a subtheme of homogeneous grouping and the students' beliefs in the benefits of homogeneous grouping.

Homogeneous grouping. The research participants in the yes group believed that if students are given the choice of enrolling or not in Physical

Education 20, those who want to take it will do so. Although this seems straightforward, there was an apparent assumption that such choice creates a group of like-minded individuals and that this homogeneous group would then willingly engage in physical activity. Some students noted that students in Physical Education 10 who appeared not to like physical education should not enroll in Physical Education 20. The following comments illustrate this thought pattern:

Y3: There won't be as many people who don't want to do phys. ed. in there, so it'll be a lot better because everybody wants to be there.

Y8: PE 20 should be elective because those who choose it will have a better time, better feeling than not taking it.

Y9: The ones that want to take it will be the only ones that are in it.

Y1: It should be optional, because if people didn't like PE 10, they wouldn't like PE 20 and might not want to participate.

The perception of competitiveness. Of note is that, although the yes group affirmed that group activities usually focus on traditional team sports as discussed in the Physical Education 10 Experiences section, very few indicated competition as a characteristic of Physical Education 20. A participant referred to the intensity of the activity rather than to competition:

Y2: I think that it's [Phys. Ed. 20] more competitive.

Y4: Some activities are more intense, like the for-fitness thing that we do, the 12-minute run.

The theme of program status emerged from the discussion of the students who planned to enroll in Physical Education 20, and the subthemes of elective or required and homogeneous grouping. It appears that the students who intended to enroll in Physical Education 20 would do so regardless of their knowledge of the program and its elective or required status. Rather, they would enroll to continue

their enjoyment of group activities and engage in physical activity for the purposes of fun and fitness with like-minded peers. What then of the students who chose not to enroll in Physical Education 20?

Reasons for Students' Decisions Not to Enroll in Physical Education 20

Students who chose not to enroll in Physical Education 20 did so for unique reasons. Program knowledge and program status emerged as common themes in their reasons for not enrolling in Physical Education 20. Further, the theme of disenchantment with Physical Education 10 experiences emerged as significant in their decisions not to enroll in the course.

Program Knowledge

Like their yes-group peers, the students who chose not to enroll in Physical Education 20 appeared to have limited program knowledge. That is, they did not seem to be aware of the nature of the Physical Education 20 program in their school, as the following dialogue illustrates:

Researcher: What do you know about Phys. Ed. 20 in your school? N4, do you know anything about Phys. Ed. 20 in your school?

N4: Not really.

Researcher: N5?

N5: No, not really.

Researcher: N2?

N2: I know you can do some more advanced activities and stuff, but not much.

Researcher: Okay, N3, do you know anything about Phys. Ed. 20 in your school?

N3: I don't know.

Researcher: N1?

N1: Nope!

This question was close ended, but neither the interview of the no-group students nor the students' written comments revealed further knowledge of the program

except for the participant who thought that more advanced activities might be involved. Therefore the no group's program knowledge does not differ dramatically from that of their yes-group peers. The research data reveal that disenchantment with their Physical Education 10 experiences accounted for a greater proportion of the decisions not to enroll in Physical Education 20.

Program Status

All of the students who did not intend to enroll in Physical Education 20 felt that it should be an elective subject for various reasons. Two students commented on scheduling issues and other course priorities:

N2: Yes, some of the things are just for scheduling; I have other things that I need to take and everything.

N3: I don't want to take Phys. Ed. 20 because I want to take [another subject for a future career].

One student commented on the importance of physical activity even if students choose not to enroll in Physical Education 20. For him, a healthy lifestyle includes activities outside the school environment:

N3: [It is important to be fit.] So even if you can't take Phys. Ed. 20, but . . . you're going to your outside school activities; you'd be . . . playing soccer, basketball. Even if you're not taking it at school, but you know that it's good to have some games that you're involving yourself in.

Yet another student pointed out that his wheelchair is a barrier to his participation in physical education and asserted that physical education should be optional. This comment might have been intended to link these two ideas, but it was difficult to frame because I could not clearly understand whether he did not like physical education because of his wheelchair or for some other reason that he

did not indicate. This student was difficult to probe for information, but he clarified his thoughts in the following conversation:

Researcher: And why did you decide not to take Phys. Ed. 20? What helped you make that decision? Was it because of your wheelchair? Was it because of something else?
 N4: Yes, my chair for one; second, I just don't really like it.
 Researcher: So you think Phys. Ed. 20 should be an option?
 N4: Yes.

Disenchantment With Physical Education 10 Experiences

For the purposes of my analysis I used Stevenson et al.'s (2002) definition of *disenchant*: to “make someone disillusioned” (p. 199). Students who chose not to enroll in physical education expressed feelings of disenchantment, of which emotional pain and lack of individual activities were subthemes. That is, emotional pain made the students generally unhappy, and a lack of individual activities discouraged them from enrolling in Physical Education 20.

Emotional pain. Emotional pain is a subtheme of the no group's disenchantment with Physical Education 10 experiences. Most of the students in the no group spoke candidly about the pain and emotional stress that they felt in the class:

N1: For me it's really scary to go to gym every single day, knowing that everyone will probably be staring at me and everything, and I just don't really like to go to get—I hate it!
 Researcher: That's tough for you isn't it?
 N1: Mm-hmm.

Another dialogue with the no-group participants exposed equally painful comments:

N5: To be blunt, I just hate other people. I mean, they are annoying.
 Researcher: N2?

N2: Yes; a lot of the yes, because it's mandatory. [It's] not like with the academic classes, they split you up into like academic kids and not as academic kids. But with phys. ed. it's all the same kids in the same group, and you get put together with a lot of weird kids. And also, phys. ed. is the kind of place where kids will say if they have a stain on their shorts, "That's your mom's period from last night."

N1: Oh God, so true, so true!

One participant in particular described the exhaustion of the emotionally draining situation in Physical Education 10:

N2: It's just like when you're in phys. ed. and not good at a specific sport, the kids will [say], "Oh, you suck!" or "You're a pussy!" or whatever. Blah, blah, blah. And it just drains on you, and I go home really tired because it's the last thing I have in the day, and it just tires me out, not just physically, but emotionally too.

Yet another student referred to the emotional pain of his current physical education experience, which seemed to be part of his decision not to enroll in Physical Education 20. This comment is particularly distressing:

Researcher: So, N1, why aren't you taking Phys. Ed. 20?

N1: Because the gym I'm taking now, it's hard enough that I go through it already; I don't want to go through it again.

It is evident not only that physical education was inflicting emotional pain on some of the males in the no group, but also that the hurt remained. The actions of their peers could have long-term effects on their participation in physical education. It was disconcerting to hear these comments considering that, as I have noted, the participants in both groups enjoyed physical activity and understood its benefits for a healthy lifestyle. The types of activities in which most of the no-group participants wanted to engage also emerged as a subtheme of disenchantment with their Physical Education 10 experiences. Some members of

the no group as well as their yes-group peers preferred variety and choice, but in ways that included more individual activities.

Lack of individual activities. Even though both research groups shared the desire for variety and choice of physical activities, most students who chose not to enroll in Physical Education 20 expressed a need for such a consideration to include more individual activities. Comments from some of the no-group students reveal this latter desire in their personal pursuits of physical activity:

N2: I play golf with my dad in the summer and ski with my family and friends in the winter.

N1: I would try to make some more individual things like sports and whatever; individual stuff, yep.

N5: I also like to go out to an acreage because I like to ride horses and such.

N1: Draw, run. I like to help elders. I like to do animation on the computer, and I am starting to do some figure skating.

Their desire for individual activities in physical education were embedded in other comments; for example.

N1: I hate them all [activities], because most of them involve groups and lots of people, and I don't like to do anything in groups of people, where people can see me and everything.

Another student spoke to the creativity that is possible in a physical education setting that has greater choice and a variety of physical activities:

N5: I do think it should be required, but I also think that if you really don't like PE 10, then you should be able to somehow videotape yourself doing something else active and bring that in to the teacher and get marks for that instead.

For some of the students who chose not to enroll in Physical Education 20, disenchantment with their Physical Education 10 experiences factored into their

decision not to enroll, and emotional pain and lack of individual activities emerged as subthemes.

In conclusion, the three categories of data from the responses to the research questions were the male students' common experiences of Physical Education 10, their reasons for enrolling in Physical Education 20, and their reasons for not enrolling in Physical Education 20. These categories included many themes and subthemes: value of physical activity, engagement in physical activity, disengagement from physical activity, Physical Education 10 status, and teacher as leader. The following discussion focuses on the data analysis and links to current trends in the participation of male students in high school physical education.

Discussion

The Research Questions Revisited

The impetus behind this research was the need to understand the participation trends of high school males in elective physical education. Other research has given voice to female students in response to similar queries about female trends in elective high school physical education, but not as much voice to males. Therefore, with this awareness came my desire to hear male high school students' perspectives on elective high school physical education.

Throughout the analysis I used the three research questions as a framework for the emerging themes: (a) What are the experiences of male high school students with regard to Physical Education 10? (b) What are the reasons that male high school students enroll in Physical Education 20? and (c) What are

the reasons that male high school students do not enroll in Physical Education 20? The ensuing section captures the voices of the male high school students who volunteered to participate in the study, details the research findings, and includes a pedagogical discussion. With such considerations, I then explain the educational significance.

The Research Findings Revisited

The male high school students enrolled in Physical Education 10 who participated in this study value physical activity as an important component of fitness and a healthy lifestyle. They commented on the need for proper nutrition, regular exercise, and attention to mental health as important to healthy living. Further, many of the students in both research groups noted that physical activity can occur in settings outside the physical education class. In addition, the students made connections between fitness and physical activities and suggested that a higher fitness level increases endurance in activities. The value that the students placed on physical activity is refreshing considering the current distressing activity patterns of Canadian youth (Active Healthy Kids Canada, 2009).

In addition to valuing physical activity, the Grade 10 males readily engaged in physical education that involved enjoyment, variety, and choice. That is, most of the students in both study groups enjoyed physical education when the activities were fun, inclusive, personally beneficial, and included a fitness component. Some described fun activities as making them happy and being held in an environment that involves everyone. Other students commented on the need for personal benefits such as fitness and health for engagement in physical

education to be meaningful. For example, a student from the no group said that he enjoys running because of the solitude and time to think, but he also recognized the important fitness benefit from running. Other students connected engagement to group activities. Several of the participants in the yes group commented that their engagement in physical education is linked to group activities that involve everyone. Most of the group activities that these males discussed are traditional in nature. However, an interesting observation is that the yes-group students tend to engage in physical education regardless of the activity. That is, it appears that their enjoyment of physical activity is one of the most important factors in their participation.

Conversely, disengagement from Physical Education 10 occurs from boredom and frustration with physical activity. A great many of the yes-group students noted that this is often the case when they participate with students who do not appear to enjoy physical activity or physical education. They suggested that students who stand and do not become actively involved in physical education class create an environment that is conducive to boredom with the activity. This situation further frustrates members of the yes group because they find it difficult to understand such lethargy. However, in some cases competition is the source of frustration, according to a few members of the no group who felt that the males in their physical education class ruin the experience when they become too competitive and take over the game. Some students from both groups commented on offering choice and a variety of activities as possible ways to alleviate some of the frustration and boredom.

As with disengagement, the opinions of both groups on the current status of Physical Education 10 varied. Most of the yes-group participants felt that Physical Education 10 should be required, but less than half of the no-group members shared that view. Students in both groups who felt that Physical Education 10 should be required believed that it is important for students to learn about fitness and health in physical education class. Of particular note is the thoughtful comment of a student in the no group that if physical education is about fitness, it should be required; however, if games are the focus, Physical Education 10 should be elective. There is therefore an apparent disconnect for this student between the types of games and the fitness benefits that may occur.

Another noticeable observation is the lack of knowledge of most of the students in both groups about the Physical Education 20 program. In particular, some students openly commented that they knew nothing about Physical Education 20, despite the information that is available to them in the school's handbook and the physical education department's program guide. As noted, the school's program guide lists the activities, assessment procedures, and expectations for all physical education programs. Possible reasons for this knowledge gap are that students were not aware of the program guide, that they did not retain a copy for perusal, or that they did not listen when the teacher explained the program to the class. It is also conceivable that the teacher gave the students limited information on Physical Education 20; however, that seems unlikely considering that some students who volunteered to participate in the study identified that they planned to enroll. Again, an apparent disconnect exists.

It appears that the students based their decisions to enroll in Physical Education 20 on their perceptions of physical education rather than on tangible information on the course. Students who chose to enroll in Physical Education 20 did so because of their apparent desire to participate in physical activity with like-minded peers in a homogeneous grouping. Some of their comments focused on the belief that students who do not like physical activity will not enroll in Physical Education 20. These students did not state why they believed this, but I assume that this belief results from the observation of the decreased engagement of their physical education peers. Further, many of the students expressed their desire that Physical Education 20 be an optional course and felt that such status would ensure that only students who choose to take physical education will enroll. This contention is somewhat erroneous, because experience shows that, although physical education is optional, students also take the course for reasons that have less to do with a desire to be physically active and more to do with filling their schedules. Congruent with this thought, several students had chosen to take Physical Education 20 because of their perception that credits in physical education are easier to attain than in other option courses. A few students concurred and commented on the lack of paperwork involved in the physical education program. They did not elaborate on the source of this idea.

It is interesting that students who did not plan to enroll in Physical Education 20 cited a reason for the decision that differed from those of their yes-group peers: Disenchantment with Physical Education 10 was an important factor in the choice. The two most prominent sources of disenchantment seemed to be

the experience of emotional pain and the lack of individual activities. Some of the students spoke openly about the bullying behavior that makes daily participation in physical education difficult. One male student noted his disdain for group activities because he felt that his physical education peers continually stare at him and make him feel extremely uncomfortable. Yet another student echoed the hurtful experience of name calling and teasing that occurs when the teacher is unaware. Furthermore, some members of the no group felt that chaos in the class frequently ruined the physical activity experiences for all students and expressed the concern that the teacher needs to supervise situations more closely. It is important to note that fewer than half of the members of the no group had chosen not to enroll in Physical Education 20 for reasons of scheduling and course priorities because they needed to enroll in other academic courses that are required to pursue postsecondary plans. Therefore, the majority of the no group chose not to enroll in Physical Education 20 because of the issue of disenchantment.

Having discussed the themes and subthemes, I feel that it is worthy of note that some students in both the yes and no groups participated in physical activity opportunities outside their physical education class such as community or school programs. Examples included team participation in a sport in school or in the community, individual participation in a sport in school or in the community, and participation in physical activities with family and friends. However, the students seemed to equate sports with physical activity in physical education class. That is, members of both groups frequently referred to the activities and games in physical

education class as “sports.” The only reference that any participant in either group made to other types of games (i.e., games with little organization or cooperative games) was to the dodge ball game that they played in class.

In addition, the research data reveal a noticeable absence of references to assessment practices in the physical education class. Admittedly, I did not ask a question about assessment, but I would think that physical education students who are near the end of a course might have brought up the topic in connection with other experiences. For example, Gibbons et al., (1999) reported that assessment emerged as a concern in group discussions on the value of physical education. I am left to wonder why assessment was apparently not an issue for these students. It is possible that ideas related to assessment might have arisen if I had been able to spend more time with the research participants.

In summary, the research captured multiple themes related to Physical Education 10 experiences, the decision to enroll in Physical Education 20, and the decision not to enroll in Physical Education 20. These themes hold educational significance in that they reinforce what we currently know about trends in the participation of male students in high school physical education and they present new information for consideration.

CHAPTER 5:

CONCLUSION

Educational Significance

As I noted earlier, physical educators understand the important benefits of physical activity for all youngsters and the equal value of such active living as the focal point of a quality physical education program (Spence et al., 2001). This awareness is reinforced in the framework of the Alberta Physical Education Program of Studies (Alberta Learning, 2000), which states that “physical activity is vital to all aspects of normal growth and development, and the benefits are widely recognized” (p. 1). However, a considerable number of research studies have identified key areas of concern, even with the known benefits of physical education, that are potentially linked to the enrolment of high school students in elective physical education programs and, consequently, their lifelong pursuit of physical activity (Fairclough, 2003; Fraser-Thomas & Beaudoin, 2004; Gibbons et al., 1999; Gibbons & Gaul, 2004; Humbert, 1995; Lowry et al., 2005; Mandigo et al., 2004; Spence et al., 2001; Spence et al., 2004).

The results of this research reinforce much of what we already know about the apparent need for high school students to find worth or merit in physical education and choose to enroll in elective physical education (Gibbons et al., 1999; Humbert, 2006). The male students in the yes group in this study reported that they value physical education as an environment in which they can engage in physical activity, whereas students who are disenchanted with physical education hesitate to enroll (Gibbons et al., 1999; Jutras, 2009). The findings from prior

research concur with these results and insights in that some of the male students in the no-group found little merit in physical education (but not physical activity) and did not plan to enroll in elective physical education. Many of these participants offered disenchantment with physical education as the primary reason. However, even the yes-group participants noted that boredom and frustration can be factors in disengagement from activity in physical education, but this was not a consideration in their decision to enroll or not enroll in Physical Education 20.

In addition to the merits of physical education, the research also identified variety and choice as important to students in their decision to enroll or not enroll in elective physical education (Fairclough, 2003; Humbert, 2006; Jutras, 2009). Most of the students in this study expressed the need for choice of and variety in physical activities as important to feel that their voices are respected in course programming. As I mentioned earlier, studies focused on the voices of female physical education students and combined-gender studies have reported these findings (Gibbons et al, 1999; Humbert, 2006; Jutras, 2009; Robinson, 2009). Furthermore, most of the students in my study desired that Physical Education 20 be elective and that the decision on enrolment be left to the student. It is important to reemphasize that the vast majority of the students understand the importance of physical activity as an integral component of personal well-being.

Furthermore, the students in the no-group also identified a need to feel secure in physical education. Some of the students in the no-group described the emotional pain of their interactions with their physical education peers, and the

hurtful comments from and actions of many males in a physical education class are factors in some students' disengagement from and disenchantment with physical education. Such research findings have also emerged from other studies on females and the combined genders (Gibbons et al, 1999; Humbert, 2006; Jutras, 2009; Robinson, 2009). In this regard, the observations from this current research do not appear unique to male high school participants.

However, it is important to recognize that even though this research has reinforced much of what is already known, the significant new insights that have also emerged are important for potential future research directions.

Insights for Future Directions

The analysis of the research revealed possible new insights for contemplation and consideration. Three basic implications have emerged from this research, as they have in other studies: High school male students have an identified need (a) to find merit, (b) to feel respected, and (c) to feel secure in physical education. Physical educators and administrators must consider these apparent needs and desires and incorporate male students' voices into program planning and delivery.

Further, insights into possible future study and inquiry have also emerged from this research, such as male students who enroll in Physical Education 20 appear to believe that their peers who do not enroll do not enjoy physical education. Some of the members of the yes group contended that enrolling in Physical Education 20 would mean that they would participate with like-minded peers (a homogeneous grouping) who also enjoy physical education, which is a

possible disconnect in the research. The comments of some of the yes group indicated that they had formed their perception from watching their peers in class. That is, they identified the disengagement from physical activity of some students in the physical education class with their belief that these students did not like physical education. However, members of the no-group who enjoyed physical activity identified the disengagement as related to disenchantment with physical education experiences.

The implication for future study is the need to understand this gap in the perceptions of some high school males. For possible answers one might look to research in the area of the masculinities in physical education (Kehler, in press). Kehler addressed the issues of body image and male students' perceptions of males in physical education: "The ways in which boys are positioned among boys and by boys in PE class significantly underscores the kinds of experiences and impressions these boys develop about the masculine body" (p. 171). Kehler gave examples from his interview data that might give physical educators some insight into the disconnect that emerged in the current study. He explained how males' perceptions of masculinity may affect their views of other males. Often males view their male peers who do not appear to be as masculine as not being suited to physical activity. In the current study, as in Kehler's, there seems to be a judgment about the ability to perform physical activity based on a stereotypical ideal of male masculinity. This is a plausible emerging theme from the research that gives pause for thought as to future research relevance and implications.

Who then is responsible for ensuring that high school male physical education students have a safe, caring, and worthwhile experience? Are physical education teachers listening to the students who are disenchanted with their Physical Education 10 experiences and might be discouraged from enrolling in Physical Education 20? Some of the males in both research groups identified the teacher as an important component of their Physical Education 10 experiences. Their comments illustrate that the teacher needs to demonstrate leadership in planning and listen to the voices of students in promoting physical education as an important subject. In a recent study of physical education teachers, Chorney (2009) discussed insights into emergent themes that focused on exceptional teaching practices. Prior research and potential new information revealed the importance of “relating to/with students” (p. 179) as the most critical factor in ensuring excellent teaching and learning. Chorney emphasized that “sincerely caring for students, being open and honest with them, respecting them, and valuing their input are characteristics that only a few physical education teachers have and more important, act on in their daily teaching” (p.181).

Therefore, it can be inferred that only the teacher can create an environment that is conducive to exceptional teaching and learning. This belief is etched in a foundation built from multiple teaching experiences that have presented opportunities to witness and understand the power of exceptional teaching. Some of the males in the current study vocalized their enjoyment of the teacher; they liked him. These same males also identified teachers’ actions that could improve their physical education experience. Acknowledging male

students' reasons for not enrolling in Physical Education 20 does not necessarily guarantee an increase in future enrolment. However, if the teacher values students' input and creates a safe place for males' voices to be heard in physical education, the positive impact of these actions could be that male high school students will place a higher priority on elective physical education.

Concluding Remarks

As a novice researcher I acknowledge the shortcomings of the research. I have reflected extensively on areas I could have probed further in my questioning and interviewing of the participants. Through reflection has come a desire to continue to explore the experiences of male high school students as they negotiate decisions to enroll or not enroll in elective physical education.

Completing this study has left me with a sense of the enormity of our task as teachers. The impetus to study the experiences of high school males' decisions to enroll or not enroll in elective physical education certainly evolved from a greater awareness of the issues pertaining to the health and well-being of the youth whom we are responsible for teaching. I hope this research will serve to validate exceptional teaching practices and foster the important understanding that we must listen to student voices if we are to create environments in which each and every student will have a positive physical education experience. The work must continue, and the voices of the students must be heard.

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APPENDIX A:

INTERVIEW FORMAT AND SAMPLE QUESTIONS

The interviews will be up to 60 minutes in length and each of the two focus groups will engage in two interviews. It is acknowledged that interviews will need to be kept as short as possible for engaging the participants. One hour interviews would be the maximum time allotted. It is expected the interviews will be in the 40 minute range. Interviews will take place at lunch or after school, however, it is recognized that to accommodate the participants' scheduled school time may be necessary during the school day within the academic schedule. It will also be necessary to reiterate the interview method and process to the participants.

- Review consent forms, privacy and confidentiality requirements emphasizing the need for the participants not to communicate information shared in the focus group interviews.
- Review the interview format of 2 interviews of up to 60 minutes each.
- Comment that opting out of the research is allowed up to one month after data collection has occurred – the last formal interview.
- Researcher is a facilitator or interview moderator.
- Emphasize that all focus group members have valuable and important information to share and are encouraged to feel safe and confident in doing so.
- Questions may not be asked in any apparent order.

Prior to the interviews occurring, general conversation with the participants will occur to create a welcoming and comfortable environment. That is, general questions of hobbies, sports teams and school life will be used to facilitate this requirement for a comfortable research setting.

Sample General Interest Questions:

- a. Who is your favorite sports team? How long have you liked this team?
- b. What do you like about your current school and its programs?
- c. Do you participate in school sports or community sports?
- d. What are your hobbies?

Sample Data Gathering Questions (used with permission from S. L. Gibbons, personal communication, April 2006; Gibbons et al., 1999).

1. I would like to know your thoughts on health, fitness and physical activity in your life.
 - What does health mean to you? What does fitness mean to you?
 - Are health and fitness the same?
 - What does being healthy and fit mean to you in terms of what you do everyday?
2. I would like to hear about your thoughts on physical activity both in and out of school.
 - What kind of physical activity do you like to do/not like to do?
 - How do these activities make you feel?
 - What about your life encourages/discourages you to be physically active?
3. I would like to know your thoughts and ideas about PE 10 – what’s good, not so good, what changes you would make if you were in charge and if it is an important subject to you and in your school. Think specifically about PE 10 in your school.
 - What would you keep the same/change about PE?
 - Should PE 10 be an elective or a required subject for everyone?
4. I would like to know your thoughts and ideas about PE 20 – what do you know about PE 20 in your school, is it an important subject to you and your school.
 - What do you know about PE 20 in your school?
 - Will you be taking PE 20 in high school?
 - Why are you planning to take/not take PE 20?
 - What are the factors that you are considering in relation to taking/not taking PE 20?
 - Should PE 20 be an elective or a required subject for everyone?
5. If you were responsible for teaching PE, the top 5 things you would do to encourage males to participate in PE would be...

The interview questions will be created purposefully, being cognizant of the core research questions for the research study.

- a. What are the experiences of male high school students in relation to Physical Education 10?
- b. What are the reasons male high school students enroll in Physical Education 20?
- c. What are the reasons male high school students do not enroll in Physical Education 20?

General Interest Questions:

- a. Who is your favorite sports team? How long have you liked this team?
- b. What do you like about your current school and its programs?
- c. Do you participate in school sports or community sports?
- d. What are your hobbies?

Data Gathering Questions (used with permission from S. L. Gibbons, personal communication, April 2006; Gibbons et al., 1999):

1. I would like to know your thoughts on health, fitness and physical activity in your life.
 - What does health mean to you? What does fitness mean to you?
 - Are health and fitness the same?
 - What does being healthy and fit mean to you in terms of what you do everyday?

2. I would like to hear about your thoughts on physical activity both in and out of school.
 - What kind of physical activity do you like to do/not like to do?
 - How do these activities make you feel?
 - What about your life encourages/discourages you to be physically active?

3. I would like to know your thoughts and ideas about PE 10 – what’s good, not so good, what changes you would make if you were in charge and if it is an important subject to you and in your school. Think specifically about PE 10 in your school.

- What would you keep the same/change about PE?
- Should PE 10 be an elective or a required subject for everyone?

4. I would like to know your thoughts and ideas about PE 20 – what do you know about PE 20 in your school, is it an important subject to you and your school.

- What do you know about PE 20 in your school?
- Will you be taking PE 20 in high school?
- Why are you planning to take/not take PE 20?
- What are the factors that you are considering in relation to taking/not taking PE 20?
- Should PE 20 be an elective or a required subject for everyone?

5. If you were responsible for teaching PE, the top 5 things you would do to encourage males to participate in PE would be...

The interview questions have been created purposefully, being continually aware of the core research questions for the research study.

- a. What are the experiences of male high school students in relation to Physical Education 10?
- b. What are the reasons male high school students enroll in Physical Education 20?
- c. What are the reasons male high school students do not enroll in Physical Education 20?

Do you have any additional comments?

APPENDIX C:
SAMPLE CODING PROCEDURES

Codes	Excerpts from the interview transcripts	Themes/ideas
Fitness and health	Y3: They're tied into each other , but fitness is more like being able to do sports without getting exhausted too fast, and health is, like I said before, feeling okay and going to the doctors regularly and eating healthy and stuff like that.	Importance of fitness and health
Fitness and health features	Y8: Health and fitness are similar to each other, but fitness is more of a physical feature .	Awareness of fitness and health knowledge
Fitness, health and mental health	N2: Eating properly and exercising regularly , and also being mentally healthy and being with friends and family and being in good relationships and stuff.	Awareness and knowledge of holistic health

(Procedures from Creswell, 2005, p. 240)

APPENDIX D:
INVITATION LETTERS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY,
CONSENT AND ASSENT FORMS

Letter to Parents/Guardians

Date

Dear Parent(s) and/or Guardian(s),

I am a graduate student in the Master of Education Thesis Program at the University of Alberta, in the Department of Secondary Education. I have been a secondary teacher, specializing in Physical Education and Humanities, for 16 years.

I am seeking to conduct a research study with grade 10 male physical education students with the purpose of gaining a deeper understanding of their choices for pursuing or not pursuing elective physical education and their reasons for those choices. Ultimately, the goal of this study is to gain insights that will allow for improvements to the status, curriculum, and teaching of high school physical education so that more male students might be inclined to participate in and enjoy elective physical education. I would be grateful if you would consider allowing your son to participate in this study.

Your son's participation in this research study will be in the way of audiotaped small focus group interviews that will see him and his peers engaging in a structured dialogue with me as the facilitator asking a series of scripted questions. Information will be gathered from two focus groups of eight participants each. Each focus group will have two interviews to ensure all participants' voices are heard and all voices are heard correctly. The participants will partake in the interviews of 40 to 60 minutes each, during the school day at a time that is appropriate and respectful of the scholastic schedules of the participants and the school's regular activities. Depending on the school's schedule these interviews may also occur at lunch or after a regularly scheduled school day. Your son's noon nourishment requirements will be accommodated. I do not expect the participants to miss lunch during the interviews.

Participation in the study is free and completely voluntary, and you may opt out or remove your son from the research study at any time without penalty or prejudice. However, withdrawal of your son will only be allowed up to one month after data collection. All interview data will be secured in a locked filing device for five years and will remain confidential. Anonymity, confidentiality, and privacy will be protected through strict compliance with the University of Alberta

Standards for the Protection of Human Research Participants. In addition to the use of pseudonyms, participants will be repeatedly reminded about the importance of maintaining confidentiality and they will be assured that I will not share their responses with teachers or anyone other than my research supervisor, Dr. Nancy Melnychuk, and assistants who may be hired to transcribe the interview data. Any assistants used as transcribers will sign a confidentiality agreement and will also comply with the University of Alberta Standards for the Protection of Human Research Participants. There are no known risks to participation.

The results from this study will be used primarily for my own thesis dissertation. However, I also expect that the results will also be presented to peers through professional and/or academic publications and/or conferences. Furthermore, a copy of a report will also be given to participating schools so that you may access the findings.

If you have any questions regarding the intent of the research and your potential involvement, please contact me at 780-424-1270 or e-mail to Christina.Jones@epsb.ca. My research supervisor, Dr. Nancy Melnychuk, is also available to answer any questions. She can be reached at 780-492-0543 or nem@ualberta.ca. Thank you for your consideration of this research request.

Sincerely,

Christina Jones
Master of Education Candidate

Consent Form for Parents/Guardians of Students Under 18 Years

I, _____, hereby give consent for my son to:

- participate in an initial audio-recorded focus group discussion, and
- participate in a second audio-recorded focus group discussion as necessary.

I understand that:

- my son's participation is completely voluntary and at his own discretion.
- my son may choose not to respond to any question.
- my son may withdraw from the research at any time up to one month after the data collection has been completed.
- my son will not be identifiable in any documents resulting from the research.

I also understand that:

- All information will be treated confidentially and raw data will be shared only among the researcher, her supervisor, and a transcriber as necessary.
- All information will be held in a secure office during the study and for five years after.
- This study is being conducted in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

I also understand that the results of this research will primarily be used for a dissertation but will also likely be used for professional and scholarly presentations and written educational reports or publications.

(print name)

(signature)

(date)

For further information concerning completion of this form, please contact Christina Jones at Christina.Jones@epsb.ca or at 780-424-1270.

The study is being conducted in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and the information will be used for educational purposes only. Furthermore, the plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education, Extension and Augustana Research Ethics Board (EEA REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EEA REB at 780-492-3751.

Letter to Student Participants

Date

Dear Student,

I am a graduate student in the Master of Education Thesis Program at the University of Alberta, in the Department of Secondary Education. I have been a secondary teacher, specializing in teaching Physical Education for 16 years.

I am seeking to conduct a research study with grade 10 male physical education students with the purpose of gaining a deeper understanding of your choices for pursuing or not pursuing elective physical education and your reasons for those choices. Ultimately, the goal of this study is to gain insights that will allow for improvements to the status, curriculum, and teaching of high school physical education so that more male students like yourself might be inclined to participate in and enjoy elective physical education. I would be grateful if you would consider participating in this study.

Your participation in this research study will be in the way of audiotaped small focus group interviews that will see you and your peers engaging in a structured dialogue with me as the facilitator asking a series of scripted questions. Information will be gathered from two focus groups of eight participants each. Each focus group will have two interviews to ensure all participants' voices are heard and all voices are heard correctly. The participants will partake in the interviews of 40 to 60 minutes each, during the school day at a time that is appropriate and respectful of your scholastic schedule and the school's regular activities. Depending on the school's schedule these interviews may also occur at lunch or after a regularly scheduled school day. Your noon nourishment requirements will be accommodated for. I do not expect you to miss eating lunch.

Participation in the study is free and completely voluntary, and you may opt out or remove yourself from the research study at any time without penalty or prejudice. However, your withdrawal will only be allowed up to one month after data collection. All interview data will be secured in a locked filing device for five years and will remain confidential. Anonymity, confidentiality, and privacy will be protected through strict compliance with the University of Alberta Standards for the Protection of Human Research Participants. In addition to the use of pseudonyms (anonymous names or codes), you will be repeatedly reminded about the importance of maintaining confidentiality. I assure you that I will not share your responses with teachers or anyone other than my research supervisor, Dr. Nancy Melnychuk, and assistants who may be hired to transcribe the interview data. Any assistants used as transcribers will sign a confidentiality agreement and will also comply with the University of Alberta Standards for the

Protection of Human Research Participants. There are no known risks to your participation.

The results from this study will be used primarily for my own thesis dissertation. However, I also expect that the results will also be presented to my peers through professional and/or academic publications and/or conferences. Furthermore, a copy of a report will also be given to participating schools so that you may access the findings.

If you have any questions regarding the intent of the research and your potential involvement, please contact me at 780-424-1270 or e-mail to Christina.Jones@epsb.ca. My research supervisor, Dr. Nancy Melnychuk, is also available to answer any questions. She can be reached at 780-492-0543 or nem@ualberta.ca. Thank you for your consideration of this research request.

Sincerely,

Christina Jones
Master of Education Candidate

Assent Form for Students

I, _____, hereby consent to:

- participate in two audio-recorded focus group discussions.

I understand that:

- My participation is completely voluntary and at my own discretion.
- I may choose not to respond to any question.
- I may withdraw from the research at any time up to one month after my formal interviews without penalty.
- All information will be treated confidentially and discussed only between the researcher, supervisor, and transcriber.
- All information will be held secure during the study and for 5 years after.
- I will not be identifiable in any documents resulting from the research
- This study is being conducted in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

I also understand that the results of this research will be used only for professional and scholarly presentations and written educational reports or publications.

(print name)

(signature)

(date)

For further information concerning completion of this form, please contact Christina.Jones@epsb.ca or at 780-424-1270.

The study is being conducted in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and the information will be used for educational purposes only. Furthermore, the plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education, Extension and Augustana Research Ethics Board (EEA REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EEA REB at 780-492-3751.

APPENDIX E:
LETTER TO THE DEPARTMENT HEAD/TEACHER
AND CONSENT FORM

Date

Dear Department Head/Teacher,

I am a graduate student at the University of Alberta in the Department of Secondary Education. I am pursuing my Master of Education degree and have been a secondary school physical education teacher for 16 years.

I am seeking to conduct a research study with male Physical Education 10 students in your school, with the purpose of gaining a deeper understanding of their choices and reasons for such in elective male physical education. Ultimately, the goal of this study is to gain insights that will allow for improvements to the status, curriculum, and teaching of male physical education so that more males might be inclined participate and enjoy elective physical education in the future.

In order to facilitate this study I am asking for access to your Physical Education Department. As the Department Head you would pick two male Physical Education 10 classes for me. These two classes will be picked based on your discretion, keeping in mind which two classes may like to participate in the study. Once the classes are picked, I would ask the department's permission for 15 minutes of class time to explain the study to the students. Once I have done so I will hand a package of information to the participants to take home and discuss with parents/guardians. I will ask the participants who wish to participate in the study to return the documents to you within one week from the visit. From the participants who wish to participate in the study, I will randomly draw 2 groups of 8 names each and then draw 2 spares for each group.

The chosen students' participation in this research study will be in the way of audiotaped small focus group interviews that will have them engaging in a structured dialogue with myself as the facilitator asking a series of scripted questions. Information will be gathered from the focus groups. Each focus group will have two interviews to ensure all participants' voices are heard and all voices are heard correctly. The participants will partake in the interviews of 40 to 60 minutes each, during the school day at a time that is appropriate and respectful of the scholastic schedules of the participants and the school's regular activities. Depending on the school's schedule these interviews may also occur at lunch or after a regularly scheduled school day. If the interviews occur at lunch arrangements will be made to ensure the participants receive nourishment.

Participation in the study is free and voluntary, and participants may withdraw from the research study at any time without penalty. Anonymity, confidentiality, and privacy will be protected by strict compliance with the University of Alberta Standards for the Protection of Human Research Participants. In addition to the use of pseudonyms, any information shared with me will only be shared with my research supervisor and a transcriber. Furthermore, any transcribers will sign a confidentiality agreement and will comply with the University of Alberta Standards for the Protection of Human Research Participants. All data will be secured in a personal office for five years and will remain strictly confidential. There are no known risks to participation. I agree to comply with the University of Alberta Standards for the Protection of Human Research Participants. Further information on these standards can be seen at <http://www.uofaweb.ca/gfcpolicymanual/policymanualsection66.cfm>.

The results from this study will be used primarily for my own dissertation. However, the results from this study will also likely be presented to peers through professional and/or academic publications and/or conferences. Furthermore, a copy of a report will also be given to participating schools so that you may also access the findings.

For purposes of record keeping, two copies of this form will be provided. One signed copy is to be submitted and the second signed copy is for your records.

If you have any questions regarding the intent of the research and your potential involvement, please contact me at (780) 424-1270 or e-mail to Christina.Jones@epsb.ca.

My research supervisor, Dr. Nancy Melnychuk, is also available to answer any questions. She can be contacted at 780-492-0543 or nem@ualberta.ca. Thank you for your consideration of this research request.

Sincerely,

Christina Jones
Master of Education Candidate

Consent Form for Department Head/Teacher

I, _____, hereby consent to:

- allow for the above mentioned research study to occur in my school/department.
- assist with the administration information and invitations for participation to male students in Physical Education 10 currently.

I understand that:

- Students' participation is completely voluntary and at their own discretion.
- I am under no obligation to participate
- Even after giving my consent to participate, I can withdraw my participation. I may withdraw my participation by contacting the researcher, Christina Jones within one month of the collection of the data.
- The students may choose not to respond to any question.
- The students may withdraw from the research at any time without penalty.
- All information will be treated confidentially and discussed only between the researcher, supervisor and transcriber.
- All information will be held secure during the study and for 5 years after.
- The school nor the participants will not be identifiable in any documents resulting from the research.
- This study is being conducted in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

I also understand that the results of this research will be used only for professional and scholarly presentations and written educational reports or publications.

(print name)

(signature)

(date)

For further information concerning completion of this form, please contact Christina Jones at Christina.Jones@epsb.ca or 780-424-1270.

The study is being conducted in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and the information will be used for educational purposes only. Furthermore, the plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education, Extension and Augustana Research Ethics Board (EEA REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EEA REB at 780-492-3751.

APPENDIX F:

DATA-GATHERING AND RESULTS-ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

- Step #1 a. Audiotaped interview #1 yes group
Question sheet handed out and returned
b. Audiotaped interview #1 no group
Question sheet handed out and returned
- Step #2 a. Listen to interview #1 and read question sheet yes group.
Note possible themes and information.
b. Listen to interview #1 and read question sheet no group.
Note possible themes and information.
- Step #3 a. Audiotaped interview #2 yes group
Question sheet handed out and returned
b. Audiotaped interview #2 no group
Question sheet handed out and returned
- Step #4 a. Transcription verbatim interviews #1 and #2 yes group.
Typing of answers from question sheets of yes group
b. Transcription verbatim interviews #1 and #2 no group.
Typing of answers from question sheets of no group
- Faculty advisor given copies of transcriptions for discussion of possible emergent themes.*
- Step #5 a. Read transcriptions of interviews #1 and #2 yes group and question sheets, noting possible themes, and necessary edits as per audio.
b. Read transcriptions of interviews #1 and #2 no group and question sheet, noting possible themes and necessary edits as per audio.
- Step #6 a. Read transcriptions of interview #1 and question sheets of no group, highlighting for the coding emerging themes and important information.
b. Read transcriptions of interview #1 and question sheets of yes group, highlighting for the coding emerging themes and important information.

- Step #7
- a. Rereading the transcriptions of interview #1 and question sheets of no group, dictating the highlighted emerging codes, themes and notes into Dragon Speak Version 9.0.
 - b. Rereading the transcriptions of interview #1 and question sheets of yes group, dictating the highlighted emerging codes, themes and notes into Dragon Speak Version 9.0.
- Step #8
- Edit and reread the documents produced in step #7 for the no group and yes group.
- Step #9
- a. Read transcriptions of interview #2 and question sheets of no group, highlighting for the coding emerging themes and important information.
 - b. Read transcriptions of interview #2 and question sheets of yes group, highlighting for the coding emerging themes and important information.
- Step #10
- a. Rereading the transcriptions of interview #2 and question sheets of no group, dictating the highlighted emerging codes, themes and notes into Dragon Speak Version 9.0.
 - b. Rereading the transcriptions of interview #2 and question sheets of yes group, dictating the highlighted emerging codes, themes and notes into Dragon Speak Version 9.0.
- Step #11
- Edit and reread the documents produced in step #10 for the no group and yes group.
- Faculty advisor given copies of documents for discussion of emergent themes.*
- Step #12
- Create data results with major themes and subthemes, noting important quotes and information for reference.
- Step #13
- Return to the data to ensure themes and subthemes are represented in the results section of the thesis.

(Adapted from Creswell, 2005; Gay & Airasian, 1992)

APPENDIX G:

EMERGENT THEMES AND SUBTHEMES

PHYSICAL EDUCATION 10 EXPERIENCES

- Value of physical activity
- Engagement
 - Enjoyment of activity
 - Variety and choice
 - Group activities
- Disengagement
 - Boredom and frustration
 - Competitive focus
- Physical education 10 status
- Teacher as leader

ENROLMENT IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION 20

- Program knowledge
- Program status
 - Elective or required
 - Homogeneous grouping
 - Competitive

NOT ENROLLING IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION 20

- Program knowledge
- Disenchanted physical education 10 experiences
 - Emotional pain
 - Lack of individual activities
- Program status
 - Elective or required
 - Course priority