University of Alberta

Physical Activity Through the Eyes of Six Ten-Year-Old Children: A Case Study

by

Deborah Anne Rowley ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to gain insight as to how six children at ten years of age perceive physical activity. Up until recently, little research has been done in the area of physical education focusing on the child's perspective, and in an effort to plan for and design developmentally appropriate physical education programs for children in the elementary school, we need to gain further insights as to how children view physical activity, and how they participate in physical activities during their physical education classes and in their leisure time.

As the nature of this case study was to seek explanations for *why* children feel the way they do about physical activity, a grounded theory approach was incorporated. Classroom and playground observations, interviews, personal activity logs, photographs, and documents related to the school program were studied over a five month period to gain understanding of the perspectives of six ten-year-old children towards physical activity. The study involved an equal number of boys and girls from one grade five classroom, in an urban elementary school, who were taught physical education by a physical education specialist.

The findings indicated that the children wanted to be active, but felt there was little time during the school day for physical activity. Personal safety and feeling psychologically secure were also prerequisites for their participation in activities, both at school and in their leisure time at home. These youngsters valued opportunities to make decisions regarding physical activity, and felt that parents gave little consideration to their personal interests and desire to have input into activity choices for leisure time. The six children wished to have fun in physical education classes, an wanted a wide range of activities within their physical education programs They also equated fun with activities which challenged their abilities, allowing for active participation, which permited them to play with friends. Fairness on the playground and in the physical education classroom was extremely important to these ten-year-olds, and the childre viewed being successful in physical education as the ability to participate cooperatively with others in group activities. Physical activities provided the children with opportunities to develop and demonstrate personal and social responsibility. Participation styles differed between boys and girls.

As a result of this study, parents of these children are encouraged to give more consideration to their child's interests in choosing physical activity programs for leisure time. They need to closely examine how much time their children spend watching TV and videos during their leisure time. Elementary teachers may wish to consider providing more time for physical education and for physical activity during the school day. Teachers may also want to consider their students' interests, and offer varied programs which focus on skill development in ways that provide optimal challenges and success for all children. Elementary teachers need to consciously plan for and model personal and social responsibility with their students within the context of physical education. They need to recognize that at this age boys and girls hold definite perceptions of their own abilities and of the abilities of others.

The six children in this study valued opportunities to make decisions when learning and practicing skills within the context of physical education classes. Teachers might give this consideration within the context of unit and lesson planning. The researcher advises elementary school administrators to make decisions in the best interests of children, by staffing their schools with teachers who have expertise in teaching physical education. Administrators may be key advocates for physical activity by providing more time for physical education during the school day. They may also wish to review school discipline practices that deter children from being active. The author suggests that when teachers, administrators, and parents begin to consider the child's perspective in relation to physical activity, they may be able to design and offer more developmentally appropriate physical activity programs and experiences for children.

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CHAPTER ONE

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY THROUGH THE EYES OF SIX TEN-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN: A CASE STUDY

Introduction

My research reflects a personal interest in physical education and young children, and relates to my work in this area over the last ten years as a physical education consultant for elementary schools. During this time I have had the opportunity to work closely with teachers, school administrators, and parents regarding the importance of physical education and its benefits for the growth and development of young children. Often our discussions centered on the amount of time given to physical education in the total school program, the kinds of resources that schools should access to offer a well balanced program, and the various teaching strategies appropriate for teaching elementary aged children in physical education. Most elementary school physical education programs in Alberta are taught by the classroom teacher, and programs vary widely from one school to another depending on the knowledge and expertise of the teachers, and how the physical education program is valued and supported within the school and district setting.

Although most of my efforts have focused on teaching practices in the area of physical education, I have often wondered how the children we teach feel about physical education. In my travels to schools it is not uncommon to see children rushing down to the gymnasium grinning from ear to ear, or to see them waiting eagerly at the gymnasium entrance hoping that the teacher will unlock the door so that they can move! My observations of children in the gymnasium and out on the playing field have often made me wonder how the physical education programs in our schools are affecting children. What kinds of experiences are children having in physical education, and how do they view physical activity? How do they feel about being active and participating in physical education classes? What kinds of activities do they like? What kinds of activities do they dislike? And why? Perhaps my curiosity to learn more about the child's perspective in physical education is what Katz (1993) would define as my "disposition" to conduct further research in this area.

Research in Physical Education

Research on the child's view in physical education is almost non-existent, therefore we know very little about how our physical education programs are being experienced by children. Research to date in the area of physical education has concentrated heavily on the areas of teacher effectiveness, teacher knowledge and decision making in physical education. Much of this research has been grounded within the natural science tradition and has incorporated systematic observation systems (Eldar, Siedentop, and Jones, 1989; Fink and Siedentop, 1989; Siedentop and Eldar, 1989) in an attempt to distinguish more effective from less effective teachers. Many studies have focused on Academic Learning Time in Physical Education (ALT-PE) (Beauchamp, Darst, & Thompson, 1990; Eldar, Siedentop, & Jones, 1989) with the premise that how a teacher uses the time in a physical education class is an indication of how much students are learning.

Studies comparing beginning and experienced specialist teachers in the area of physical education have also provided insights to the practices and views of teachers with different years of experience. O'Sullivan (1989) found that elementary teachers from both of these groups were more alike than they were different. Both groups of teachers had high expectations for learning, and both groups taught many of the same rules, routines and expectations, using similar instructional strategies. O'Sullivan states that, "The veterans and novices spoke consistently about skill learning as the major objective of their programs" (p.237). The differences were that the more experienced teachers "had more content knowledge and used it to match activities to the various skill levels of student ability" (p.237). Beginning teachers followed the prescribed programs quite rigidly, and felt very "plan dependent" (p.237). The veterans were also better at promoting and marketing their programs by using school wide events as an opportunity to highlight student learning.

Research on the learning environment or classroom context in physical education (Doyle, 1992; Locke, 1975; Siedentop, 1991; Vickers, 1983) has helped identify various aspects of the classroom setting. Siedentop (1991) defines the classroom ecology as:

> The study of the habitat of living objects, the relationships between organisms and their environment. An ecology is typically made up of a number of systems that interact with each other so that a change in one system influences what happens in the other systems. (p.67)

From his perspective, the ecology of physical education consists of three primary systems: the managerial task system, the instructional task system and the student-social system. Over the past two decades he has conducted numerous studies from the empirical-analytical perspective that have explored these systems and suggest that negotiations occur between them to form the ecology of the learning environment. Siedentop reinforces the idea that the teacher's challenge is to establish an ecological balance:

> The sensitive effective teacher will understand how these systems interact and work to develop an ecology that students not only cooperate and behave well within, but one that is also learning-oriented and accommodates student-social needs. To develop and maintain this kind of ecology in a typical class in today's schools is not easy. It requires that teachers have strong intentions to build this kind of educational environment and the managerial and instructional skills to make it happen. (p.71)

Within the context of the learning environment, children come to us with a variety of backgrounds and experiences that affect how they learn and participate in our classes. To develop and maintain a positive learning atmosphere in a typical class in today's school is not easy. As a teacher, I believe we need to take time to find out more about the children we teach so that we can offer positive physical education experiences for all.

Very few studies in the area of physical education have actually attempted to examine the complexity of the classroom environment. Hellison and Templin (1991) suggest that "it should be quite apparent that the physical education class is a heterogeneous setting when considering the variation in student backgrounds, interests, abilities, and yes, even their attitudes toward physical education" (p.37). Schempp (1987) supports the idea that we need to look more closely at the total physical education environment to get a comprehensive picture of how our programs are affecting children. He states that the qualitative paradigm seeks to "qualify the occurrence of phenomena in an attempt to answer the questions, 'Why is this happening? Who is making it happen? What does it mean in the context of the human lived experience?'" (p.115) Perhaps by looking at physical education from the child's perspective we can come to a better understanding of how our programs are being received.

Fox (1988) also supports the belief that we need to broaden our horizons in physical education by understanding how the youngsters we teach feel about physical activity. He says it best by stating:

> We can no longer function under the pretense that youngsters are impassive recipients of our services. We cannot simply assume that if we drill them thoroughly enough with motor skills and fitness, that they will habitually adopt physical activity as a pastime. (p.34)

Like Fox, I believe that physical education is for all and for a lifetime, and perhaps it is this belief that has inspired me to look beyond the teacher and examine the kinds of attitudes that children are developing as a result of their physical education experiences.

In 1983, Alberta Education published a new Elementary Physical Education Curriculum to set the direction for and assist in the implementation of appropriate programs for physical education in Alberta Schools. One of the four goals of the Elementary Physical Education Curriculum identified by Alberta Education is that:

> The Physical Education Program should assist the individual in developing and maintaining positive personal attributes and

> interpersonal relationships including a positive attitude towards continued participation in physical activity. (p.11)

Purpose of the Study

One of the underlying assumptions of the 1983 Alberta Education Physical Education Curriculum is that if children participate in a wide range of movement experiences and develop skills during their elementary years, they will go on to enjoy a lifetime of physical activity. The purpose of this study was to explore the following questions relating to this belief:

1. How do six children ten years of age view physical activity? What kinds of experiences are they having in physical education within the school setting? What do they like? What do they dislike? And why?

2. What are their choices for leisure time? What influences their choices for leisure activities?

3. Are these six children developing skills and engaged in movement experiences in such a way that they are forming positive attitudes toward physical activity?

Significance of the Study

This study is significant for four reasons, the first being that very little research in the field of physical education has been undertaken to examine the child's perspective, and more specifically, how children during their middle childhood years experience and view physical activity. Second, this study may have implications for teachers of elementary children in the area of physical education. Third, this research may provide insights to the teaching practices and role of a physical education teacher in an elementary school setting. And fourth, with the possibility that the present physical education curriculum in Alberta may be revised, this research will contribute to the knowledge base that may serve as the foundation to future curriculum revision.

The Need for Research From the Child's Perspective

In my initial review of the literature I discovered that only a few researchers in the area of physical education give consideration to the child's perspectives within physical education (Fox, 1988; Graham, 1995; Hellison and Templin, 1991; McKenzie and Sallis, 1994; Orlick and Botterill, 1975; Patterson and Faucette, 1990; Schutz, Smoll, Carre, and Mosher, 1985). Patterson and Faucette (1990) examined children's attitudes toward physical activity in classes taught by specialist versus non specialist elementary physical education teachers, and found that although there were some differences in motor skill performance, there were no significant differences in the attitudes of these children toward physical activity. These findings suggest that further research is needed to help us gain a better understanding of children's experiences in physical education, and how they perceive their programs. Perhaps this is what Smith (1991) meant in his article, "Where Is the Child in Physical Education Research?"

Research on the child's perspective has been limited to identifying how children rate or rank certain physical activities, and there is little information available that suggests why children enjoy some activities over others. In a recent study examining children's liking for activity, McKenzie and Sallis (1994) concluded that children in the fourth and fifth grade preferred skill-related activities such basketball, soccer, and softball, over health-related activities such as jogging, running, and fitness walking. Although they suggest that further research is needed to determine why the difference exists, they speculate that this preference may be related to the fact that children find health-related activities to be more strenuous than skill-related activities. McKenzie and Sallis also advocate that "designers of physical education curricula who want to develop positive attitudes toward physical education should consider student perceptions about both the curriculum and the specific activities that are included in it" (p.207).

A few studies that have recently been published (Dyson, 1995; Hopple and Graham, 1995; Lee, Carter, & Xiang, 1995; Veal and

Compagnone, 1995) have focused on the child's perspective in physical education at the elementary school level, specifically focusing on children at the grade 4 to 6 level. Results of these studies indicated that physical education was not a pleasurable experience for many children, particularly those who were low-skilled. These studies also indicated that those children involved had very little understanding of the purpose of physical education, and that most children felt that doing one's best was more important than successful performance in physical education.

Other studies which have attempted to examine children's experiences in physical education programs have focused on primary age children or children in their adolescent years. Winther (1983) examined the perceptions of six-year-old children toward physical activity, and found that children viewed physical education experiences as being quite different than their own play experiences. Humbert (1995) and Wood (1994) interviewed high school students about their physical education experiences and found that students at this age were discouraged by physical educations programs that were characterized by traditional sports and excessive competition. Humbert (1995), found that many of the high school girls she interviewed had a negative body image, and felt uncomfortable in coeducational physical education classes that stressed traditional sports. Wood (1994), in his case study of how the curriculum unfolds in the real life-world of high school physical education, found that the curriculum centered on the athletes in the school, and that many students looked beyond the classroom to meet their physical activity needs.

The child's perspective has also been researched in relation to organized sport (Martens, 1978; Orlick and Botterill, 1975; Wankel and Kreisel, 1985) however, these findings may have limited application to the physical education setting. If our goal as teachers is to help the children in our programs develop positive attitudes toward physical activity, then we need to know more about how our programs are affecting them.

Possible Implications for Elementary Teachers of Physical Education

Second, this study may have implications for teaching physical education. Often as teachers, we attempt to implement the written curriculum with the best of intentions, and we assume that the skills we teach and the instructional strategies we use will encourage children to participate. Researchers of young children (Cantor, 1990; Katz, 1993) suggest that the acquisition of knowledge and skills does not guarantee that they will be used and applied. Katz (1993), in her work with young children, suggests that children bring different dispositions to each learning situation. She defines disposition in the following way:

> A disposition is a pattern of behavior exhibited frequently and in the absence of coercion, and constituting a habit of mind under some conscious and voluntary control, and that is intentional and oriented to broad goals. (p.16)

This study will attempt to uncover how six ten-year-old children feel about various activities, and why they feel the way they do. Are their physical education experiences helping them form positive attitudes toward physical activity?

According to J.J. Mitchell, in a personal interview(University of Alberta, April 1995),

> Examining the attitudes of children during the middle childhood years is like dipping a stick into a jar of goop. The formation of attitudes is an extremely complex and murky area within the field of childhood development, and there is nothing definitive in the research to suggest that middle childhood is a time when lifelong attitudes begin to evolve, or that one influence in a child's life has greater impact on attitudes than another.

Many child psychologists (Ausubel, Sullivan, and Ives, 1980; DeVries and Kohlberg, 1990; Piaget, 1973, 1977; and Vgotsky 1978) support the idea that affective and personality development is integrated with intellectual growth and development. Piaget (1977) advocates that feelings toward something are structured along with the structuring of knowledge. He described four major stages in the development of children's thinking, and he argues that at each stage children do not copy what they encounter, but actively construct reality out of their experiences with the environment. As children grow and develop they begin to coordinate interests and to "construct a hierarchy of personal values--likes and dislikes" (DeVries and Kohlberg, 1990, p.34). Their interests are shaped by many influences such as parent and peer influences, ego, intellect, self-concept, socio-cultural and moral influences. DeVries and Kohlberg (1990, p.34) also state that "the progressive differentiation of interests, feelings, and values, and the increasing stability and coherence of affectivity are bound up with intellectual development, and both depend on social relations of reciprocity." Piaget (1973) strongly believed that the teacher, in order to organize and intervene effectively, "should know not only his own science but also be well versed in the details of the development of the child's or adolescent's mind" (p.16). By focusing on the child's perspective, this study supports the belief that our teaching of physical education needs to give consideration to the child, and their physical, intellectual, social and emotional growth and development. Perhaps by considering the child's perspective, we can offer more appropriate physical education experiences for children.

Several researchers in the curriculum field (Aoki, 1978; Eisner, 1994: Schubert, 1986) also stress that we need to look at curriculum development and implementation in a more holistic manner, so that our programs can better meet the needs of the learner. Schubert defines curriculum as "the continuous interaction among the four commonplaces: teachers, learners, subject matter, and milieu" (p.301). Curriculum as he defines it is anything that "influences or shapes the thought, feeling, outlook, and behavior of learners in schools or other educative institutions" (p.301). Eisner (1994), in his recent book <u>Cognition and Curriculum Reconsidered</u>, suggests that we need to broaden our view of cognition to include the affective. He states that, "What happens is that the limited view of cognition that permeates so much psychological and educational literature legitimates a form of educational practice that itself limits what children have the opportunity to learn in school." He argues that there can be no affective activity without cognition, "If to cognize is to know, then to have a feeling and not to know it is not to have it" (p. 21).

Another view supporting the idea that the teaching/learning relationship should consider the needs of the child is illustrated by Aoki (1978) (see Appendix, Figure 1) who proposes a model for curriculum development. He advocates that curriculum offered in school's today should involve the student in the curriculum process. Aoki's framework for curriculum development suggests that the student and the teacher interact in each instructional setting, and each bring a different perspective to the learning environment. He states:

> Consider for a moment how the same sunrise could be seen by a person who has to go to work very early, a youngster who is going fishing early in the morning, or a prisoner who is scheduled to be executed in the morning. The notion of perspective when trying to make sense of instructional programs is crucial. It allows us to entertain the following about programs: (1) that underlying any program is a perspective; (2) that developing intents, designing displays, teacher/student activities or evaluation are perspective guided activities; (3) that the kind of interest, the form of knowledge, the mode of teaching, the way of learning, the modality of evaluation, etc., embodied in a program reflect the underlying guiding perspective. (p.16)

Perhaps by considering the child's perspective in physical education, we can examine more critically the influence of the curriculum and the physical education programs we offer in our schools.

In a recent study, Wood (1994) agrees that we need to examine the student's perspective in our attempt to make physical education programs more meaningful:

> Student experiences of physical education curricula are critical to understanding the historical significance of the individual's participation or non-participation in physical education, and the learnings which may be attributed to these experiences.... It is important, therefore that physical educators become aware of student experiences and perceptions of physical education, in the hope that this knowledge will assist in the development of meaningful curricula. (p.32)

Perhaps if we take time to better understand how children view physical activity we can offer physical education programs that are more developmentally appropriate for the children in our care.

A Case for the Physical EducationTeacher in the Elementary School

Thirdly, this study will provide insights to the teaching practices and the role of a designated physical education teacher in an elementary school setting--something which is uncommon in schools throughout the province of Alberta. Perhaps the teaching and learning illustrations presented in this study, and a description of the lived experiences of six children, will help us identify more "developmentally appropriate" (Bredenkamp, 1992) teaching practices in the area of elementary physical education, and will help us present a case for physical education specialists in our schools.

Enriching the Knowledge Base

Fourth, the physical education curriculum that is being taught in Alberta schools has been setting the direction for physical education for the past eleven years. In the event that the present provincial curriculum is revised, and with the possibility that individual school districts and schools may be designing their own curriculum, this study may help to identify recommendations which may significant for future curriculum development.

The School Site: Chelsea Heights

The research project was carried out at Chelsea Heights Elementary School, an urban elementary school with a population of about three hundred students. Chelsea Heights is a bright, clean school in a community that was approximately ten years old. Most of the children who attend the school are from the surrounding neighborhood and they either walk or are driven to school by parents; very few are bused in. It is situated on a large community parksite, adjacent to another elementary school of a similar size. Although there are no fixed playground equipment near the school, several soccer fields surround the school, and tarmac lines the perimeter of the school. The gymnasium storage room is well equipped with class sets of games equipment items and a complete array of foam and wooden gymnastic apparatus. Equipment is organized in containers and portable bins. Corner windows provided bright, natural lighting in the gymnasium, and colorful green and blue targets are splashed against one wall. The gymnasium is a bright, inviting place!

The majority of the teachers in the school are experienced teachers who have taught for over ten years, and the school administrative team have worked together closely since the school opened. The principal is a full-time administrator and the assistant principal carries out administrative responsibilities and is the homeroom teacher for the grade five children involved in the study. The history of the school suggests that the school has always had a music specialist and this teacher also serves the role of providing preparation time for other teachers. Although the music specialist teaches music to all grade levels, the physical education specialist has only taught physical education up to as many as three grade levels in any one year. Both of these specialists work on a part-time basis at the school. Because the physical education teacher also has expertise and experience in special education, she is designated as the resource facilitator in the school.

The school has several teaching assistants, a part-time counselor, a full time day custodian, and a night custodian, who supervised recreational groups in the evening. During the five months that I spent at the school, I felt the incredible camaraderie and support that the staff shared with one another, and I knew by the way they joked and greeted the children at the doors every morning, that this support was demonstrated toward their students. The staff were supportive of my research, and frequently asked about the study when they saw me in the hallway or in the staffroom at recess or noon hour breaks. Often our brief, informal conversations would lead to rather serious philosophical discussions about the importance of physical activity and physical education for children. To my surprise, the teachers were the ones to initiate the discussions.

A year prior to the study occurring a tragic incident occurred which resulted in a death in the community, and led one of the teachers in the school to develop a special project to promote caring and kindness in the classroom. This project carried over to become a full-scale school effort. It was obvious that tolerance, understanding and kindness were part of the lived philosophy within the school, and that the staff worked hard to make this a reality for the students.

The Teacher

During the study I had the opportunity to work with the physical education teacher, Jill, who was a part-time teacher at Chelsea Heights. She had a wide range of teaching experiences in an elementary school setting, including special education, and physical education. Jill was regarded by her colleagues as an outstanding physical education teacher, and she had been a lead teacher or "facilitator" of physical education in her school district for several years. She had written curriculum resources and presented many inservices for elementary teachers in her school district. She was also one of the few elementary teachers within her district who was assigned to teach physical education to most of the children in the school. I had the pleasure of working with her on several professional development activities related to physical education. I always respected Jill for her enthusiasm and innovativeness in teaching physical education, and for the contributions she made towards the professional development of her colleagues. It was not uncommon to see Jill with students from her school at special district events such as cross country meets or dance festivals. I have had the opportunity to work with Jill on various projects and committees and to share thoughts on teaching physical education to elementary children. I chose to work with Jill in this study, because I needed to work with children who had experienced the written curriculum.

When I approached her with the idea of working with her students, she seemed honored that I would ask. One day at lunch when we discussed the possibility of working together, our conversation led to a discussion of how our views of teaching children physical education had evolved over the years. Jill shared with me that she, too had often wondered how the students were "receiving" the program, and she spoke of times that she found it difficult to motivate students to try certain activities. She recalled the time she "bribed" the grade five and six students to participate in a creative dance unit with masks, by giving them a free choice class at a later date in the gym. We laughed at the fact that on occasion we went to "great lengths" to try and teach "the curriculum," regardless of how the students felt about the activity!

My time at Chelsea Heights Elementary School has been most beneficial. It has certainly helped me get to know Jill better as a colleague and a friend, and it has given me an opportunity to do research with children through a case study approach.

Preliminary Fieldwork

Spending time at the school site prior to identifying all of my research questions provided me with an opportunity to shape the kinds of questions I needed to ask children. It also provided me with an opportunity to get to know the children I would be working with over the course of the five month period. Prior to the Christmas break, I spent a month observing them and participating with them in their physical education classes, and outside during their recess and noon hour activities. This provided me with an opportunity to become more familiar with the school, staff, and the children I would be working with in the months that followed. It also encouraged me to 'get my feet wet' as a researcher, and to try out research skills such as listening, asking questions, and observing (Merriam, 1988). Doing preliminary work in the field encouraged me to be more aware of the importance of being flexible, and making adjustments accordingly. Eisner (1991) stresses the importance of this quality by stating that:

> Thus, qualitative inquiry works best if researchers remain aware of the emerging configurations and make appropriate adjustments accordingly. A preformulated plan of procedure indifferent to emerging conditions is the surest path to disaster. Flexibility, adjustment, and iterativity are three hallmarks of qualitative 'method.' This does not mean that

> there is no rhyme or reason to qualitative research, but rather that the course of its development is contingent upon the features of a future no one can fully anticipate. (p.170)

Most importantly, my time spent with the children during those initial weeks, served as a springboard for future conversations and questions I needed to explore with the children throughout the course of the study.

Parameters of the Study

This study focused on the perspectives of six ten-year-old children in one grade five class in an urban elementary school. The study involved six ten-year-old children, three boys and three girls, who were representative of their grade five classroom. This particular grade level was selected because they were near the end of their elementary school physical education program, they were only one of two grade levels taught by a specialist physical education teacher in the school, and most of the children had been taught by this particular specialist teacher for three consecutive years, from the time that they were in grade three.

The purpose of working with a small number of students was to enable the researcher to gain an indepth understanding of the lived experiences of the participants over the course of a five month period. The physical education class met for three thirty minute periods a week, and in addition to these time periods had several day or half day outings to accommodate certain program objectives. The children were in a class of 28 students, 13 boys and 15 girls, with two children identified by the school district psychologists as having behavioral limitations.

Since there is a lack of elementary school physical education specialists in schools throughout Alberta, this research may inform the case for the specialist physical education teacher in elementary schools. Through a description of the lived experiences of children taught by a specialist within a particular classroom context, this study is will attempt to illustrate the complexities of teaching physical education. Perhaps some of the classroom scenarios and physical education activities described may be unfamiliar to all elementary generalist teachers. However, it was my intent to examine classroom interactions and processes in order to illustrate classroom interactions and processes in order to illustrate what impacted these six children's experiences, and to identify issues that the teacher and administrator needed to consider in offering a quality physical education program for the children in their school.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

> Some studies naturally lend themselves more to qualitative types of research, for instance, research that attempts to uncover the nature of persons' experiences with a phenomenon like illness, religious conversion, or addiction. Qualitative methods can be used to uncover and understand what lies behind any phenomenon about which little is yet known. It can be used to gain novel and fresh slants on things about which quite a bit is already known. Also, qualitative methods can give the intricate details of phenomena that are difficult to convey with quantitative methods. (Strauss and Corbin,1990, p.19)

As the nature of this study is to understand physical activity from the child's perspective, an area which we have little knowledge about, the best source of data is the children themselves. My intent as a researcher is to go beyond the description of children in the school context into an explanation of why they view physical activity the way they do. As Glaser (1992) suggests, "Grounded theory allows the relevant social organization and social psychological organization of the people studied to be discovered, to emerge--in their perspective! Grounded theory does justice to the data" (p.5). For these reasons, a qualitative approach, and more specifically, a grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), is best suited to the nature of my research problem.

According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), grounded theory as a methodology is characterized by (a) the need to get out into the field, if one wants to understand what is going on; (b) the importance of theory, grounded in reality, to the development of a discipline; (c) the nature of experience as undergoing and continually evolving; (d) the active role of persons in shaping the worlds they live in; (e) an emphasis on change and process, and the variability and complexity of life; and (f) the interrelationships among conditions, meaning, and action. Other educational researchers (Bogden and Biklen, 1992; Eisner, 1991; and

Merriam, 1988) suggest that qualitative research is field focused and is concerned with making meaning. Eisner (1991) states that qualitative studies are "nonmanipulative, that is they tend to study situations and objects intact....qualitative researchers observe, interview, record, describe, interpret, and appraise settings as they are" (p.33). Lincoln and Guba (1985) also support this view and define qualitative research as being "naturalistic" in that the research must occur in the natural setting or context, and that "realities are wholes that cannot be understood in isolation from their contexts, nor can they be fragmented for separate study of the parts" (p.39).

Bogdan and Biklen (1992) suggest that without some work in the field prior to doing an extensive review of the literature, data collection and analysis is based on pure speculation. In their discussion of research proposals they state, "Such proposals are necessarily highly speculative; at best they are a rough guess about how you are going to proceed and what the issues to examine might be" (p.76). The preliminary framework provided me with the opportunity to begin constructing a theoretical framework for my study.

Bogdan and Biklen (1992) also advocate that an aspect of qualitative research is that theory emerges "from the bottom up (rather than from the top down) from many disparate pieces of collected evidence that are interconnected" (p.31). Layder (1993) says it best by stating:

> grounded theory is to encourage the researcher to be as flexible as possible when interpreting the findings of the research. In this respect the researcher should adopt theoretical ideas which fit the data collected during the research rather than collecting data that fit a preconceived hypothesis or theoretical idea. (p.19)

As this study is qualitative in nature, it is based on the features identified by Eisner (1991) for qualitative inquiry: (1) it is field focused; in that it concentrates on the experiences of six ten-year-old children in physical education in a single school setting; (2) it is related to the self as an instrument, in that my role as researcher is to observe and make sense of what is seen in the school context; (3) it is interpretive, in that it is concerned with matters of motive and why children view physical activity the way they do; (4) it uses expressive language and the presence of voice in text, in that it uses vivid descriptions of the classroom and school setting to help the reader come to better understanding of the child's experiences; (5) it attends to particulars, so that the distinct features can provide a sense of the uniqueness of the case; general themes and categories of the classroom context and the child's lived experiences will be derived from the particulars; and (6) is believable because of its coherence, insight, and instrument utility; multiple sources of evidence will be used to come to a richer understanding of the child's perspective.

Research Design

"A research design is an action plan for getting from here to there, where 'here' may be defined as the initial set of questions to be answered, and 'there' is some set of conclusions (answers) about these questions" (Yin, p.28). According to Merriam (1988) and Yin (1989) the forms of research questions being asked should determine the research strategy to be used. Yin (1989) states that "the case study strategy is most likely to be appropriate for 'how' and 'why' questions" (p.29). Stake (1994) defines case study as not a methodological choice but rather " a choice of object to be studied" (p. 236). Several researchers (Feagin, Orum, and Sjoberg, 1991; Patton, 1990; Stake, 1994) support the belief that case studies are effective for identifying what is both common and particular about a specific context. Patton (1990) states that case studies

> become particularly useful where one needs to understand some special people, particular problem, or unique situation in great depth, and where one can identify cases rich in information--rich in the sense that a great deal can be learned from a few exemplars of the phenomenon in question....Case studies are particularly valuable when the evaluation aims to capture individual differences or unique variations from one program setting to another, or from one program experience to another. (p.54)

By examining children's' perspectives within the context of one classroom situation taught by a specialist, I have attended to the unique or the different, in that the practice of having a specialist physical education teacher in the elementary school differs from the norm in Alberta. Six ten-year-old children were selected from one particular classroom context taught by a specialist teacher. Within this group of six were an equal representation of boys and girls. The children were selected by the physical education teacher on the basis of their differences. Some were very outgoing, talkative, confident in themselves as individuals, and involved in many school and community recreational and sport programs. Others in the group were rather quiet, not considered to be "high achievers" by the teacher, and were not involved in extracurricular school and community programs. These children were identified as representative of the range of children in their class. The one constant among all of the children was that the physical education specialist had taught them physical education for three consecutive years, from the time they were at the grade three level. This selection of children allowed me to hear from those children Fox (1988) refers to as "the approachers," those children who would actively and independently seek out physical experiences, and "the neutrals," those who have no strong feelings about sport and/or exercise, and whose activity patterns are probably more dependent on social and environmental circumstances than strong convictions. Although I did not have any children in the group who would be categorized by Fox (1988) as "avoiders" in that they perceive sport or exercise as a potentially negative experience, I did identify one girl in the class who demonstrated avoidance behaviors (such as sitting out or frequent trips to the washroom), and I made an effort to speak with her informally on several occasions.

Because I am interested in 'how' six children view physical activity, their explanations of 'why' they feel the way they do, and their physical education experiences, a case study approach seemed best suited to my research question. Feagin, Orum, and Sjoberg (1991) state that the case study "can permit the researcher to examine not only the complex of life in which people are implicated but also the impact on beliefs and decisions of the complex web of social interaction" (p.9). These researchers state that:

> Doing a case study is an art, but in that respect it does not differ from other forms of social science research, and probably it does not differ from research in the natural sciences either. Research involves recognizing, identifying, and conceptualizing phenomena not previously known, or it involves finding connections or relationships that were not previously known. It involves assembling evidence and reasoning about the evidence. In these regards, all research is alike, and it requires some mental latitude. (p.264)

Within the field of education, Merriam (1988) acknowledges that a case study is a method that can influence the development of knowledge and improve practice. She states that "research focused on the discovery, insight and understanding from the perspectives of those being studied offers the greatest promise of making significant contributions to the knowledge base and practice of education" (p.3). As an elementary teacher, it is my hope that by coming to a better understanding of how six children perceive physical activity with a specialist physical education teacher, I may be able to make more informed decisions, and provide appropriate physical education experiences for my students.

Bogdan and Biklen (1992) advocate research which focuses on school or classroom life. They suggest that "by learning the perspectives of the participants, qualitative research illuminates the inner dynamics of situations--dynamics that are often invisible to the outsider" (p.32). Because of the complex interaction between the teacher, the child, and the program in physical education, the case study is an appropriate approach to the research design for assisting the researcher in coming to a comprehensive understanding of six children's experiences in physical education.

Data Collection

Yin (1989) suggests that:

> Case study research need not be limited to a single source of evidence. In fact, most of the better case studies rely on a wide variety of sources.... The use of multiple sources of evidence in case studies allows an investigator to address a broader range of historical, attitudinal, and observational issues. (p.96-97)

This study will rely on combining a variety of data collection techniques in an attempt to develop what Yin (1989) would describe as "converging lines of inquiry, a process of triangulation..." (p.97). Denzin (1970) has distinguished between different types of triangulation: data, investigator, theory and methodological forms of triangulation. In an attempt to construct a theoretical framework, methods such as observation, individual and small group interviews, document analysis, personal activity logs and photography were used to gather information. Denzin (1970) states that, "The rationale for this strategy is that the flaws of one method are often the strengths of another, and by combining methods, observers can achieve the best of each, while overcoming their unique deficiencies"(p. 308). By combining the information from several sources of data collection, I was able to provide a more accurate account of the child's perspective in the context of the school setting.

The case study took place over the course of a five month period to provide me as a researcher with sufficient time to get to know the children, experience the physical education program and develop a sense of the school setting. School visitations occurred mainly on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday mornings, as these were the days that the children had scheduled physical education classes. Stake (1994) suggests that, "Qualitative case study is characterized by the main researcher spending substantial time, on site, personally in contact with activities and operations of the case, reflecting, revising meanings of what is going on" (p.242). Although the children had physical education classes the first period of the morning, I remained at the school for the entire morning and sometimes over the lunch hour so that I could observe the children during the recess break and in their noon hour activities. This amount of time enabled me as a researcher to provide more detailed descriptions of the children in relation to their activity habits, and arrive at more accurate conclusions, because I had a more comprehensive view of children in relation to the school physical education program.

Gaining Access

Gaining access was one of the first hurdles I had to undertake prior to conducting my research. After deciding several broad questions I wanted to explore, I sought permission through both formal and informal channels to do my research . As I knew both the teacher and principal of the school I wanted to work in, I met with the teacher informally first and talked to her about my research proposal. As she had taught physical education to young children for many years, she was interested in the research topic. Although I provided time for her to consider the possibility of participating in the research project, she agreed to participate during our initial meeting. Informal contact was made a few days later with the school principal who was very supportive, with the provision that the teacher felt comfortable with it and was in agreement.

Bogdan and Biklen (1992) advise that seeking informal approval first from the teacher is critical in gaining the support of the school administration. They state, "The principal usually will not go to bat for you unless he or she knows that the teachers involved are supportive" (p. 81). Once approval was granted through informal channels, written consent forms were sought from both the school principal and the teacher involved. Throughout the entire course of my fieldwork, the staff made me feel most welcome in the school. The principal and secretary suggested areas in the school I could use to meet students and conduct interviews, the physical education teacher offered me her office space adjacent to the library, which she very seldom used, and even the custodian would stop on a daily basis, always asking if I needed anything such as extension cords, etc. to conduct my interviews. On many occasions I was invited to staff luncheons and other functions. This "low-profile entry" (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992, p. 82) was most helpful to me in establishing a relationship with the school administration and staff that seemed to grow throughout the course of the fieldwork.

Immediately after I sought informal approval from the "gatekeepers" (Bogdan and Biklen, p. 81) at the school site, I sought formal approval from the Superintendent of Educational Services to carry out my preliminary fieldwork. Written consent from the school district was obtained at the outset. One morning, I met with the six children in the school library and told them about my research project. I explained to them that I was a University student doing research about children and physical activity, and that I wanted to observe their physical education classes, spend time with them in their recess and noon hour programs, and talk to them about physical activity. At this time, we identified several possibilities for interview scheduling, with before school and mid-morning just before recess as being the best times to meet. They seemed very eager to participate in the study, and written consent was obtained from the parents of the children involved in the study. The school administration was provided with a copy of the parent permission letter and a written explanation outlining the intent of the research project.

Observations

> 'Then my children, you must go out into the world. Live among the peoples of the world as they live. Learn their language. Participate in their rituals and routines. Taste of the world. Smell it. Watch and listen. Touch and be touched. Write down what you see and hear, how they think and how you feel.'
> ' Enter into the world. Observe and wonder. Experience and reflect. To understand a world you must become part of that world while at the same time remaining separate, a part of and apart from.'
> 'Go then, and return to tell me what you see and hear, what you learn, and what you come to understand.' (Patton, 1990, p. 199)

As naturalistic research takes place out in the field, observational data are critical in allowing the researcher to better understand the context or the social setting. Most importantly, "Observational data, especially participant observation, permits the evaluation researcher to understand a program or treatment to an extent not entirely possible using only the insights of others obtained through interviews" (Patton, 1990, p.25).

Patton (1990, p.203) supports the idea of using observational data in program evaluations, and states that direct, personal contact with and observations of a program have several advantages for evaluators: (1) by directly observing program operations and activities the evaluator is better able to understand the context within which the program operates; (2) firsthand experience with a program allows an evaluator to be open, discovery oriented, and inductive in approach; (3) the evaluator has the opportunity to see things that may routinely escape conscious awareness among participants and staff. Merriam (1988) also recognizes the importance of using observations as a data source, and stresses that observations make it possible to record behavior as it is happening.

Observing the children in their physical education classes provided me with a "wide-angle" view (Spradley, 1980, p. 56) from which I could come to know the children's experiences with physical activity. Spradley suggests that there are varying levels of participation in the observation process. I experienced what he describes as the "insider/outsider experience" (p.56). At times, I chose to participate in class activities alongside the children, so that I could experience the physical education activities in an immediate, subjective manner. On other occasions, I chose to sit on the sidelines and become more of a detached observer. Merriam (1988, p.93) defines this alternating role as one of "observer- participant." During my fieldwork I found myself to be "a participant who seeks to maintain a balance between being an insider and an outsider, between participation and observation" (p.60). Being explicitly aware of the information I would have normally taken for granted, I attended to the details of routine activities within the social situations which I found myself in, whether it be in the physical education classes, outside at recess, during noon hour activities, and even in the hallways.

A research map (Layder, 1993, p.77, Figure 2) served to guide me in examining more closely "the link between individual identity and experience and the situations and settings that are the stuff of everyday life". The map was used as a resource to outline the elements of self, activity, setting and context in describing the physical education and school setting. By engaging in what Spradley (1980, p. 58) refers to as "introspection," I tried to more fully understand the micro-level events or the child's experiences, in every observational setting in relation to the macro-level structures or norms that existed in the school and beyond. As a researcher, I found that the map provided me with "'new lines of attack' or 'fresh angles' on the problem, issue or topic at hand" (Layder, 1993, p.73).

Record Keeping

During the first few classroom observations I found myself writing frantically to note details, to record thorough descriptions of what I was seeing. I soon realized that by doing this I was infringing on my actual observation time. I was experiencing what Spradley (1980) would label as "overload," in that I was trying to remember all objects, all activities, all information, all of the time! I discovered that it was more effective to write down only the key words or phrases that would allow me to capture a significant idea from what I had observed. I spent forty-five minutes to one hour after every classroom observation session expanding on my field notes and writing more comprehensive descriptions of the people, events, conversations, behaviors, physical environment, and interactions. This often occurred in the staffroom as it was empty at the time, or in Jill's office space. These descriptions were shared with the those being observed throughout the fieldwork so that "formal and informal member checks" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.373) could be carried out with the participants.

In addition to descriptive field notes, Bogdan and Biklen (1992) suggest that field notes should also include personal reflections of what has been observed. I also kept a personal journal to note ideas, impressions, and plans for follow-up interviews or discussions with the children.

Interviews

I interviewed the children in the study to try to come to a better understanding of their perspective. At the outset of the study, I met with each of the children separately to tell them a little more about myself, and to give them an opportunity to tell me about themselves and their families. These individual interviews were quite structured and I soon found out that they were not very effective in providing me with information. My preliminary fieldwork helped me realize that group interviews were necessary to 'draw out' information from the children. It also provided me with the opportunity to ask questions that surfaced from my observations of the children in the physical education setting and out on the playground. Brown, Collins, & Duguid (1989) recommends group interviews because "groups are not just a convenient way to accumulate the individual knowledge of their members. They give rise synergistically to insights and solutions that would not come about without them" (p.40).

Group interviews were conducted before school in the morning, on an average of twice a week. This was a time that seemed to work well for the children, and I was surprised by the fact that this was their first choice over the option of missing class time during the morning. Initially, I had conducted many of the group interviews about twenty-five minutes before the morning recess bell, however this meant that the children had to miss a good portion of their independent work time in language arts. I soon discovered that some of the children felt anxious about missing class time, so I scheduled all interviews for early in the morning, prior to the first bell.

To my surprise, missing class time was more of an issue to the children than it was to their teacher, and I tried to do my best to respect their wishes. When Maria, one of the girls in the study, mentioned that she was concerned about the possibility of having too much homework, I took that as an indication that I had to alter times for group interviews. Scheduling the interviews was done informally with the children on a weekly basis, and they would post notes on the front blackboard in the classroom as a reminder of the interview times. The children were extremely dependable and attended all of the interview sessions, with only one or two students arriving late on occasion. Because the study involved children, interviews were scheduled for approximately thirty to forty-five minute time frames with room for flexibility if needed. Most of the interviews lasted no more than thirty minutes, and generally by that time I could see that the children were tiring.

Patton (1990) outlines the benefits of interviewing. Because we are not able to observe everything, "We interview people to find out what we cannot directly observe" (p.279). He elaborates on the importance of interviews by stating:

> The fact of the matter is that we cannot observe everything. We cannot observe feeling, thoughts, and intentions. We cannot observe behaviors that took place at some previous point in time. We cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer. We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world. We have to ask questions about those things. (p.278)

Within the study, observations and interviews were linked in that the questions I asked the children originated from the context of their classroom experiences. During the beginning of each interview session, I highlighted very briefly some of the key points that we discussed in the previous interview, or incidents that I thought might be significant from my observations of their physical education classes or recess activities. This enabled me to seek clarification, check my interpretations, and redirect my line of questioning. A combination of informal conversational interviews and an interview guide approach (Patton, 1990) were conducted with the children in both individual and group settings. Most group interviews involved the girls and boys together, however during the course of the fieldwork I interviewed the boys and girls separately on four occasions to determine if any comparisons could be made or if any contradictions existed between the two groups.

Interviewing children posed an interesting challenge for me as a researcher. Ellis (1994) suggests that the researcher needs to be sensitive to the child, and, as much as possible, word questions in ways that communicate respect and acceptance:

> It is important for the interviewer to communicate confidence in the child as a person who has good reasons for everything he or she does, thinks, or feels. As part of demonstrating acceptance, the interviewer must convey that there are no hidden answers to be guessed, no concealed standards of

> behavior or expression that are not openly stated, no pressure for the child to read the interviewer's mind and no rush to say everything at one time. (p.78)

Attention was given to this issue and every effort was made to use language that the children would understand and feel at ease with. Most importantly every effort was made to listen to the responses of the students. Yin (1989) defines a good listener as one who "hears the exact words used by the interviewee (sometimes, the terminology reflects an important orientation), captures the mood and affective components, and understands the context from which the interviewee is perceiving the world" (p.63). The children were told that all of the interviews would be audio-taped, and during the first couple of interviews they seemed to be quite intrigued by the machine. After one or two interviews with the tape recorder present, I noticed that their attention was no longer focused on the machine, and that they seldom ever asked if it was working. I can still see them arriving at the same time each morning for the interviews, and seating themselves around a large rectangular table in the art room chatting amongst themselves about what happened the night before or on the way to school. The interview schedule and the ritual we seemed to create for conducting the interview set them at ease, and they knew what to expect.

Photography

Photography was used in two ways throughout the study. First, it was used as a tool for initiating discussion with the participants involved. Photos of the children *in action* provided me with an opportunity to find out how the children react to the images. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) state that, "After the pictures are taken and developed, they provide a reason to get together for discussion, which produces good data--data on peoples' reactions to the photos" (p.143). On several occasions, I photographed the children participating in various activities in their physical education classes. Whether it was cross-country skiing, performing juggling feats in the gymnasium, playing badminton games, or demonstrating gymnastic sequences, I was able to capture images of children participating in the various activities offered within the physical education program. These photographs were used to stimulate conversation in interviews, and to seek further information about incidents and activities that the children were involved in. My intent as a photographer was not to let the images I created stand on their own, rather to use the images as a means of seeking out further explanations. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) say it best by stating, "In educational researchers' quest for understanding, photos are not answers, but tools to pursue them" (p.145). I noticed that near the main entrance of the school, there were many colorful displays and photographs of children participating in various activities in their physical education program. When I spoke to Jill about her purpose for displaying the children *in action*, she said that she felt it was an important way of communicating aspects of the physical education program to parents and to other teachers in the school. It would as Jill described it, "increase the profile and highlight the importance of physical education to the rest of the school." She also commented that the children enjoyed seeing themselves in the photographs, and that she hoped it would contribute to a positive school spirit and the self-esteem of the children. Many of the photographs that I took of the children were passed on to Jill to be displayed.

Secondly, disposable cameras were made available to the children to take pictures, so that I could gain further insight into how they viewed physical activity from their perspective. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) suggest that "another way a camera can be used as a research tool occurs when the researcher gives the camera to subjects asking them to take pictures....it can be a way to gain insight into how the subjects see their world" (p.144). This technique also allowed me to get a more comprehensive idea of what activities the children were involved in at home in their leisure time. The children were ecstatic about receiving the cameras, and on the morning I passed them out I received comments like, "You mean we get to keep these?" "We get to take our own pictures?" I asked the children to take pictures related to their physical activity experiences either at school or at home. As many of them sought further clarification of the kinds of things that they could take pictures of, I was careful not to be too specific in my request. I asked them to think about activities they were involved in, what they did after school or at home, who they played with, and objects or places related to their activities. Most of them kept the cameras over the course of a month, and after I had the photos developed, I asked the children to select a few of the pictures and describe them further during the group interviews. The children were excited to see each other's photos, learn more about each others' hobbies, personal interests, and leisure time pursuits.

Document Analysis

Documents related to the physical education program were also considered as a source of data in this study. Yearly program plans, the Alberta Elementary Curriculum Guide, bulletin and announcement boards, and the school newsletter were considered as sources of information. Any documents such as posters, task cards or permission letters to parents were also examined. Eisner (1991) reinforces the idea that documents can be a useful form of data in qualitative research because they "reveal what people will or cannot say" (p.184). Document analysis gave me another opportunity to relate the children's perspectives to the norms and practices that existed within the school context.

Personal Activity Logs

The children in the study were asked to keep a Personal Activity Log (PAL) to record their activities. A small coil bound booklet stamped with various activity logos, and entitled "PAL" was given to each of the six children in the research project. They were asked to describe activities or incidents that they experienced during their physical education classes, and any other physical activities which they were participating in outside of class. I found it interesting that one of the first questions they asked me when I gave them the journals was if I would be marking them! I assured them that I would not be evaluating their journals or sharing them with anyone else. I explained to them that the journals would provide them with an opportunity to share thoughts and feelings that they may not want to share in the interviews, or have an opportunity to share. They were encouraged to record their feelings about activities they participated in during physical education classes, and why they may have enjoyed or disliked a particular activity. Some of the children included drawings or pictures to convey their ideas, but most made entries of a written form. Only half of the children in the group wrote in the journals on a regular basis, as the others would often forget them at home or forget to write in them. By asking the children who did write in them to submit the journals to me about every two weeks, we were able to carry on somewhat of a written dialogue. The journals also gave me, as a researcher, another "angle" from which I could find out more about each child's personal perspectives related to physical activity.

Personal Journal

Throughout the course of the study I kept a journal that allowed me to record my thoughts and comments as a researcher. Bogdan and Biklen (1992, p. 157) recommend that "rather than allowing the recording of detailed description to dominate your activities to the exclusion of formulating hunches, record important insights that come to you during data collection before you lose them." I found that the personal journal enabled me to note mental connections, speculate about meanings, and link findings to other situations and data. As I became more immersed in my fieldwork I found myself thinking about the children and my research more and more. The journal gave me an opportunity to record those ideas, impressions and interpretations that occurred at "the wee hours of the night."

My journal served several purposes outlined by Bogdan and Biklen (1992, p.122). My comments provided (1) Reflections on analysis: I was able to speculate about the themes that were emerging and the connections between pieces of data;(2) Reflections on method: I was able to comment on my rapport with the children, the physical education teacher, and other teachers in the school. I was able to examine the methods I was using to collect the data;(3) Reflections on ethical dilemmas and conflicts: I was able to think through ethical concerns I had involving the children and the teacher, and how I would share information with the teacher throughout the study;(4) Reflections on the observer's frame of mind: I was able to become more aware of my own preconceptions related to my experiences with children this age (these were confronted and compared with what emerged from the course of the study);(5) Points of clarification: I was able to correct informational errors that were recorded at other times, and I was able to add additional information to the descriptions to clarify something confusing. Strauss and Corbin (1990) advocate the idea of reflective field notes, and they suggest that the researcher must "maintain an attitude of skepticism" (p. 45). Bogdan and Biklen (1992, p. 121) share a similar view by stating that "the emphasis is on speculation, feelings, problems, ideas, hunches impressions, and prejudices." By writing in the journal I was able to make brief comparisons to other contexts, what I found in the literature, and to personal experiences.

Journal writing also encouraged me to step back from my role as researcher, and become extremely self-conscious about my own relationship to the study. Because I was the instrument (Eisner, 1991, p.35) in the study, I had to make a conscious effort to continually re-examine what Bogdan and Biklen (1992) defines as the "relationship to the setting, and of the design and analysis. In order to do a good study, you must be self-reflective and keep an accurate record of methods, procedures, and evolving analysis" (p. 121). Most of my reflective notes were brief, but on occasion I added additional notes or "think pieces" (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992, p. 122) about the progress of the research.

Leaving the Field

My approach to ending data collection was somewhat gradual. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) state that "rather than abruptly ending this phase of their research, many people ease out of the field by coming less frequently, and then eventually stopping altogether" (p. 104). I found this approach to be most helpful, as I had developed so many positive relationships with the children and the staff, that I felt like as though I were part of the school team. In addition to this, my apprehension stemmed from a fear that I would miss seeing the children participate in an element of their program which I had not observed them in. I worried about "some new piece of data that would lead to a new insight"(p. 104).

I sensed that it was time to bring the fieldwork component of my study to a close when I found that the interview sessions and the informal conversations were not generating any new findings. Lincoln and Guba (1985) list four guidelines for ending the data collection phase of a study:

> 1) *exhaustion of sources* (although sources may be recycled and tapped multiple times);
> 2) *saturation of categories* (continuing data collection produces tiny increments of new information in comparison to the effort expended to get them);
> 3) *emergence of regularities* - the sense of 'integration' (although care must be exercised to avoid a false sense of conclusion occasioned by regularities occurring at a more simplistic level than the inquirer should accept); and
> 4) *over-extension* - the sense that new information being unearthed is very far removed from the core of any of the viable categories that have emerged (and does not contribute usefully to the emergence of additional viable categories). (p.350)

In the later stages of my fieldwork I found myself as a researcher attempting to verify and confirm what I had seen, heard, and experienced throughout the course of the study. Patton (1990) states that:

> Over the course of the fieldwork, as one nears completion of data gathering, more and more attention is devoted to matters of interpretation. As the observer becomes more knowledgeable about the setting being observed, as information increases, more and more time is devoted to fine-tuning and confirming observed patterns.(p. 265)

Near the end of the fieldwork I also found myself becoming more certain of the data I had found. I came to know the context of the school and the physical education classroom so well that I began to identify emerging themes and concepts. I experienced the kinds of feelings described by

Glaser and Strauss (1967) that the traditional field observer has as fieldwork moves toward a close and data begin to fall into place:

> The continual intermeshing of data collection and analysis has direct bearing on how the research is brought to a close. When the researcher is convinced that his conceptual framework forms a systematic theory, that it is a reasonably accurate statement of the matter studied, that it is couched in a form possible for others to use in studying a similar area, and that he can publish his results with confidence, then he has neared the end of his research...
> Why does the researcher trust what he knows?...They are his perceptions, his personal experiences, and his own hard-won analysis. A field worker knows that he knows, not only because he has been in the field and because he has carefully discovered and generated hypotheses, but also because 'in his bones' he feels the worth of his final analysis. He has been living with partial analyses for many months, testing them each step of the way, until he has built this theory. What is more, if he has participated in the social life of his subject, then he has been living by his analyses, teasing them not only by observation and interview but also by daily living. (p. 224)

This passage illustrates the feelings I experienced as data collection came to a close. During this time I spent more time discussing the findings with Jill, and learning from her reactions to my descriptions and analyses.

Data Analysis

With multiple sources of data it will be imperative that various methods of data processing be incorporated by the researcher. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that within the naturalistic paradigm

> ...data are not viewed as given by nature but as stemming from an interaction between the inquirer and the data sources

> (human and non human). Data are, so to speak, the constructions offered by or in the sources; data analysis leads to a reconstruction of those constructions.(p.332)

A key feature of qualitative studies identified by numerous researchers (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992; Eisner, 1991; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Layder, 1993; Merriam, 1988) is that data collection and analysis should be a simultaneous process. Merriam (1988) states that "the process of data collection is emergent: One does not know whom to interview, what to ask, or where to look next without analyzing data as they are collected....data collection and analysis is recursive and dynamic" (p.123). data analysis was an ongoing activity from the time initial contacts were made with the school. As a researcher I made a conscious effort at the end of each day to read through the data, elaborate on observations, and identify areas that needed further questioning. Merriam suggests that "Data that have been analyzed while being collected are both parsimonious and illuminating"(p.124).

By sifting through the data on a daily basis, I made notes of my own analytical insights. I was careful not to use these initial interpretations to "distort additional data collection;" instead, I used them to "seek out further alternative explanations and patterns that would invalidate initial insights" (Patton, 1990, p.378). Spending time reading through the data and trying to make sense out of what I had heard, observed and experienced at Chelsea Heights enabled me to become closer to the information at hand, and more focused in my inquiry.

Organizing the Data

Near the end of my fieldwork, I spent approximately one week organizing all the data I had collected. This was a bit overwhelming to say the least. My greatest concern at this point of my research was that I had all the data necessary to begin my formal analysis, and that I would be able to organize it in such a way that it would enable me to read and retrieve data to be able to provide a rich description of the children's perspectives of physical activity. During this time, I made sure that my fieldnotes were complete and I added details and descriptions of situations I had observed. Several phone calls to Jill, the physical education teacher, cleared up a few of my unanswered questions, and I was able to confirm particulars about the school. During this time I also completed interview transcriptions of interviews with the children. Once all of the information was compiled, I was faced with numerous pages of observational notes and personal reflections, a binder full of interview transcripts, the children's activity logs and their many photographs, along with all of the related documents I had collected from the school. I read through all the interview transcripts and observational notes, dated and numbered the pages, and then photocopied them for coding purposes. Once all the data were compiled and organized, I began to analyze the data using the procedures described in the following paragraphs.

Generating Categories

In generating the categories that would eventually shape the conceptual framework of my study, I began by reading and rereading the data I had collected, and I looked for words, phrases and patterns of behavior that tended to repeat themselves or stand out. I then wrote down words or phrases in the margins of the fieldnotes and transcripts to represent these topics and patterns, and these words and phrases became my "coding categories" (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992, p.166). Rather than looking for discrete incidents or single observations or words that represented a phenomenon, I searched for a pattern or cluster of many similar incidents that could be given a conceptual name as a preliminary category.

The process of grouping concepts that seem to pertain to the same phenomena is what Glaser and Strauss (1967) call *categorizing*. Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggest that categories have conceptual power because they are able to "pull together around them other groups of concepts or subcategories" (p.65). As the categories seemed to emerge, I created category codes with a name that seemed to best represent the concept being illustrated. By illustrating the preliminary categories on a large concept map on my office wall, I was able to see the distinctions and the relationships between the them. I was also able to start posting themes within each category as I read through each folder carefully.

Sometimes the category codes were words or phrases used by the informants themselves, but often they were more abstract codes denoting more than the example itself. These category codes then became the means of sorting the descriptive data I collected over the five months. In my attempt to discover theory in the data, I used several techniques to enhance my theoretical sensitivity.

Strauss and Corbin (1990) present several techniques that can assist the researcher in attaining analytic depth. Techniques such as the use of questioning to "open up" the data, and the analysis of a word, phrase or sentence within the data, helped to "steer my thinking out of the confines of both technical and personal experience" (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p.76). I also found that by making comparisons within the data I was able to break through assumptions and uncover alternative views. Strauss and Corbin describe the use of the "flip-flop technique" (p.84) and the technique of making systematic comparisons of two or more phenomena. Strauss and Corbin note that in order to make comparisons, the researcher needs to "draw upon personal knowledge, professional knowledge, and the technical literature" (p.84). In my attempt to make meaning out of the child's perspective regarding physical activity, I relied upon my personal and professional knowledge of children, child growth and development, and curriculum perspectives in relation to physical activity.

Considering all these factors, I was able to identify several broad categories that emerged from the children's perspective of physical activity: time, safety, decision making and choice, fun, ability, cooperating with others, friends, perspectives on gender and ability, and social-moral dilemmas.

Identifying Themes

Specific subcategories or themes emerged as I clustered all the data within the preliminary categories I had identified. To facilitate the identification of themes, I actually used a file folder approach (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992, p.177) where I cut up the hard copies of my data, and compiled them into manila file folders that were identified by a category code.

To ensure that I retained the original context of the information , I made photocopies of the case record; the interview transcripts, observation notes, and my reflexive journal notes. Using colored markers, I then wrote the preliminary category codes in the margins of the photocopied pages. I then cut up the pages, taking time to date all of the coded units of information, with the date of the interview or journal notation. Then the coded sections were placed into the file folders that were labeled with a category. I found myself resorting to the original pages of data when I needed to get a sense of the context from which the coded, cut up pieces of information originated. One advantage that the folder approach provided was that I had a certain degree of flexibility in grouping or arranging the information within the files, as well as identifying relationships between the contents of one file and another. Merriam (1988) refers to the process as "clustering" and suggests that:

> At its most basic level, clustering is a sorting process . One asks if two units of information are alike in any way, and thus can be clustered together, or if it makes more sense to separate them. From sorting concrete items into clusters one can move to higher levels of abstraction by analyzing, resorting, and sifting through the clusters themselves. (p.149)

In the process of arriving at these categories, I began naturally to integrate or link specifics within the categories. Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggest that it is important to uncover patterns and group data accordingly, because this is what gives the theory specificity. They state that "to systematize and solidify connections we use a combination of inductive and deductive thinking, in which we constantly move between asking questions, generating hypotheses, and making connections" (p.131). I often found myself trying to "tease" the data, in that I wanted to get beyond a description of their experiences, and provide an explanation of why children feel the way they do about physical activity.

Once I began to identify issues and possible themes within the data, I was able to explore the literature that related to the issues which I had identified. I found that this enhanced my analysis, as I was able to contextualize my findings, and broaden my understanding of how my research compared to existing theories. Strauss and Corbin (1990) support this approach and state, "By choosing the right literature in tandem with doing analysis, one can learn much about the broader and narrower conditions that influence a phenomenon" (p.55). I found that the interplay of reading the literature and doing an analysis of it, allowed me as a researcher to gain an integrated view of existing theories that would enhance the conceptual richness of my study.

Retelling Their Perspective

Presenting the children's perspective of physical activity was probably as great a challenge as doing the fieldwork, if not greater. During the writing portion of my research I found that I was continually asking myself, "Is this accurate? Am I providing an accurate account of their experiences related to physical activity?" In my attempt to portray the situations the children found themselves in, and in my attempt to construct meaning from these situations, I attempted to create a structure within my writing that allowed me to "illuminate the themes I had formulated" (Eisner, 1991, p.190). In my writing of the themes, I tried to follow Eisner's advice and "construct what was essential and use enough description to make the thematic content vivid" (p.190). This of course was done with the realization that I could never possibly retell the children's experiences in such a way that was identical to the experience itself. Rather, my goal was to provide an account of the child's perspective, which was "supported by evidence, structurally corroborated and coherent" (p. 190). In writing the case study, my intent was to persuade the reader of the ten year olds' perspective regarding physical activity. Whether it was the voices of the children that I used to illustrate a concept, or an account of their experiences, my intent was to do justice to the child's perspective of physical activity.

Being Informed

My challenge as a researcher, therefore, was to attend to the language and the values of the children involved, and to construct meaning from their actions and their words. There were many moments that I found myself taking their words and perspectives and applying them to other situations or happenings in my own life. As a parent or a teacher, I often caught myself saying, "Oh this is how the kids would view it...." Their words became the fence posts from which I was able to build my own analogies of the world around me.

Even in my casual conversations with friends and colleagues, I found myself bringing in the children's perspective, and in a very abstract way, analyzing my own experiences in light of their view. Gradually, I became conscious of the effect the children had on me as a researcher. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) state, "Data analysis is thus not a matter of data reduction, as is frequently claimed, but of induction" (p.333). The children definitely informed my views on physical activity, and they caused me to look at physical activity in a different light.

Attending to Trustworthiness, Credibility and Dependability

> "What we trust ultimately depends upon the features of the text we read and what those features enable us to understand, see, or anticipate."(Eisner, 1991, p. 53)

Several strategies were utilized throughout the course of the study to ensure that my analysis was accurate. First, the fieldwork and interpretation took place over the course of five months to ensure that I as a researcher would have sufficient evidence to provide a more comprehensive description of the case. Eisner (1991) states that qualitative research becomes believable because of "its weight, by the coherence of the case, by the cogency of the interpretation" (p.39). He adds that there are "no operationally defined truth tests to apply to qualitative research and evaluation, but there are questions to ask and features to look for and appraise" (p. 53). Following the criteria Eisner (1991, p. 53) identifies for appraising qualitative inquiries, I attempted to (1) provide a coherent interpretation of the child's perspectives within the school context using multiple data sources to support my conclusions, (2) secure consensus or agreement by providing descriptions, interpretations and evaluations of the educational account--that is, I attempted to provide an account of the child's perspective toward physical activity that is consistent with the reader's experience, and (3) provide an account of the child's perspective that will be useful in the designing of physical education programs for children in their middle childhood years.

Being in the school context for the five months enabled me as a researcher to experience the dynamics of the physical education context--the physical education and school setting as a "social context in a state of flux" (Eisner, 1991, p. 39). During this time I allowed for participant discussions with the children and the teacher to verify the credibility of any emerging categories I identified through the analysis. Guba and Lincoln (1982) emphasize that in naturalistic or interpretive research, the researcher has an obligation to find out, "Do the data sources (most often humans) find the inquirer's analysis, formulations and interpretations to be credible (believable)?" (p.246) Conducting member checks with the participants (Guba and Lincoln, 1982; p.247) assisted me in identifying new insights as to how the children felt about a concept or a theme that I have derived from the data.

Every effort was made to cross check the information attained from the different data sources employed throughout the study. Patton (1990) suggests that the "triangulation" of different data sources is one way of addressing the issue of credibility. He states that "consistency in overall patterns of data from different sources and reasonable explanations for differences in data from divergent sources contribute significantly to the overall credibility of findings" (p.468). Eisner (1991, p. 110) suggests that we seek to find "structural corroboration" in that we "look for recurrent behaviors or actions, those theme-like features of a situation that inspire confidence that the events interpreted and appraised are not aberrant or exceptional, but rather characteristic of the situation." Schutz and Luckman (1973) suggest that we look for typifications. Layder (1993) in his discussion on multistrategy research, reiterates the importance of incorporating multiple data sources or methods to address the issue of 'testing' the reliability, validity, and generality of the findings. He suggests that "if the use of other methods turns up the same finding or result, then it is confirmed. If it does not, then the initial finding may be discarded as an artifact or aberration caused by the method used" (p.121). In spending time with the children in the school setting and in using a number of strategies to inform my interpretations, I found it possible to identify linkages, and make comparisons and confirmations from my observations of the children and the perspectives they shared.

"Fittingness"

Within the interpretive paradigm the issue of transferability is dependent on the degree of similarity between any two contexts, or what Guba and Lincoln (1985, p.124) would define as "fittingness." Therefore it is imperative that I as a researcher provide sufficient information about the physical education setting, or what Geertz (1973) would define as a "thick description" (p.7). This will enable other researchers to "extrapolate" (Patton, 1990, p.489) information that may be applicable to other situations under similar but not identical, conditions.

A similar view is held by Eisner (1991) who states that "in qualitative case studies the researcher can generalize but it is more likely that the readers will determine whether the research findings fit the situation in which they work" (p. 197). It is my hope that I will be able to have teachers of elementary children in other school settings gain insights from the participant perspectives I have come to know and find some application of the research for their own programs and practices.

Ethical Considerations

Bogdan and Biklen (1992) highlight four ethical principles that need to be addressed when conducting qualitative research. First, the identity of the participants involved should be protected. Pseudonyms were used in the written descriptions of the case to ensure anonymity of the children and the teacher involved. Caution was demonstrated at the school site to refrain from sharing any information about the children with others, whether they were teachers, students, or parents volunteers in the school.

Secondly, as a researcher I made every effort to get to know the children and to build a trusting relationship with the children, and to communicate with them in an honest and sincere manner in our time together.

Thirdly, the children involved were informed about the nature of the study and the importance of their role in the research. Once the teacher had identified all the children, I met with them in the library to further introduce myself and the purpose of my research. The children were intrigued by the fact that I as an adult was interested in them and how they felt about physical activity. I reflected on the ethical dilemmas that I was faced with. How do children give informed consent? And how do I as a researcher maintain confidentiality so that I do not threaten their position in the school and in the community? Before any preliminary fieldwork, and with the assistance of my advisor, I went through the proper channels to seek approval by the ethics review committee in the Department of Elementary Education at the University of Alberta.

Involving children in my study presents some interesting ethical considerations and challenges for me as a researcher. In working with children, I regarded them collectively and individually, not only as a legitimate source of knowledge, but also as individuals. They were asked to give their verbal consent for participation in the study, and they were presented with the option to withdraw from the study at any time if they felt the need to. Written consent from the parents was attained. A letter describing the purpose of the study and the nature of the research project was sent home to the parents with the cooperation of the school.

And finally, as qualitative fieldwork focuses on human interactions and the realities of others, it can reveal very sensitive findings. I made every effort to share conclusions that were accurate and credible. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) emphasize the uniqueness of qualitative research by commenting:

> For many qualitative researchers, ethical questions do not reside narrowly in the realm of how to behave in the field. Rather, ethics are understood in terms of their lifelong

> obligations to the people who have touched their lives in the course of living the life of a qualitative researcher. (p.55)

As a researcher in the school setting, I always felt that it was my first responsibility to ensure the safety and security of the children and the other participants in the study, and then to carry out the intentions of my research.

CHAPTER THREE

JUST ASK THE KIDS...THEY'LL TELL YOU

Introduction

My desire to better understand what represents developmentally appropriate physical education programs for children, is what prompted me to investigate the lived experiences of six children in a school physical education program, and to better understand these children's perspective in relation to physical activity. Although I have taught physical education to elementary children for the last fourteen years, I have seldom considered the child's perspective in relation to the curricular and instructional methods I have put into practice.

During my initial meeting with the students, I felt somewhat nervous in asking them to participate in my research. I clearly recall our first meeting around a table in the school library; their seriousness and silence amazed me. They listened intently as I described my research, and to my surprise they seemed excited by the fact that someone, especially an adult, would want to spend time with them and to find out how they felt about an aspect of their school program. "You're interested in what we think?" asked Daniel, who was one of the boys in the study.

I believe it was a combination of my successes and frustrations with my past teaching experiences in physical education that made me realize that I needed to understand the child's frame of reference in relation to physical activity. Katz (1977) advocates this practice by stating that:

> If we are to help young children to improve and develop their understandings of their experiences, we must *uncover* what those understandings are. The uncovering that we do, or that occurs as children engage in the activities we provide, helps us to make good decisions about what to *cover*, or what subsequent activities to plan. (p. 18)

The purpose of this chapter is to describe and interpret the experiences of six 10-year-old children in relation to physical activity. It is my intent as a researcher to uncover the experiences and perspectives of these children, and in doing so offer an analysis that is grounded in their reality. The following paragraphs will present the social and learning contexts I observed the children in, and their descriptions and views on physical activity in the school and home environments.

Teaching involves choices. And it is my hope that by examining more closely the perspectives and movement experiences of 10-year-old children, I can be more insightful to the needs of children, and expand the bases on which I can make more appropriate choices for teaching physical education.

We Need More Time

> It's not really fair. We don't get enough time in the gym. By the time the bell goes and we go to Mr. M's class to register, we lose a lot of our phys. ed. time. (Daniel, February 8, 1995)

The young children in this study were adamant that there was a lack of opportunity to be active during the school day. On the three days each week that they had scheduled physical education classes, I watched them enter the gymnasium at running speed, eager to pick up equipment and get started with a task, or they would often sprint to a particular space in the gym immediately engaging in a warm-up activity with a partner. The morning bell rang at 8:40 a.m., and their physical education class was scheduled during the first period of the day. However, they did not arrive at the gymnasium for at least five to eight minutes after the morning bell, as they went to their homeroom class to register.

This bothered me and on several occasions I visited the grade five homeroom first thing in the morning, just to observe the morning routine before they made their way down to the gymnasium. It was evident that the classroom teacher spent valuable time greeting the students, checking attendance, and making brief announcements. On several occasions, the physical education teacher arrived at the classroom and had to wait patiently for several minutes before she could introduce the lesson focus for the day, and assign a warm-up to the students. The physical education class which was scheduled from 8:40 a.m. to 9:10 a.m., often ended up being only twenty to twenty-five minutes long. To compound the problem, the grade six class had a scheduled physical education class at 9:10, and on most days they arrived on time naturally expecting to get a full thirty-minute physical education period in the gym. Usually these children observed the grade five students in their culminating activity for a few minutes from the sidelines of the gymnasium. The grade five children I spoke to felt cheated of instructional time in physical education, a problem that might have been alleviated if the physical education periods were scheduled ten minutes after the initial morning bell.

The amount of time allocated to physical education in elementary schools is discouraging. In 1987, a national survey was undertaken to identify the similarities and differences in some specific areas of physical education programs in each Canadian province. In terms of time allotted for physical education at the elementary level, it is important to note that the minimum time requirements set by the provincial Ministries of Education vary from sixty minutes to one hundred and fifty minutes per week (excluding Ontario and more recently Alberta, with no minimum time requirements). "The average minimum time requirement in Canada is 107 minutes" (Trottier, 1987). In a planning kit to promote Quality Daily Physical Education, the Canadian Association for health Physical Education and Recreation published a paper entitled Issues in Physical Education (1987). The paper illustrates the time devoted to physical activity and fine arts and the overemphasis on academic subjects. Children spend eighty five to ninety percent of their school week on intellectual pursuits and a mere ten to fifteen percent on what is categorized as non-core subjects. Fishburne and Harper-Tarr (1992) compared elementary timetables in Alberta and British schools and found that the actual time allocated for physical education in Alberta was approximately six per cent of the total school timetable.

The fact that physical education is poorly represented in the school timetable across Alberta is also confirmed in a more recent study conducted by Serfaty and Lumby (April, 1995) who examined trends in physical education in Alberta. 75 schools were randomly selected from around the province and 50 surveys or 67 percent were returned. From the schools who responded, only 28 percent of the schools had 120 minutes per week, and 20 percent had it 90 minutes per week. At the extremes, 4 percent had physical education for a total of 60 minutes per week, and 8 per cent offered it on a daily basis for 150 minutes per week. These studies indicate that the status of physical education in Alberta is somewhat depressing when you consider that the total number of minutes per week of instruction for students exceeds 1400 minutes. The Guide to Education ECS to Grade 9 Handbook released in 1994 by Alberta Education, outlines that there are no specific time guidelines for subject areas at the elementary level. The Alberta Elementary Program of Studies (May, 1990) specifically states that the amount of time devoted to physical education is to be determined by the school site:

> The amount of time devoted to physical education, and the frequency of the activities is a matter that may be decided locally. It is widely believed that daily physical activity enhances mental and emotional well-being and contributes to physical health. A healthy adult cardiovascular system depends upon a minimum of three 20-minute periods of activity at target heart rate levels each week. (Physical Education, C.1)

The Program of Studies refers only to the minimum requirements of physical activity for health benefits for an *adult,* but makes no reference to what is appropriate for children. Perhaps this is because little research exists regarding physical activity requirements for children. Corbin and Pangrazi (1992) suggest that children are more fit than we have previously believed, and when compared to the most recent criterion-referenced standards, most children and youth scored high on fitness tests. On all health-related fitness tests, the majority of children and youth were considered fit. Although they do not provide any physical activity guidelines for children, they recommend in a later article (Pangrazi and Corbin, 1993) that teachers must recognize that children are more active than adults and they must reinforce regular physical activity "regardless of the type or intensity" (p. 17). Blair, Kohl, Paffenbarger, Clark, Cooper, and Gibbons (1989) in their study of healthy men and women, also stress the importance of regular exercise and suggest that more moderate amounts of health-related physical fitness are adequate to contribute to good health. Previous recommendations for subject time allotments have been removed from the provincial curriculum guidelines, so the minimum number of 150 minutes identified for health and physical education is no longer requirements. One might hope that there would be ample opportunity to now extend time for physical education, or to make inroads to integrate physical education across the curriculum. However, current practice indicates that teachers feel pressured to focus on what Alberta Education identifies in the Handbook as "Basic Education" (p. A1-1). The Alberta Ministry defines Basic Education in the following manner:

> The school's first obligation is to provide a solid core program consisting of language arts, mathematics, science and social studies.
>
> Schools have the responsibility to provide instructional programs to ensure that students will meet the provincial graduation requirements and are prepared for entry into the workplace or post-secondary studies. As well, schools must ensure that students understand the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, and have the skills and disposition to pursue learning throughout life.

It is interesting to note that nowhere in this definition is there reference to the importance of the health and well-being of children, or to the development of positive attitudes toward physical activity.

In my discussions with Jill, the physical education teacher at Chelsea Heights, she often mentioned her frustration with the existing physical education schedule and lack of time for physical education at her school. On one occasion when her class was in the middle of a gymnastic lesson using large gymnic balls, the grade six children quietly entered the gymnasium and sat against the wall around the perimeters of the gym. Jill looked over at me somewhat exasperated, and said, "This always happens...we just seem to get started and we always run out of time. They lose a good part of their class time, and often there isn't enough time to get through the lesson" (Jan. 18, 1995). In a subsequent conversation, Jill mentioned something that I have thought about for a long time, and that is the opportunity to *integrate* certain physical education concepts and activities with other curricular areas. She felt that this was somewhat difficult given her situation, because she only taught the children physical education for three (brief) periods a week. She felt that this left little time for her to hold lengthier discussions, work on written projects with the children, or extend the learning in any way.

Recent curriculum initiatives in Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia have all embraced the concept of curricular integration. In Alberta, the 1990 Guide to Education *Elementary School Handbook (ECS to Grade 6)* encourages continuity across subject areas and emphasizes the importance of integration:

> There are many connections across subject areas of the curriculum. Integrating across content areas and providing ways for students to make connections enhance continuity and transfer of learning. Thus, students continue to see the world as a connected whole instead of in fragmented bits. (p. 17)

Duke (1994, p.12) states that "there are many arguments in favor of curricular integration." Curricular integration is frequently advocated as a way of making education more connected, more holistic. Goodlad (1984), in his book A Place Called School, suggests that the major problem in schooling is the degree of unconnectedness it often has with the reality beyond school. He advocates for a curriculum emphasizing problem solving and knowledge utilization rather than knowledge acquisition. Other advocates for curricular integration (Eisner, 1994; Goodlad, 1986; Murphy, 1987; Werner, 1982) suggest that this practice is pedagogically sound as it meets the needs of learners, allows for increased opportunities for children to participate in 'hands-on' experiences and innovative activities as compared to the more traditional discipline-oriented approaches, and it develops positive attitudes toward learning. Eisner (1994) says it best by stating:

> One of the ways to increase relevance and transfer is to help students see relationships across fields; another is to increase the variety of forms of representation through which meanings can be construed by the student. Thus, increasing the variety of forms used to teach a field relating that field to other fields, or using a variety of fields to address a key idea, are ways not only to provide more *handles* for students to grasp but also to make what students learn more transferable. (p.84)

On one occasion Jill addressed this notion by saying, "I feel I could do more if it was my own class" (Jan. 18, 1995). Each day after the grade five children left the gymnasium I watched Jill rush off to teach another class of grade two students.

Because Jill also taught the same grade five class social studies three times every week, she incorporated some aspects her physical education program in social studies, to focus on the importance of lifestyles. She asked the children to keep a personal activity log of the physical activities they were engaged in throughout the course of a few weeks. On several occasions she spoke about the lack of time she had in physical education to reinforce the concepts she was teaching. Her attempt to integrate aspects of the curriculum stemmed from her dilemma to build in what she described as "talk time" with the children. She wanted to incorporate an active living focus in her program and utilize some of the thinking and knowing activities from the Canadian Active Living Challenge, a resource recently published by Fitness Canada to promote the concept of Active Living. If possible, she integrated health related issues within the context of physical education. For example, after a basketball lesson where the children were very active, and ran almost continually throughout the lesson, Jill made use of the "teachable moment" and spoke to them about personal hygiene as they lined up at the door to go back to class. Her humor and interest got their attention, and they stood in absolute silence as she spoke to them for a brief moment about personal hygiene practices:

Jill: Now we're going to be moving a lot as you can see, and you may need to think about hygiene.

Jeff: Dental hygiene?

Jill: No, arm-pit hygiene! (She said jokingly)

Daniel: Doesn't it smell?

Jill: You can get the unscented kind.

Mitchell: Yeah...like bubble gum flavor!

Jill: Well you don't lick it! That's a toothpaste flavor! (January 5, 1995)

The conversation caused a chuckle or two, but the children were in awe as if the entire topic were new to them. Jill talked about the importance of personal cleanliness, and the importance of presenting their personal best for themselves and others. This certainly seemed to be an appropriate time to discuss the issue, as the children listened intently in their sweaty clothes, red faced and perspiring.

During another conversation on the concept of integration, she talked about the possibility of collaborating with the homeroom teacher to incorporate the Active Living Program in health classes, but there were several factors that had to be considered, such as the other teacher's knowledge of the subject area, and willingness to use the resource. In her discussion on curricular integration, Duke (1994) recognizes that there are very few resources and teacher materials for the curricular integration of physical education. Only a few researchers (Humphrey, 1990; and Kirchner and Fishburne, 1995) focus on the integration of physical education in the school curriculum, and provide suggestions for integrating concepts related to knowledge, fitness, and motor skill development. Kirchner and Fishburne (1995) advocate the use of classroom time to extend the learning of physical education concepts. They present the following approaches:

> Whenever a concept or skill in one subject area can be fortified or acquired through another subject, the relationship

> should be consciously planned. This may occur in two ways in the elementary school. The first approach is to use the assigned time for an academic subject, such as math, and use physical activities within this time period to teach or reinforce a particular skill or concept....The second approach is, first to plan a well-balanced physical education program for a particular grade. Once the program is established, the classroom teacher can modify activities within each unit to reinforce academic skills and concepts concurrently taught in the classroom. (p. 11)

Jill's efforts to integrate reflection time in physical education into other subject areas illustrates the first model for integration outlined by Kirchner and Fishburne.

Duke (1994) presents another dimension of the whole notion of increasing time for physical activity, and states the following:

> National initiatives such as Quality Daily Physical Education (QDPE) and Active Living, while they are purposeful and focused in their message for increased physical activity for all children, cannot afford to dilute their mandate by advocating close integration with other subject areas in the school curriculum. Thus, curriculum materials produced or recommended by these initiatives do not provide practical support for promoting integrated activities in physical education. The development of resources and materials will have to become a priority if curricular integration is to effectively implement. (p. 13)

Duke also cautions that the integration of physical education could be a backward step unless we develop models for the integration of physical education, new resources for teachers, and ways to assess whether the goals of physical education are being met.

As a physical education specialist, Jill's only opportunity to extend the concepts taught in physical education was to incorporate time in another subject area to provide the time necessary for the children to record and reflect on their activity habits. We discussed the fact that perhaps the opportunity to extend the knowledge component of physical education would occur more easily if the children had a daily physical education program. Jill shared with me that she wanted to help the children make connections to their personal leisure time, however she did not want to infringe on large chunks of activity time during scheduled classes. I soon realized that the sighs of "Aw...no!" coming from the children as their physical education period drew to a close each morning, and they made their way through the gym door toward their next class, were indicative of the disappointment they felt with the lack of time provided for physical activity.

Nettleton (1980) in his article, "Children's Needs and Physical Activity," states that "If we observe children when they are not in school it is clear that the majority are pretty active creatures" (p.28). He quotes Plato by saying:

> No young creature whatsoever, as we may fairly assert, can keep its body or its voice still: all are perpetually trying to make movements and noises. They leap and bound, they dance and frolic as it were with glee. (p. 28)

Nettleton argues that if activity is so important to children, then how are we to regard the school time-table of, for example, a fourteen year old boy, on a typical Monday. "He was sitting down for 86 per cent of the time and had the opportunity to be active during recess and lunch breaks for 14 per cent only of the school day" (p.28). He reiterates the words of an Australian boy who says:

> Walking home from school is warmer than the morning. It's like a crossword which is black for lessons, and white for play. (p.28)

One of the girls who participated in the study drew a similar comparison between physical education and the rest of the school day by saying she would like to have daily physical education classes:

> I would go 5 times a week. I would go five times a week because it gets you more fit. But mostly because it's like you are doing a boring subject in language arts, and you want to have something fun before you go in there.... Yeah, its like you're going to die, right, so if you're going to die you'd like to do something you like in the last few hours. (April 13, 1995)

Although their analogy seemed quite rash to me at the time of our conversation, I began to realize that they viewed physical education as an enjoyable but only small part of their school day.

Time also influenced their choices for recess activities. Each day the children chose to play in play spaces close to the building because, as they told me, "there is not enough time to make it out to the big field and back again during recess.... We LOSE playing time" (Jan. 18, 1995).

Recess routines were almost a ritual. It was common to see the children dressing themselves or munching on a snack as they hurried to the door, and ran to the space in the playground that they claimed as theirs to play soccer every day. When the recess bell sounded it was as if they didn't want to waste any of their precious time to play. After recess one day I had the opportunity to ask one of the grade five girls why the children *ran* back towards the school when the recess bell signaled them in, and she indicated that they had French after recess, and the French teacher gave them points if they were on time for class. Christi, one of the grade five girls explained the routine as follows:

> Debbie: So everyone just joins a team. But why do you choose to play on that particular field?
>
> Christi: The other one is just too far out. We have to go far down and then we have to come all the way back. We have to be on time for French because you get points for French. So you have to hurry up. (Jan. 19, 1995)

I recall another conversation I had with the children during one of our interviews, in which I asked them why they chose not to use the soccer field that was assigned to them. They indicated that it was simply too far away from the school and that if they used the "real field" (Jan. 19, 1995) it would leave them less time to play soccer. They had a space on the playground that suited their needs, they were active, and they weren't infringing on anyone else. The teachers had obviously made an attempt to provide play spaces for all of the children in the school during recess and noon hour play, however, these choices made by adults seemed inappropriate to them. These choices for play failed to make sense to the children, and simply became one more hurdle to jump.

Providing Time for Physical Activity

What do we do as teachers to encourage physical activity? I have asked myself this question on many occasions, but I am not so certain I have any answers. For three months I had watched the grade five children play soccer day after day during their recess breaks. The games were always quick to start and little time was wasted on selecting teams or on 'getting organized' to play. It was not uncommon to see up to twenty children involved in one game, always playing in mixed teams. They thrived on it. I vividly remember a day I walked outside at recess and to my surprise the grade five children were not playing soccer that day. I glanced over to their "designated" field but they were nowhere in sight.

I soon recognized a group of three or four of the grade five boys tossing a football around in a space not too far from where I was standing. Most of the other children were just standing around, looking somewhat bored. Relieved to see them, I went up to them casually and asked them why they weren't playing soccer that day. I presumed that they were tired of it, and probably felt like playing something different. "No, not at all!" Tim said to me, "Mr. Morgan took our ball away... for two weeks!" When I asked him why, he told me that three boys in their class, John, Paul, and Jeff, were touching the ball with their hands in the soccer game, and arguing about it, and Jeff decided to go and tell Mr. Morgan what had happened. As Tim explained this to me he went up to one of the boys who happened to be standing there, and he pretended to choke his neck saying sarcastically, "Yeah, thanks a lot Jeff, that'll teach you for being a tattletale!" As I walked away from Tim's group I looked for the rest of the class to see what they were playing, and I saw a group of girls bounce passing a tiny ball which they had brought from home, while another group of boys were just standing around shivering. They had nothing to play with.

The whole incident made me wonder why the teacher had handled things the way he did. Why did the whole class have the soccer ball taken away because two or three children were arguing in the game? Could the teacher have assisted the children in some way to mediate their own social dilemmas? Tim's comment to his friend Jeff made me think that they will probably think twice next time about seeking the help of a teacher if their opportunities to play were taken away. They lived for soccer, and it was their personal choice for recess play. Later on in an interview the incident surfaced again:

Debbie: So you don't have a ball to play with at recess any more?

Tim: Just for the rest of the week we don't but next week we do... and probably we will lose it then, when Jeff and John start fighting again.

Debbie: So, it sounds like everybody got penalized or affected by the decision.

Tim: Yeah, I told my dad to file a complaint on Mr. Morgan 'cause they should not play, they should get suspended for like a week 'cause now we can't play with the soccer ball now and we are really bored. (March 22, 1995)

Jill was out on supervision the day the children told me their story, and as we walked back into the school I shared with her what had happened. She shook her head in dismay and we explored ways that the teacher might have handled the situation. Perhaps the teacher might have brainstormed with the large group of students ways of handling infractions or arguments occurring during play situations. Or if the problem couldn't be resolved by the group perhaps only those involved in the incident could be removed from play for a given period of time. Corbin (1986) advocates that children need opportunities to be active during the school day. He suggests that physical activity should not be regarded as a privilege when he states, "Physical education is essential for all children, but children also need free play. Recess is important, too. Children should not be punished by restricting their recess time or physical education classes" (p.84).

Since hearing their story I have often asked myself, What do we do as teachers to actually discourage physical activity? Do we take away opportunities for children to be active as a form of punishment, and do we sometimes ignore opportunities to teach morals and values in relation to social behavior? If we can accept the fact that activity is important to children, then perhaps we can find ways to provide more time for children to be physically active during the school day. Perhaps by increasing the amount of time children have to be active, we can also provide more opportunities for personal choice, which is a theme I will address in the following paragraphs.

Playing to Please

The issue of playing to meet the expectations of others surfaced in many of our group interviews. This issue seemed to influence the children's decisions to be involved in structured programs in the community at large, and their choices regarding free play. On numerous occasions the children spoke about the fact that they did not feel they had a choice in deciding what kinds of recreational activities they could pursue. Parents, teachers, and older brothers and sisters all influenced the children's involvement in leisure time activities. On the mornings we held our group interviews, it was common for the children to rush into the artroom with books in hand, and as they laced up their shoes I usually heard highlights and snippets of the activities from the previous evening. On one particular morning, Daniel told the group that he had to spend a good part of the evening playing basketball with his older cousin, even though he would have rather played hockey out in the driveway. We had an opportunity to discuss this during an interview, and I came to realize that Daniel didn't want to play basketball, but he felt pressured by his older cousin who was much more skilled than he was:

Daniel: It's like I hate basketball so why should I play? But it's just that it's my cousin. It just doesn't do anything for me, like whenever I want to go out and play hockey, I have to play basketball with him and his older sister who is in grade 8.

Tim: Tell your cousin that he can play with the neighbors!

Daniel: Well he doesn't know these people and besides he doesn't like them.

Tim: Daniel, why should you do what he wants when he won't do what you want?

Daniel: Because he is my cousin and he is five years older than me. (February 22, 1995)

When I quizzed them on why they had signed up for a particular sport or recreational activity, they often came back with statements such as, "Because my mom thought it would be a good idea," or "My brother's in hockey so my mom wanted me to play ringette, too." In speaking with one of the girls in the group she gave me what she perceived to be her mother's rationale for taking swimming lessons:

Debbie: Maria, you're involved in swimming lessons; was it your decision to take swimming?

Maria: Well, actually my mom made my brothers and me take it because she thought that if we were ever

> out in a boat in a lake and we are drowning we will need to know how to swim. (January 16, 1995).

Jennifer, one of the very shy girls in the group, nodded and smiled as if she could relate to our conversation, and when I asked her if she decided on what activities she would take after school, she responded by saying, "No, my mom just put me in skating" (January 16, 1995).

One of the boys mentioned that his parents gave him an opportunity to choose between two activities which were offered in the local community.

Aidan: My mom got this flyer in the mail one day and she said that I could either take karate or basketball at Ridgewood School, and so I chose karate.

Debbie: Do you like karate?

Aidan: Yeah, I guess so, but I would have liked to take basketball and get so good that I could maybe make it to the NBA. (January 12, 1995)

One of the girls in the group came from a family in which everyone was involved in some kind of organized sport. Her mother played ringette on a women's team, her dad played hockey, and her twin brother and older brother played community hockey. She was one of two girls in the family, and her older sister was very involved in ringette, much like her mother. Although Christi belonged to an indoor soccer club and played twice a week, her free time was often spent outside playing hockey with her sister and brothers:

Debbie: Is there anything else that you really like?

Christi: I like those big blue balls in gym and I like skipping...I kind'a like hockey cause my brothers play it, and I kind'a like ringette.

Debbie: Why did you choose not to take ringette?

Christi: Well, I really don't like falling down on the ice, and I don't know the rules that much. I have to play hockey though because my brother plays it. (January 19, 1995)

During another group discussion regarding physical education at Chelsea Heights, I had an opportunity to ask the children what they liked about their program. One boy indicated that he liked the way Mrs. H. sometimes let them decide who they would play with and what they would do, for example in gymnastics, or in a game. Another fellow in the group told me that although Mrs. H. provided them with free choice days in physical education, he wished that they had more of them, "Free days, I like them, but we don't get them very often, and sometimes when we do get them we don't have very much time to do what we like" (March 16, 1995). The children also valued activities that allowed for creativity and personal choice. Christi's journal entry illustrates that she enjoyed gymnastics because it provided for a certain degree of personal choice,

February 28, 1995

> On Monday we played with the klimer (climber). That was fun. I loved it. I like when you can do what you want to do like go up and down on the klimer (climber).

Comments like those highlighted above illustrate that the children valued a certain degree of autonomy to make decisions, and to fulfill some of their personal interests.

From their perspective, the opportunity to have choices was what really mattered. I was surprised to hear the children tell me that their parents seldom ever asked them questions such as, "What are you interested in?" or "What would you like to do?" After countless interviews, Orlick and Botterill (1978) identified the same concerns expressed by children in their study. "Many parents are not aware of the kinds of experiences their kids are having or what their kids are feeling because they seldom if ever, sit down and talk to them" (p.57). Some exciting research has been done in the educational field relating to personal interest, decision making, and learning outcomes. Deci (1992) has done extensive research in the area of autonomy and interest as it relates to the motivation of behavior, and suggests that in contexts which are autonomy-supportive rather than controlling, children display greater levels of intrinsic motivation to learn. In another study, Deci, Nezlek, and Sheinman (1981) studied children in 35 4th-, 5th-, and 6th-grade classes and found that children in classrooms of control-oriented teachers showed less intrinsic motivation, perceived themselves as less competent, and felt less good about themselves than students of autonomy-supportive teachers.

Several other investigations (Benware and Deci, 1984; Grolnick and Ryan, 1987; Grolnick, Ryan, and Deci, 1991; Deci, Hodges, Pierson, and Tomassone, 1990) considered the relation among external pressures, intrinsic motivation, and educational outcomes. In their study involving fifth grade students, Grolnick and Ryan (1987) used different techniques to motivate students, and found that those students who were motivated to learn written material because they would be tested on it displayed lower interest and significantly less conceptual understanding than those students who were asked to read the material and comment on how interesting they found it. Deci (1992, p.64) comments on the outcome of this study and concludes that "the standard practices of pressuring students to learn through the use of techniques like tests may result in poor affective and conceptual outcomes." He also suggests that "there is a clear link between interest and intrinsic motivation emphasizing that an activity is intrinsically motivated if one's primary reason for doing it is the spontaneous interest and enjoyment one experiences from doing it" (p.54). The aspect of enjoyment and fun is an area which will be elaborated on in a subsequent chapter.

Given this information, it only makes sense that teachers and parents should take into consideration the interests of children when offering educational programs for children. If we want children to become adults capable of making wise decisions regarding physical activity, then it only makes sense that we need to develop the thinking processes involved in decision making. Perhaps if parents were to provide choices to children, encourage them to explore their interests, and invite them to be part of the decision making process for their own leisure time activities, they would have a greater sense of satisfaction, and be better prepared to make decisions regarding physical activity as they move into adolescence.

The Power of Parents

> Every Sunday our family goes skiing, and I like to ski with my dad, because we have fun together. (Christi, February 9, 1995)

The role of the family as a socializing influence upon children's physical activity seems almost indisputable. As I got to know the children who participated in the study, learned about their family life, and their personal interests, I came to see that each one of them came to the physical education context with a different view of the world, a view that had been shaped and molded by the norms, attitudes, and interests of their parents. The pictures that the children took at home revealed parts of their life that I was not able to participate in: their extended families, their associations in the community with organized sport, and the impoverished living conditions that some of them experienced within their lives. As I heard their stories though, I began to see a relationship with the children's interests and the parental encouragement and level of involvement with physical activity.

Those children who spoke about their parents participating in organized sport and team sports tended to also be encouraged to participate in organized sports. Children with parents who enjoyed recreational activities such as skiing or biking also seemed to spend time participating in those activities as a family unit. Those children whose parents were not very physically active did not seem to have as many opportunities for physical activity, and they tended to participate in programs that tended to have an instructional focus such as swimming, skating, or karate. In their study assessing the similarity of parent/child activity habits, Freedson and Evenson (1991) found that similarity between the categorization of father and child occurred in 67% of the cases, and between mother and child in 73% of instances. In another study conducted by Moore, Lombardi, White, Campbell, Oliveria, and Ellison (1991) the researchers found a strong relationship between the physical activity levels of parents and that of their 4- to 7-year old children. The results of this study indicated that children of two active parents were six times more likely to be active than children of inactive parents. The children who talked about going skiing for spring break with their parents, and spoke of bike riding or skating with their parents, were more likely to be involved in these activities than those children who told me that their parents were not active, or did not participate in an activity with them.

The power of socialization that parents have in influencing their children might be what Resnick and Klopfer (1989) refer to in the chapter "Shaping Dispositions for Thinking: The Role of Social Communities." They suggest that any social community can help to cultivate the expectations for certain kinds of behavior:

> The social setting may help to shape a disposition to engage in thinking. There is not much research on how intellectual dispositions are socialized, but we do know how other traits such as aggressiveness, independence or gender identification develop. By analogy with these traits, we can expect intellectual dispositions to arise from long-term participation in social communities that establish expectations for certain kinds of behavior. (p.9)

In my conversations with Jill, regarding the children and the differences in their physical activity habits, she spoke about parental influence, and the assumption that many of the parents were positive role models for their children. When I first met Christi, one of the more active ten-year-old girls in the study, Jill pointed out that Christi was very physically active and involved in organized sports, much like all of the other members of her family. She said that the "entire family is into team sports in one way or another...everybody plays on a team" (December 16, 1995).

When they were all in the gymnasium, it was difficult to think of them as being very different from each other. I thought of my teaching experiences with children, and how I tended to regard them as "my class, or my group of kids." At first, these children, too, all looked the same. But as I began to talk to them and get to know them, I realized that they led very different lives and came from very different homes. The photographs the children shared with me gave me a different view of them as individuals, of their home environments, their realities. I came to learn more about the economic circumstances they found themselves in. Two of the children who did not take part in any sort of community sports, clubs, or instructional programs came from large families with three or more children. Their homes were crowded and they appeared to be living on the edge of poverty. These children, never spoke of participating in any kind of physical activities with their parents, whether it be biking, skating, tobogganing or even going out for a walk to the park.

Although the children never complained to me about the lack of money for physical activities, their physical education teacher mentioned that they came from larger families with as many as six children, both parents were working, or housing extended families, and there wasn't a lot of money for "extra things."

These children often shared with me stories about their added responsibilities around the home. As one of the boys told me when I asked him what he did during his spring break he said, "All I did was I had to take care of three kids that my mom baby-sits; they were Coty, Shane and Martin." (April 6, 1995) Although all the children who participated in the study had the support of two parents, they often spoke about the amount of time they spent on house-related responsibilities, and that they did not have very much time to play. During my very first interview with Tim, he told me that he spent every Saturday morning cleaning the house with his whole family. As he put it, "The two things I do on Saturdays are watch cartoons, and cleaning" (January 12, 1995).

Almost all the children came from families where both parents worked, and their stories about cleaning, baby-sitting in the home, and helping their parents perform other household errands such as shopping and preparing meals, made me realize that there was little time to play. All of these factors, in addition to the homework they brought from school, added to their school day and did not leave much time for them to play. Many of the children at the age of ten had assumed a full schedule of school and homework assignments, and taken on many of what traditionally would be regarded as adult responsibilities. They had no time to be children.

It became apparent to me that the children just wanted time to play, and to enjoy themselves. Physical education, or "gym" as they often referred to it, provided them opportunities to try new activities that they would not have an opportunity to learn at home or to participate in with their parents. It also gave them a chance to play and enjoy themselves with their peers. Jill's agenda, too, was one of providing unique opportunities for the children. She spoke of the varied backgrounds the children had, and the fact that some children could afford more than others to participate in certain activities. She felt that it was important to provide a wide array of activities in her physical education program for the children she was teaching, and provide them with successful experiences and opportunities to make decisions in the hope that they would be better prepared to make positive choices later on.

Hellison and Templin (1991) strongly believe that the social and cultural trends in society affect our teaching more than we may realize. As physical education teachers our "gyms" are what he refers to as our "microsocieties, and in them we can promote certain trends and counter or downplay others" (p.21). Fox and Biddle (1988) reiterate this viewpoint and present a framework which illustrates the factors that affect the youngster's activity decisions (see Appendix, Figure 3). They suggest that social agencies, social norms, parental encouragement, and peer influence all contribute to the kinds of decisions children make regarding physical activity. In their article, "The Child's Perspective in Physical Education: A Question of Attitudes" (1988), they suggest that as educators we need to meet the challenge of providing quality physical education programs to help children make decisions about physical activity. They say it best by stating:

> Undoubtedly, children are very much dependent upon family regarding their decisions to be active. As adolescence progresses, peer group and general societal trends through the

> media also exert their influence. In essence, youngsters who are dependent upon these pressures are dominated by the subjective norm component. They remain the followers rather than the leaders. One of the main aims of any educational program is to create 'independence' in students. Clearly, we have a responsibility to help youngsters base their behavioral decisions on the convictions of their own beliefs and attitudes, not on those of others. (p.111)

I recall a conversation that I had several years ago with an elementary school principal, who was new to her role in an inner city school. She had contacted me to find out about upgrading resources in the area of physical education. She spoke about the lack of physical education equipment and playground apparatus at her school, and her words remain with me until this day: "These children deserve the best of everything here. If I don't provide the best resources for them, I'm just perpetuating poverty. Poverty only perpetuates poverty." Her words have remained with me to the present, and my conversations with the children involved in the study encouraged me to realize that, for many of them, physical education was their only opportunity to try new activities and develop skills in areas that they might never have an opportunity to learn outside of school.

In trying to understand how children viewed physical activity, and how they made choices for leisure time, I came to realize that many of them had few opportunities in their personal lives to *decide* what kinds of physical activities they would like to pursue; and in all cases, the home circumstances and the economic situations they found themselves in seemed to steer their choices. Despite the differences in their home lives, however, I discovered one startling similarity that all of the children mentioned as being essential for their participation: that was the notion of personal safety.

Safety in the Community

> I used to go biking with my friend in the forest area by my house, but one day a man came up to me and asked me if I wanted a beer, and now I'm scared to go near the park. (January 12,1995)

The importance of personal safety was part of many of our conversations and it emerged early in the study. I frequently remember the children speaking about going outside to play in their own neighborhood only when they were in the company of older siblings or other relatives who they felt safe with. I was surprised that this was an issue to them in relation to their choices for play, mostly because I assumed that they came from relatively safe neighborhoods. However, once I became more familiar with the recent history of the surrounding community, I realized that there were previous incidents which contributed to the concern for safety felt by the students.

About one year prior to the study, a random act of violence occurred in a neighborhood not far from the school, and it left two children age six and ten without a mother. This incident devastated the entire community, and gathered much attention through the media. It was apparent that many of the children and staff in the school were deeply affected by the tragedy that had occurred in their school community. Although the children who experienced the loss did not attend Chelsea Heights, the entire school made concerted efforts to address the incident with the children, deal with the hurt, and emphasize an educational focus to promote respect for others and to stress personal safety.

Throughout my five months at the school, I became increasingly aware of the school efforts to promote kindness. One of the teachers who taught grade two initiated a project with her students called "Kids for Kindness" in an effort to encourage students to develop positive social relationships with others. When I arrived in December, the entire school, staff students and parents, were involved in the initiative in some way or another.

Personal notes of thanks from one teacher to another on the staff room board, acknowledgments to parents, teachers and students in the school newsletter, and children's classroom projects were only some of the visible efforts made by the entire school to promote self respect and respect for others.

One evening I sat down to watch a video tape of the school Christmas concert which Jill had shared with me, and the message hit home again loud and clear. Both Jill and the music teacher had choreographed a dance presentation with the grade five and six students, that was dedicated to the family who would spend their first Christmas without their mother. The dance depicted the idea of kindness, caring for others, and love. This was just one example of how the school attempted to address values and shape the curriculum to counter the trend toward violence in their own community, and in the lives of their children. In her work with young children, Katz (1977) proposes the following:

> It seems to me that children need communities or societies that take the necessary steps to protect them from excessive exposure to violence and crime while their characters are still in formation. The role and significance of adequate adult models seems valid for all children wherever they are, wherever they come from, throughout their developing years. (p.19)

Many of the boys and all the girls spoke about feeling unsafe playing with certain children in their own neighborhood. They told me that the children on their block were too rough, and that they did not feel safe unless their brothers and sisters were outside playing with them. As Maria told me during one of our earlier conversations, "My street is crazy...all the kids are just, well, they're too rough" (February 9,1995). During one of the interviews with the boys, Aidan shared with me that the reason he was taking karate was because he needed to be able to protect himself, especially in his neighborhood:

Debbie: A couple of the other kids said that they took swimming lessons once or twice a week, or they played a team sport of some kind. Do you do any of those things, or are you involved in anything else?

Aidan: Yeah, I'm involved in karate.

Debbie: So where do you take that?

Aidan: I take it at Winchester School on Tuesday nights from 7:00 to 8:00.

Debbie: Why did you pick karate?

Aidan: Well, then I don't have to go and get my mom or dad so now if someone starts picking on me after school, or they try to beat me up I could just kick him back....

Debbie: Do you think its making you more aggressive? More violent?

Aidan: Yes, well, actually the reason why I take karate was so I won't have to go and tell my teachers. I can start defending myself, I'll start fighting them.

Debbie: I see, does that mean that you live in a rough neighborhood?

Aidan: Actually, I have a tough situation. (February 22, 1995)

Some of the children in the group told me that because their mom and dad both worked after school, they were not allowed to play outside until their parents or an older brother or sister came home. They told me that their parents were afraid that something "bad" might happen to them, and that it was not safe to go to the park or to be out on the streets.

Living In a Technological World

Their concern for safety and the amount of time they were left on their own might have explained why so many of them spent so much time inside watching television. I was discouraged by their photographs depicting images of their free time activities. Tangled cords, TV. monitors, computer screens, Sega Genesis machines, cordless phones, and cabinets filled with videos, were some of the items they photographed when I asked them to take pictures of things that they did outside of the school day. Sadly, I realized that although some of the children came from families where money for recreational equipment was an issue, there still seemed to be money for renting videos. Many of the entries in their personal activity logs indicated that one of their most popular forms of entertainment was to get together with a friend and watch a video.

One girl's entry exemplified the way many of them spent their weekends:

> It's Saturday and I just went to my friend Anna's for a while and played a Sega game called 'The Lion King'. Then I went home and had supper. I watched a movie until 10 and I fell asleep. (March 18, 1995)

Watching cartoons on Saturday was a favorite pastime, and all of the children spoke about watching television or playing video games after school and in the evening. As Aidan told me on one occasion, "Yeah, after school I like walking home with my friends and then inviting them over to play Sega Genesis." An appalling thought was that they even planned their homework and other tasks around their television schedule:

> Tim: Actually, on Sundays after supper I have supper at 5:30 and then I take my shower for 15 minutes and then go play Sega until 7:00. Then I'll watch Sea Quest, then Earth II. Did you see Superman yesterday, Aidan?
>
> Aidan: Yeah, I did.

Debbie: So you obviously really like those shows?

Tim: Well, I don't really like Sea Quest, and Earth II, well, I guess it's okay.

The children in this study were watching television anywhere from 18-22 hours per week, and this did not include the amount of time they spent playing video games, watching videos, or working at computers. These approximations of time are close to the national averages for television viewing reported by Statistics Canada (1992) being 19.4 hours per week for 2-11 year olds, and 17.7 hours per week for 12-17 year olds. Marshall (1992) reported similar findings when she examined childhood obesity indicators, and found that the 9-16 year old children in her study watched an average of 19.4 hours per week of television. A similar figure was quoted in a recent newspaper article by Holubitsky,(The Edmonton Journal, Sunday, June 4, 1995): "The typical Alberta child watches about 20 hours of TV a week- 1,040 hours a year." A question I often asked myself during my conversations with the children is, why are children watching so much television? Is it that parents are busy with other responsibilities and they rely on TV as a form of entertainment for their child? Does television provide a "safe" form of entertainment for children who are coming home from school to an empty house? Does TV occupy their time and keep them off the streets? The fact that the children frequently alluded to not "feeling safe" to go out and play in their own neighborhoods makes one wonder if societal trends such as violence are contributing to the inactivity levels of our children.

Another crucial question I began to ask myself is, how is TV affecting the minds of kids? Pictures of television characters and images appeared in all of the boys' journals, and it was obvious that they seemed to idolize characters depicting power and violence. Detailed drawings of figures holding laser guns, bombs, and other types of warfare implements, were often included with little or no written descriptions. When I asked the boys to tell me about their illustrations, they often said that the characters were those "they saw on TV." Quoted in the same newspaper article mentioned previously, Dr. J. Mitchell, a psychologist from the University of Alberta, stresses his views on the power of TV: "The corruptive power of TV is far greater than its benefit to children...If nothing else, TV should be chronically and consistently monitored"(Edmonton Journal, June 4, 1995). There was seldom any mention during the interviews or in their journals of sport heroes or characters representing positive traits. And began to wonder about some of their illustrations and how they depicted acts of violence and aggression. I wondered if the amount of time they were spending in front of the television set, and the quality of the shows they were viewing, was contributing to the aggressive behavior and rough play which was surfacing out on the playground, and sometimes in physical education classes.

Safety in the School

Personal safety was also an issue that the children were concerned about in the gymnasium, whether they were participating alone or in small groups. During a basketball unit, I had the opportunity to watch the children in many of their classes play modified games, and on one particular day the teacher asked the children who were partnered up to group themselves into six teams. This allowed for three cross court games to be going on in the gymnasium at one time, and it provided for the maximum participation of all children. There was lots of running, passing to teammates, and shooting, and it was obvious that the children enjoyed the fast pace and the excitement of the game. Two boys playing against each other seemed to be having difficulty getting along, and I noticed that one player got a ball in the face, and two other opponents on the same team collided and fell to the ground. As the roughness seemed to get worse, Jill observed the incident and walked over to stop the play and to investigate what was going on.

One boy in the grade five class said, "I'm not going to play anymore if these guys are pushing!" As the two boys on the ground slowly got up I sensed that the enthusiasm to play was dissipating. The safety and comfort level of the players had obviously been violated. Jill reprimanded two of the players for playing rough, restated some of the rules regarding safety, and gave them a warning for a time out. When I mentioned the incident in one of the group interviews and asked the children how they felt about roughplay during physical education and recess, some of the boys and the girls told me that they did not "feel" safe in all game situations, mostly due to unsafe behavior demonstrated by other students. As I watched them play lead-up games I noticed that it only took the aggressive behavior of one or two students in a group to restrict the involvement of the others. During many physical education classes, I observed Jill using various subtle techniques to discourage unsafe behaviors. She provided specific, brief instructions to stress rules regarding the importance of personal space in game situations. She demonstrated positive and negative teamplay scenarios, and she encouraged the children to analyze these as a group. Safety concerns were integrated into whatever concepts and skills she happened to be teaching.

Katz (1977) presents seven propositions that children have to have for wholesome development. One of the first propositions she identifies is that "the young child has to have a deep sense of safety" (p. 17). She emphasizes that "a sense of safety" is really psychological safety or a sense of security. In order to learn, and to feel confident in what they do, children need to feel connected to others and to be able to trust others around them. In a subsequent newspaper article addressing the childhood years, education, and parenting, Mitchell (Edmonton Journal, June 25, 1995) stresses that a sense of security is one of the child's most basic needs. He advises parents, teachers, and caregivers to give close attention to the following "basic needs" in terms of positive psychological development:

1) A secure, predictable environment so they can learn to anticipate events and to make choices.
2) A stable relationship with a responsive caregiver who is sensitive to the child's interests and needs.
3) Respect for the child as an active participant in the family and not merely a passive recipient of training.
4) Ample space in which to play and other kids to play with.
5) Achievements and accomplishments relevant to a child's world and not only yours. (p.1)

Rink (1993) suggests that physical education teachers need to ensure that learning environments are safe for children: "When task environments are safe and when tasks are clear to learners and appropriate for both the group and individuals, learners are likely to be engaged in the task." (p.147) She also believes that experienced teachers learn to anticipate safety problems and to build safety into the tasks they give learners. An example she provides that illustrates this might be the teacher asking the students to come down on the feet softly from a handstand, or asking the students to make sure that no one is around before swinging a racket, stick, or a club. Siedentop (1991) emphasizes the importance of ensuring a safe learning environment for children. He states that

> A major responsibility of every physical education teacher is to provide a safe learning environment for students. Safety should be considered when planning, but it is in the implementation of a lesson that safety must be foremost....This is not to suggest that activities involving risk should not be used in the physical education program. Quite the contrary, one goal of the program should be to help students learn to take some risks and want to participate in activities. Many sport activities have the potential for injury. What needs to be emphasized are the rules regarding safety in terms of the specific activity and the space within which it is practiced and played. (p. 209)

On many occasions Jill mentioned to me that she felt she had to be aware of inappropriate behaviors that might affect the safety and participation of others.

Conclusion

Listening to the children talk about physical activity and seeing them participate in both physical education and extra-curricular activities, has enabled me to take a closer look at children, what they value in relation to physical activity, and the contexts in which they find themselves. There are many issues that we take for granted as teachers of physical education, and these affect how we organize our classes and our school programs for children. How many times do we as teachers advocate the importance of a "balanced" education for our students, yet from the children's perspective there is still an inadequate amount of time in the school day for them to be physically active? Their activity time is precious, and it is a time when they can play and socialize with their friends. When opportunities to be active are limited to physical education classes, recess breaks, and noon hour activities, they regard the time as precious, and from their perspective it is unfair to deprive them of these opportunities as a form of punishment.

These ten-year-olds wanted opportunities to make choices. By observing them within the school context I have come to better understand what Deci (1992) suggests when he states:

> Social contexts play a crucial role in the immediate experience of interest (and intrinsic motivation), in the development of enduring preferences (or dispositional interests), and in the internalization and integration of extrinsic regulatory processes. Contexts that are autonomy-supportive, that provide optimal challenges and informational feedback, and within which one feels securely related to significant others will promote the experience of interest, the development of enduring interests, and the integration of regulations. (p. 61)

The children in the study wanted to have choices and make decisions in relation to physical activity. They indicated that they were participating in certain activities to fulfill the wishes of their parents, and that there was little consideration given to their personal interests.

In physical education they had opportunities to make decisions about what games or activities they were going to play within a unit, what equipment they would use, and who they would play with. Their positive feelings and enjoyment of physical activity in the gym seemed to be related to their opportunities to have some degree of choice. Whether it was the opportunity to decide what actions they would perform in a gymnastic sequence, what ball was used in a game, or who was going to be on their team to play a game, the children wanted to experience some degree of self-determination.

As teachers, I think that we tend to focus so much on compliance and conformity that we often fail to recognize the importance of autonomy and personal interest as it relates to intrinsic motivation and learning. If children in our physical education classes are made to feel that their interests count, then one might hope that they would likely experience greater feelings of self-worth, perceive themselves as competent, experience greater enjoyment and be more likely to continue on with an activity.

The children in the study also made me recognize the importance of personal safety, and that feeling psychologically secure is a prerequisite for participation. In teaching physical education we often ask ourselves, "Is the equipment safe?" When perhaps we really should go beyond this focus and ask ourselves, "Does the child feel safe in this activity?" We need to recognize that in order for children to learn and develop their motor skills they need to feel secure enough to participate with their peers in school and their friends on the street. They need to feel safe in their environments so that they can get involved, take risks, and become more self-directed learners.

CHAPTER FOUR

FUN

Introduction

This theme, "Fun," evolved from the insights highlighted at the end of the last chapter suggesting that teachers need to take into consideration children's interests, values and desire to have ownership in making decisions about physical activity. In exploring how children felt about physical activity within the physical education context, I came to realize that the sense of enjoyment and fun they experienced in certain activities was directly associated to certain features of the learning environment deliberately planned by the teacher. Variety, opportunities for active involvement, challenge and being active in the company of friends, all seemed to be associated with the notion of fun. Leisure time activities enjoyed by the children also seemed to be characterized by many of these features.

As a physical education teacher, I have always concentrated on the 'learning' aspect within physical education, and hoped that if I provided experiences that were challenging and developmentally appropriate for children, then they would naturally have fun participating in these activities. Perhaps in the past much of my efforts as a teacher and consultant have been directed at advocating the benefits of physical education in an attempt to legitimize the subject area with colleagues and parents within the total school community.

Traditionally, I have always regarded "fun" as a very vague term, and one that does not give justification or credence to the goals of physical education. I have always thought that by associating "fun" with physical activity, I would undermine the importance of the learning outcomes within a quality physical education program. My fears about "fun" stem from comments I have heard over the years from teachers who see physical education as a "time to run off steam" or "a time to have fun." These views have always prompted me to defend and continually reinforce the need for a well planned, developmentally appropriate program in the school. Like Williams (1992), I have always regarded "fun" as a result of a well planned physical education program. He addresses this topic in his article "The Physical Education Hall of Shame" by stating:

> 'Fun' is both the boon and the bane of our profession. Gross motor physical activity, in almost any form is enjoyable for our students, and we do not need to be overly worried that they are not enjoying themselves in class. It is fairly certain that fun is not a major consideration when planning classes in other fields of study, and we should not judge or define the value or quality of what we do in physical education classes by whether or not the students have a "good time". If our lessons are well-conceived and planned, and if they reach constructively toward the attainment of our ultimate goals, students will automatically have a "good time" and they will actually derive all those important benefits we claim to promote. (p.59)

Perhaps my fear of acknowledging "fun" within the context of physical education stems from the fact that I have never truly understood what fun means from the child's perspective. The issue of fun was central to all of my conversations with the children, and it definitely was the criterion from which the children judged an activity. From their perspective, I came to understand that the notion of fun is not vague at all; rather, it is associated with new and varied experiences, participation, challenge and the opportunity to be active with friends.

Novelty, Variety and Fun

Every day in the gymnasium was different. The physical education teacher at Chelsea Heights chose a wide variety of activities, equipment, and instructional strategies in teaching the grade five children physical education. One aspect of her lessons that illustrated this was the introductory activities. Warm-ups were varied and exciting, and each day the children ran from the gymnasium entrance to a particular space or to access equipment eager to begin an activity. At first I expected to see a similarity or consistency with the warm-up activities the children were asked to participate in, but each day I was amazed by new games, partner challenges, individual review practice, calisthenics, tag games and numerous other activities that could be used to develop strength, muscular endurance, cardiovascular fitness, and positive social skills.

The smiles on their faces were a good indication that they enjoyed their warm-up activities, and that the variety of challenges they were provided with enabled them to engage in something different each day, often novel or new to them. Laughter and enjoyment always filled the gymnasium at this time, and I often found myself partnering up with someone or joining in on a tag game to be part of their world and their experiences. One day the children were beginning their unit on "stuntnastics," a form of gymnastics in which the children perform group routines and formations often requiring them to take part or all of their partner's weight. As this was a gymnastic activity, the teacher presented several warm-up activities related to muscular endurance and cardiovascular fitness. First some of the children attempted a "lap sit" against the wall, to develop muscular endurance in the upper leg area, while others attempted an arm hang on the climber. They were asked to time themselves and to begin to keep a record of their achievement. Then they ended their warm-up with individual fitness skipping, to develop cardiovascular fitness. The warm-up was fast paced, varied, and the children moved excitedly from one challenge to another.

The variety Jill offered within her yearly physical education program stood out in many ways, especially in comparison to the physical education programs offered by other teachers in the school. On many occasions I had the opportunity to observe the first few minutes of the next scheduled class of grade six students, and to my dismay I discovered that the children in this class did the same one or two warm-ups for every lesson. Girls and boys hovered in little groups not far from the wall, as if they were almost uncomfortable with the activity. There was seldom any excitement at the beginning of this class and one morning I began to compare the two groups. After the grade five children finished their physical education class I joined in to help a few of the children roll the basketball bins back into the equipment room, and a boy from the grade six class came up to me and asked me what the grade five children had participated in that day. With his eyes fixed on the bin of balls, he looked somewhat disappointed as I rolled the carts away. When I asked him what equipment his class would need that day, he responded by saying, "Nothing, we just run laps or do exercises like stretch our legs" (February 6,1995).

About three months into the study, I took some time to read over my field notes and observations, and I began to look for consistencies and contrasts within the data. What became apparent was the extent and richness of the different units, activities, and learning experiences I had observed in such a short period of time. I then came to understand *why* the six children in the study, as well as others in the class, referred to physical education as being "fun." When I asked them to describe why they thought it was fun, I heard comments like, "I like phys-ed because we get to do different things" (March 22, 1995).

Jill's written yearly plan indicated a wide variety of activities in all the program dimensions with consideration that certain activities were best suited to particular seasons or sequenced in terms of skill progression. For example, when Jill taught gymnastics, she aimed to help the children develop a wide range of gymnastic skills by incorporating many different forms of gymnastic activities in her program. Stuntnastics, floor work, floor work with small apparatus, gymnic ball routines, large apparatus routines, and rhythmic gymnastics were all part of the gymnastic dimension for her students. She sequenced the approaches according to natural progressions, such as moving from floor work to large apparatus work, and she distributed the units throughout the winter months to distribute practice and prevent the students from becoming bored with an activity. In describing her philosophy about physical education, Jill emphasized her belief that it was important for children to develop a wide range of skills and participate in many different movement experiences during their elementary years.

I vividly remember the day Jill introduced rhythmic gymnastics to the grade five children. They had never participated in the activity before, and as they came over to where I was standing in the equipment room to distribute the enormously long ribbons, their eyes lit up and their mouths gaped when they saw the multicolored ribbons draped over a gymnastic incline. Ian, one of the boys who had problems behaving in school, and within physical education class, was first in line. Eager to get started, he pleaded with me to give him a green ribbon. The rest of the children stood there anxiously, waiting to select a ribbon from the assortment. A few moments later when I walked into the gymnasium to observe the children with the ribbons, all of them were exploring different ways of moving the ribbons, and some were performing matching actions with a partner. As I walked by Ian, I heard him say to his buddy, "Hey this is fun!"

The value the children placed on program variety became evident to me when we spent some time one morning compiling a list of all the activities they participated in throughout the year in their physical education program. Sitting together around the large table in the art room where we usually met for scheduled interviews, I asked the children to try and recall activities within their program, and I began to write them down on a large blackboard at the front of the room so we could examine more closely activities they had participated in.

After about twenty minutes we had completely covered two large blackboards, and as the children called out the activities, they shared with me their recollections of participating, whether it was something exciting that happened, or whether they enjoyed or disliked a particular activity and why. Even though I had received a yearly schedule of activities from Jill earlier on in the study, I was astonished by the variety and scope of the activities related to specific units she had outlined. For example, on her year plan Jill might have noted "Dance" as an activity unit, but from their perspective, the students identified line dance, folk dance, and novelty dances. Each dimension of the physical education curriculum, with the exception of aquatics, which was only offered at the grade four level, consisted of a rich variety of activities sequenced from simple to complex skills.

Outdoor pursuits for example, involved skating, downhill skiing, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, and biking. Instruction was provided in all of these activities, and different activities were assigned to grades 4, 5, and 6 so that the children learned different outdoor skills each year. for example, the children might experience orienteering in grade four, roller blading in grade five and canoeing in grade six. They had an opportunity to develop different skills and use different equipment in all of the program dimensions. In our discussion that morning, they described for me the various forms of gymnastics they were involved in: stuntnastics, small equipment in gymnastics, gymnastics using large equipment, rhythmic gymnastics, and gymnic ball routines. It became obvious to me that each program dimension was very rich in providing a wide range of movement experiences for the children. After they had identified all their activities, and exhausted their ideas, we sat back and looked over the list. Although I found the list to be quite impressive, they did not seem surprised at all by the variety or extent of the activities. I should not have been surprised by this, knowing that Jill had been their teacher for the past three years, and that they did not know much different, since they had experienced a very rich, balanced physical education program during this time.

It was the first day of working with the large equipment in their gymnastics unit, and as I sat on the sidelines of the gymnasium I took note of the large apparatus arranged attractively throughout the gymnasium. Big, bright "cheese wedges" (as a few of the kids called them!), three-tiered trapezoids, large and small balance boxes, movable foam logs, wooden benches and box horses filled the floor space of the gymnasium, not to mention of course the climber pulled out from the wall. The gymnasium was a sea of different colors and textures, so colorful and so inviting to the eye. I sat quietly waiting for the children to enter the gymnasium, and when each child stepped through the door I heard voices spout out, "Y[illegible]en they caught sight of the equipment. I was amazed by the fact that although they had spent approximately six weeks involved in different gymnastic activities at one time or another throughout the year, they were still very excited about carrying on with gymnastics.

The novelty of using different equipment in their classes appealed to them and, as they pointed out to me the day we had the group discussion around the blackboard, they enjoyed participating in a wide variety of games, different forms of gymnastics, and various outdoor pursuit activities. In fact, they tended to make distinctions between different units within a dimension of the physical education program. From their perspective, they saw games as sport specific, such as volleyball, soccer, basketball, badminton and so on. They also made distinctions between "stuntnastics" and other forms of gymnastics such as floor work, large apparatus work, and rhythmic gymnastics.

During one of our group interviews I had brought some photographs for the children to look at of their cross-country ski experience at a city park, and of a juggling lesson that they participated in just a week before. We talked for a while about the differences between the two activities, and the fact that they were both possible recreational activities, even though skiing was a seasonal activity. The children mentioned that they had learned different juggling stunts in their physical education program for three consecutive years, and that cross country skiing was a new experience for them. I asked them if they liked one activity more than the other and they said that they preferred skiing because it was new to them. The idea of enjoying an activity that was new to them came out loud and clear:

Debbie: If you were to compare the two, skiing and juggling, how are they different? Do you like one activity better?

Maria: Skiing!

Debbie: Why is that?

Maria: 'Cause its more fun. We don't do it that often. We do juggling every year for a while, but this was new to me. Oh, yeah, this is also the first year we used the ribbons, but the juggling is not.

Debbie: What do you think about the ribbons? When I was in the storage room passing out the ribbons, you know people like Mike, John and all kinds of people who had never used the ribbons before seemed pretty excited about it.

Maria: Yeah, it's a new thing so you are excited to do it! That's how I felt, with the cross-country 'cause I

> hadn't done it but when I go down the hill and
> I'm still excited 'cause I love it!

When I pointed out to them that many children in other schools do not have such extensive programs in physical education, and do not have the opportunities to experience so many types of activities, they seemed surprised. Interested in their response, I asked them to decide what type of program they would prefer, a program in which they were involved in fewer activities for a longer period of time, or one that offered them a wide variety range of activities throughout the course of the year. They all agreed that it was more fun to participate in different activities, and as one girl phrased it, "You get to try more things, and it's more fun!"

Jill continuously sought out ways to vary the learning environment and make her physical education lessons exciting for children. This of course was in the context of meeting psychomotor, cognitive, and affective learning outcomes for the students. I began to realize how important novelty was in motivating students to learn when I became a participant in many of her lessons, and I experienced the wide range of activities and strategies she incorporated to stimulate the students. By modifying equipment and games, and by offering what Gallahue (1993) would define as developmentally appropriate activities for children, Jill was able to stimulate interest, and provide opportunities for children to be successful, which is something I will expand on in another section of this discussion. Theme days, such as "Beach Day" and "Circus Day," gave students an opportunity to practice and develop their skills within an imaginative context. "Beach Day" brightened up a cold January day, and the children practiced striking, setting, and other ball handling skills as they played small circle group games with beach balls in physical education. Although the activity on this particular theme day did not fit in with their basketball unit, it allowed them the opportunity to practice skills they had worked on earlier in the year in another games unit. Dressed in wild colors, wearing visors, sunhats, with towels draped over their shoulders, they were quite a sight in the gym!

During one of our private conversations in her office later that day, she shared with me how the children enjoyed special days, and said that sometimes the staff organized them and the entire school participated, or often she planned them specifically as part of her physical education program. According to Jill, the theme days were effective ways of generating enthusiasm and "tapping into" students' interests. Deci (1992) suggests that we cannot talk about interest in any learning situation unless we look closely at the interaction between the person and the activity, operating within a social context. He believes that in intrinsic motivation or self-determination theory, interest is explicated in terms of the person, the experiential component, and the activity. In reference to the nature of the activity, he states that, "Two closely related tasks seem to be central: optimal challenge and novelty" (p.50). As a physical education teacher, Jill attempted to offer the children experiences that were novel and developmentally appropriate, so that the children were challenged physically, intellectually, and socially. To these ten-year-olds, fun was associated with the opportunity to participate in a wide range of activities, and to attempt challenges characterized by an aspect of novelty. Fun was also associated with the opportunity to be involved and to participate.

Involvement and Fun

> It's kind'a like when we play street hockey, it doesn't matter if you have a goalie, you go in the net when you need to. To stand in the net for the whole thing is kind of boring, so we all go out and somebody just goes back in the net when they need to be in goal. (Christi, March 13, 1995)

Christi's insights to what makes a game enjoyable made me think about the fact that inappropriate practice still dominates many school physical education programs today. Her comments stirred images that have remained with me from my visits to schools. On many occasions I have seen children playing large group games, where only a few of the very skilled children are actively involved while the others stand around waiting for opportunities to touch the ball or take a turn. The children in this study spoke often of enjoying those games and activities during physical education classes, intramural activities, and recess breaks that enabled them to be actively involved.

My observations of their noon hour intramural program enabled me to understand that full participation in a game or an activity contributed to the overall feelings of enjoyment that the children spoke about. Chelsea Heights offered organized intramurals for only two months in the wintertime, and during this time grade five and six students could sign up to become part of a team to play Newcombe Ball during the noon hours. Having the opportunity to observe many of the games, I discovered that each team consisted of nine or ten players, and all of the players on each team played on the floor at the same time. The rules were set by the teacher organizers, and they outlined to the children that all players would be on the floor at the same time, but each time a team received the ball they had to pass it twice before it could be sent back over the net. The rules posted in the hallway on the intramural board indicated that each team was awarded points for involving all their players on their team. When I asked the children if they would rather play newcombe ball in a traditional mode with 6 versus 6 players and children rotating in on the side, they answered in unison with a definite "No!" Our conversation went as follows:

Debbie: I know that in some schools the children play newcombe ball but they have 6 players vs. 6 and the rest of the team is sitting on the sides rotating in or acting as substitutes. If you were given the choice, would you prefer to have it the way it is now where everybody is playing, or would you rather have it that the other way where 6 are playing and the others are rotating in to get a turn?

Maria: I would rather have it our way, so everybody is playing.

Christi: I don't know about the other way. People get a certain amount of time and some people get cut off of time.

Maria: Like some people say 'switch' and that's not fair. And if you say that you are tired and then you come off then the people who are sitting off won't get a turn.

Debbie: How do you feel about watching if you are part of the team?

All: No! We'd rather be playing. (February 9, 1995)

Their feelings regarding participation and being active made me reflect on the importance of experiential learning for children. Many researchers in the area of physical education (Gallahue, 1993; Graham, Holt/Hale, & Parker, 1993; Grineski, 1992; Rink, 1993; Siedentop, 1991) advocate the importance and value of individual practice time in order to achieve optimal student learning. Siedentop (1991) addresses the importance of providing maximum opportunities for practice that are relevant to the learner. He makes reference to a set of principles entitled, "Plenty of Perfect Practice" originating from an Australian teacher preparation college. These principles are realized when practice is:

> 1) *Pertinent*: The lessons are appropriate for the abilities, interests, and experiences of the students. 2) *Purposeful*: Children are kept on task in a climate that is both safe and challenging. 3) *Progressive*: Skills are ordered correctly and lead to significant learnings. 4) *Paced*:The learning space between one activity and the next in a progression is large enough to be challenging yet small enough for success. 5) *Participatory:* As many students are active as much of the time as possible. (p.27)

Gallahue (1993) states that we need to focus on the needs of the learner in deciding on *what* and *how* to teach in physical education, and makes a distinction between the "learning-to-move" aim of physical education and the "learning through movement" aim in physical education.

He suggests that both of these aims are an important part of physical education when taught from a developmental perspective.

When I think about what it feels like to strike a ball to a teammate, to decide which way to dodge in a game, to execute a forward roll in gymnastics, perform a series of step-hops in a dance, balance on a pair of skates and glide across the ice, I think of the kinesthetic and cognitive processes associated with each of these skills. Too often teachers attempt to skip the processes associated with teaching psychomotor skills and they rush into having children play "the game" or learn "the dance." The end result is that the children become subject to learning in contexts that are totally inappropriate for their stage of development. Inappropriate physical education practices prevail in many schools and as Grineski (1992) points out these practices are mostly large group competitive practices that provide children across all grade levels with little opportunity to acquire the necessary psychomotor skills needed for successful participation. He concludes:

> Many times these large group activities are included in the curriculum to the exclusion of dance, gymnastics, and other individual or small group activities. Typically aggressive and highly skilled students who possess necessary skills dominate in these activities....Observations made during a sideline soccer game revealed that only a small number of students actually interacted with other players and the ball, while most students had limited opportunity for participation. (p.35)

Grineski's argument that we need to provide opportunities for all students to participate and develop skills supports the fact that children want to be active when they are involved in game situations, or in other physical activities they are participating in.

I came to understand the value these ten-year-old children placed on involvement and participation when I watched them play soccer each day at recess time. I must admit that I was taken by surprise during my first day out on the field when I saw them playing soccer in a play space they had created for themselves. It was a small field, about one third the size of a regulation soccer field, and it was situated between a baseball backstop and a soccer goal standard. Adjacent to their play space were the grade 4 children, and on the other side a group of grade 6 boys who claimed another small play space as theirs for soccer.

As I mentioned previously, the grade 5 children were given a designated soccer field which was quite a distance away from the school. By adult standards, it was a beautiful field with large soccer goal standards at each end. They told me they chose not to use the field for two reasons. One being that it was too far away from the school and they wasted too much time walking over to it, and secondly and most importantly, as Christi phrased it, "The field is just too big, we'd spend all our time running in the game and we'd never get to touch the ball if we played over there. We like playing our way better." The boys and the girls told me that by playing on the small field they could have more opportunities to kick the ball to each other and take shots on goal. It was common for them to have between fifteen and twenty players involved in the game each day, and they all took turns being in goal. There was always plenty of laughter and action when the children created their own game. They associated fun with being able to take part and play the game in ways that accommodated their needs.

It was a warm day in March and the entire field was rather slushy. The children were still out there playing soccer as they had been for the last three months. However, the day they were over at the "real field" as they called it, there were a lot fewer students playing compared to any other games they had played over the previous three months. When I finally reached the field one of the children in the class came up to greet me and I asked him why they chose to play on the large field that day. He informed me that they did not choose to play there, rather the teacher on supervision that morning had told them that they had to start playing on their "real field" if they wanted to play soccer. The children told me that no problems had arisen to cause this decision, they were just asked to move to their assigned space. I took note that fewer children decided to play soccer that day, and I also noted that many of those who were playing the game were standing around waiting for the ball to come their way. The large scale game was quite different from their own modified game. It lacked excitement and action, and I suddenly understood what Orlick and Botterill meant when they stated, "Plenty of activity and hustle makes things more fun and develops strength and endurance as well as skills" (p. 108).

Advocates of developmentally appropriate physical education (Gallahue, 1993; Graham, Holt/Hale, & Parker, 1993; Petersen, 1992) believe that the structure of many competitive activities can be modified so that students can perform skills more often and have challenging game experiences which provide opportunities for skill development. The children in the study demonstrated in their play activities their preference for modifications in competitive situations.

One could only wonder why the field suddenly became an issue to the teacher when she had observed the children playing in the space they declared as theirs for the previous three months, and then one day it was no longer acceptable. Although they told me that it did not make sense to them, they went to their designated field and followed the teacher's directions. As one of the girls in the study tried to justify to me as we hurried back to the school at the sound of the bell, "Well, I guess it's a good thing that we have to play on the real field, because you know, community soccer starts in a month and I have to get used to playing on the big field"(March 13, 1995).

Only a couple of weeks went by, however, and the children were back to playing and having fun on their own modified field, and no one commented on it. From their perspective, modifying the field and the rules to the game just seemed natural, and it gave them the opportunity to play the game in ways that were best suited to them. It kept them involved, interested and provided them with opportunities to be successful and have fun.

Challenge and Fun

In addition to the notion of participating and having fun, was the connection the children made between the notion of challenge and fun. Activities that provided a challenge were viewed by all of the children to be the most fun. Skill practice sessions during physical education classes provided what Deci (1992) would define as "optimal challenges" (p. 50) related to interest. In providing appropriate opportunities for skill development. Jill consistently presented the children with tasks that allowed them to test their own abilities and practice motor skills through individual and small group challenges. Deci describes the concept of optimal challenge as being: "Activities or ideas that people find interesting are usually optimally discrepant from what they know or can do. These activities require that people 'stretch' their capacities or expand their cognitive structures" (p.50). The children repeatedly told me they preferred activities that posed some type of a challenge or a goal they had to strive to meet. As Tim wrote in his journal, the element of skill work can be fun if it is presented in the context of a challenge:

> 8:50 Feb. 24
>
> Basketball skills? You gotta be kidding. I can't write about that. It's boring. But if it gets me good marks I'll do it! O.K., depending what I'm doing it can be fun. I mean if we were taking shots at the net well then it would be fun. But, if we were just dribbling round the Gym well come on this is boring, right? I would like challenge in life that's why I want to do hard things.

Tim's insights encourage us as teachers to ask ourselves, how can we present tasks in such a way that they are challenging to the student? Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1975 &1990) in his discussion of the Flow Model suggests that enjoyment or "flow" occurs when there is a match between the challenge of the activity and the skills of the individual. He states that:

> In all the activities people in our study reported engaging in, enjoyment comes at a very specific point: whenever the opportunities for action perceived by the individual are equal to his or her capabilities....Enjoyment appears at the boundary between boredom and anxiety, when the challenges are just balanced with the person's capacity to act. (1990, p.52)

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) also suggests that "flow" occurs when the individual has clear goals as to what they want to achieve, clear, unambiguous feedback as to how they are doing, the task at hand is within one's capabilities, and there is an optimal level of challenge for the individual.

As I mentioned earlier in this discussion, some activities were perceived as being more fun just because they were new or novel to the student in some way or another. I discovered in my conversations with the children, however, that some activities were perceived as being a challenge just by the very nature of the activity. The three girls in the group commented on how they enjoyed cross-country skiing just because it was a new challenge and it involved an element of speed:

Debbie: Which of the skiing activities did you like better, the games on skis in the morning, or trail skiing in the afternoon?

All: TRAIL SKIING!

Debbie: Why?

Maria: Because it was just more fun and you have to go down more hills. It's more interesting. We got to use our poles. You climb up hills and go 'fast' down hills. (February 1, 1995)

While observing their physical education classes it became evident to me that not only did the *nature* of the activity contribute to the feeling of fun, enjoyment, and total involvement, but the *instructional strategies* the teacher chose to use were powerful tools for creating challenging experiences to facilitate learning. From the children's perspective, skill practice became fun within the context of individual, partner, and small group challenges. In order to maximize the achievement and success of all students in her class, Jill incorporated what Grineski (1993) would describe as appropriate "goal structures" (p.32) to teach psychomotor, cognitive and affective skills in physical education. Grineski outlines three goal structures: 1) individual 2) cooperative and 3) competitive, and suggests that teachers must consider the effects of using singular goal structures or a combination of different goal structures in helping children achieve program goals.

During the initial lessons in her units Jill provided the students with time to practice the skills on their own, and she used these "individual" goal structures when children were acquiring or mastering skills, and increasing their competence in physical fitness. This allowed the children to concentrate on their skill practice, take risks, exercise creativity, and make mistakes, as there wasn't a lot of peer interaction going on. As the children became more competent within a lesson, or within a unit, Jill used "cooperative" and "competitive" goal structures to provide opportunities for the children to continue to develop and apply skills in partner, triad, and small group games or activities. Jill's view was, "I always make sure there are skills....and I make sure that the games are suited to the kids' level" (April 23, 1995).

Numerous authors (Gallahue, 1993; Petersen, 1992; Seefeldt, 1979; Siedentop, 1991) address the importance of instructional sequence in physical education. Siedentop (1991) suggests that teachers incorporate "skill routines" (p.193) and states that children need time to achieve an adequate level of skill performance in applied settings before they can have success in modified games.

Petersen (1992) supports a similar view and believes that teachers need to gradually increase the complexity of tasks. She states that, "Teachers frequently jump very quickly from a few warm-up drills (often the same ones which they participated in high school or college) to a full version of the game (or large group modification, such as line soccer). Children are not 'miniature adults' and they do not come to activities with the benefit of adult experiences" (p. 37).

Jill incorporated skill routines and increased the complexity of tasks in many of her lessons, but it is interesting to note that most of the children perceived these routines to be "games" because she encouraged them to add collective or competitive point systems, boundaries, or rules to make their skill practice more challenging. In an effort to make practice activities more gamelike, Jill often introduced the concept of defenders. Graham (1992) recognizes that this strategy is frequently overlooked, and yet one of the most effective ways of making skill practice more game-like. Petersen (1992) stresses the benefits of this approach and states:

> The point is that slowly incorporating defenders into practice activities is a critical part of providing very gradual sequences which increase the complexity of tasks and make them more game like. It is one of the ways of helping children cross the "proficiency barrier" to more complex activities. (p.38)

This approach was definitely part of Jill's repertoire of teaching strategies. Near the beginning of their badminton unit the teacher asked the children to work in partners and hit the shuttle back and forth to a partner over a hoop on the floor. She began by asking the children to keep track of their points collectively as a group. Then she increased the challenge of this cooperative activity by asking them to keep track of the number of hits they could attain within a three minute time period without dropping the shuttle to the ground. This heightened the challenge, and they became very chatty and excitable as they got ready to play.

Later on in the same lesson, they moved into a 1 vs 1 structure where they took on the role of 'opponent' and each player tried to make his or her opponent move toward the shuttle. Although the teacher never asked the children to keep track of their points, they made up their own point systems, and I noticed that there was a lot of continuous play in each partner grouping.

The second thing that Jill did was to provide small group games rather than large group games. During their basketball unit the children played small group games such as 3 vs 3 and 4 vs 4 basketball. In their basketball unit I observed them playing 3 vs 3 with one hoop, and on another occasion I observed them playing 4 vs 4 basketball with three games going on at one time in the gymnasium. Small group games allowed for greater participation and appropriate challenges for the students. When I asked the students to compare skill routines (drills) to playing modified games, Christi, one of the girls, shared her view: "They're (small group games) more difficult. But they're more exciting!" (February 9, 1995) Hager (1995) and Petersen (1992) both advocate the use of small group games and suggest that small group games maximize skill development and game participation. Hager (1995) states that:

> Playing in small groups rather than large ones and modifying game rules will help increase the number of chances a student gets to perform a skill and the amount of time that he or she spends as an active competitor in the game. (p.30)

Jill used a combination of both cooperative and modified competitive games to provide different structures for her students to work together, make decisions about rules and fairplay, and to experience success and enjoyment with more complex tasks.

Inappropriate Challenges Are Not Fun

All of the children told me about experiences where the fun or the enjoyment of an activity was lost when they did not regard an activity as challenging, or when the challenge was too difficult for their skill level. They seemed to dislike activities and tasks which they did not perceive as being a challenge. This became evident when I had the opportunity to ask the children if there was any activity which they disliked. One of the boys told me, "Running laps, I hate that....Because you really don't get anything out of it. Just run around and get tired, for nothing" (January 12, 1995). One morning when I asked them to write about two activities they liked and two activities they disliked and why, one of the girls, Maria ,wrote, "I don't like juggling because I can not get it right" (April 10, 1995). Tim, shared his feelings about swimming with me in his journal and wrote:

> 8:42 March 7
>
> Swimming is a real big challenge. Even when I'm in green. Boy, I remember when I was in maroon. I Failed (failed) about eight times, can you believe that? But I some how I always past (passed) the level even if it takes me one hundred years trying....

Not many of the children in the study were as determined as Tim. however, all of the children spoke about their feelings of anxiety when the conditions of challenge or competition became too intense for them to handle. In the same journal entry Tim described how he felt in preparation for his test in karate:

March 7, 1995

> For karate I say it's a breeze that turns into a hurricane. I mean first it so easy but when its time to be upgraded I get scared like I'm nervest (nervous), so I do bad.

Maria, recalled an experience she had in a semi-final newcombe ball game in intramurals, when she attempted to receive the ball from the opposing team but continually missed it, and the other team scored. Her team was in the lead 14 to 7 and the other team started gaining points. Her words denote the stress and anxiety she was overcome with:

> I felt stupid, like we were winning for so long and then just one player...Well, everyone was throwing it at me, mostly it seems that I always have to catch it. But I lost three of them, they were all so high, and then we ended up losing. Yeah, then some people said, 'Maria, why did you do that? I really felt terrible.' (February 9, 1995)

I watched Maria play that day and I saw the expression of disappointment and embarrassment on her face each time she missed the ball. She became more anxious and nervous each time the opposing team served. Although some of her teammates cheered her on, the tension between players intensified as the score continued to rise for the other team. The highly competitive situation effected her performance that day, and the comments she shared with me indicated that it affected her sense of self-worth. The stress of competition also affected Christi, who played indoor soccer and often traveled to other cities to play in tournaments. Excitement turns to anxiety as she prepares for the game:

> Down here is butiful (beautiful). This is what we did. We went straight to the soccer game, we had trouble finding the soccer senter (center) but then we saw a big soccer ball but it was far back and we new it was the soccer senter (center) so we found a parking stall and went in. I found my team and we all went in the dressing room. The coaches talked to us and we were all nervis (nervous). we had buterfly (butterflies) in our stumek (stomach) and we all went for a little jog. I was defensman with Monica W. She's good and so is alot of people. We lost the furst (first) and last games we won one of the games and came in third plass (place) but that was better than nothing so I was very happy. (January 21, 1995)

It is interesting to note that the children's stories describing situations of intense competition seemed all to relate to community programs and large group games within the school extracurricular program. However, none of the six children talked about feeling anxious or uncomfortable in attempting to meet the challenges presented to them in their physical education classes.

Some of the community programs the children participated in involved external rewards. The most disturbing comments about participating for this type of recognition came from Tim, a high achiever in the group, who wrote in his journal:

> Time 8:46 March 17
>
> I swim only to get the badges. To bet (beat) everyone. To prove I'm a somebody. Otherwise I'll have no other reason to swim but to beat my friends. Anyway what other reason would I swim for?
>
> Time 8:55 March 17
>
> Guess what? I Tim Ho, can be upgraded to yellow belt in karate. I know. I should calm down but I can't. On Saturday

> the 18th, 1995 is the day I go to be up-graded, but I have to wake up at 7:00 so I could get ready because the upgrading starts at 9:30 in the morning. But I still want that belt badly!!
>
> Time 9:14 March 21
>
> I gotta yellow belt so I'm the BOSS. OK? Now if you try to be a hero you'll be dead. OK?

Although Tim was competing against himself, one might wonder whether he was more motivated by the rewards than by the sense of enjoyment he got from participating in the activities. Deci (1992) states that, "Activities that are not themselves interesting but are done because they are instrumental for some desired outcome are said to be extrinsically motivated" (p.53). He also addresses the interactive nature of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and stresses the belief that the relationship is a complex one. He states a very important point being that:

> extrinsically motivated activities--ones that a person undertakes not because they are intrinsically interesting to him or her but rather because they are instrumental to a desired outcome--can vary in the extent to which they are endorsed by or emanate from one's sense of self and are thus self-determined. (p.54)

As Tim had come to associate the badges he had to earn as part of the activity of swimming, he had experienced what Schafer (1968) refers to as internalization, the process by which external regulation is actively transformed to internal regulation. By making decisions of what he would strive for in swimming, he demonstrated Deci's belief that "children can become more self-determined in the regulation of extrinsically motivated behavior" (p.56). Within the context of swimming, Tim was only competing with himself.

Kohn (1986) and Orlick and Botterill (1975) address the issue of competition, anxiety and self-esteem, and suggest that competition can threaten the individual's sense of security. Orlick and Botterill (1975) refer to the findings of Orlick's earlier research with children suggesting that, "Fear of failure, or the psychological stress of disapproval, appeared to influence certain children to the extent that they were afraid to participate" (p.19). Though both Maria and Tim never spoke about not wanting to participate, the pressure to succeed was obviously so great it was undermining their performance and sense of self-worth.

To my surprise the children made a distinction between competition and the notion of meeting a challenge. They recognized that certain activities involved a win/lose structure, while other activities provided challenges for them to strive for their best. Whether they were having fun playing a modified 3 vs 3 basketball game, or cross-country skiing down a hill for the first time in their physical education classes, they enjoyed both when they perceived the activity to be challenging. As long as the task or activity encouraged them to demonstrate their best effort, stretch their abilities, and be actively involved, they viewed it as challenging. Numerous authors (Kohn, 1986; Orlick, 1978; & Sadler, 1976) draw distinctions between the notion of challenge and competition. Sadler (1976) argues that activities which provide a challenge to those participating can be very rewarding without a win/lose structure:

> We should not make the mistake of equating meeting a challenge with competition. There are many sports which can be exciting, can test the abilities and skills of individuals and groups, can bring harmony and happiness, can provide healthy exercise and an exhilarating change from the workday world, can reunite persons with nature, can express ...the highest human values, which do not require competition. (p. 173)

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) shares a similar view in his book entitled, Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience, in which he stresses the idea that the element of enjoyment is associated with challenges that require some degree of skill "challenges are by no means confined to competitive or to physical activities" (p. 50). Whether the children were demonstrating a gymnastic sequence to the best of their ability, or fitness skipping to beat their own record, they were faced with optimal challenges that required specific motor skills. In their words, those challenges that required them to "be able to do things" or use specific skills were what made physical activity "fun."

As I read through many of their personal activity logs and made note of those that centered on the notion of challenge and fun, I found myself asking the question, "Do children in this age group actively seek out challenges in their choices for play?" Daniel, one of the avid street hockey players in the group, describes how he and his friends create their own challenges:

> Debbie, Hi this is Daniel. Do you really like my diagram? No, Debbie this is not the rink we play, we don't even play in a rink. We play on the street. It's still the same and really good for street hockey and when ever there are not a lot of people we have competitions, and if their are only two people we take shots on each other. (March 18, 1995)

During one of their physical education lessons, the children created group routines in the area of gymnastics, and they were asked to share their group sequences with the entire class. While each group took their turn to demonstrate their sequence to the rest of the class, I had the opportunity to sit next to a group of boys who were sitting and observing. Just as one of the groups was about to begin their sequence, one of the boys close to me cupped his hands together and whispered, "Welcome to Gymnastic Olympics.... Here comes Group #1, getting up for the Gold!" It was as if in his mind he was imagining that their demonstration of learning was in the context of an Olympic event. During an interview, Daniel told me that in working with Tim on a routine in gymnastics, they would often use their "judges' voices" and give out scores to one another to see which one was better.

Within many of their gymnastic lessons, the students had an opportunity to comment on the work of their peers, or the teacher provided feedback to each group of students. Jill made the children accountable by asking them to demonstrate their work, and by doing so she set expectations that challenged the children. This was an effective strategy for motivating the students, as they told me on many occasions, "I try hard because I want to show her (Mrs. H) my best work". By setting expectations for the children to achieve, Jill was able to offer challenges that motivated the students to be active and meet those expectations. Most importantly though, these youngsters enjoyed activities that challenged their ability and skill level. Optimal challenges also motivated the children to practice skills in the context of relevant, game-like situations.

Imagination and Fun

Despite all the responsibilities many of the children were faced with, and pressures to succeed at school and in their leisure pursuits, I was refreshed by the fact that the children enjoyed opportunities to use their imagination and create their own games based on their interests. As in the case of the gymnastic scenario mentioned earlier on, the children often internalized their real-life expectations and challenges, by imagining they were in a different world or context.

Jill provided many opportunities for the children to demonstrate and use their imagination in the context of physical education, and she had a way of blending skill work and the content of her physical education program with the world of the children. Whether it was through special event days, in which the children were given the opportunity to practice skills, or when she was helping the children refine a particular skill, she taught the content in a way that was understandable to the student. I noticed that she used this approach often in setting fitness tasks for the children to attempt. I saw many explicit examples of this in the gymnastic related units the children were involved in. In one lesson, for example, the children were asked to try a partner activity called the "Horse and Cart Pull" where one person was the horse (on hands only) and the other acted as the cart, hanging on to their partner's feet. This was a fitness related warm-up aimed to develop upper body strength, and the children took turns being the horse. As Jill explained the activity to them back in their homeroom, they listened intently to her description of how they were to carry out the task safely, and when they reached the gymnasium they immediately began moving in different spaces and directions around the gymnasium, giggling and laughing with one another. As I watched them I couldn't help but think about the enjoyment they were having in attempting a very strenuous, health-related activity; quite a contrast to the grade six physical education class in which the children were asked to attempt endless repetitions of calisthenics exercises. In another gymnastic lesson, the children practiced one foot to two foot jumps, and one foot to one foot jumps, trying to increase the height of their jumps. She asked them to jump over the equipment and imagine that they were jumping over a bed of poisonous snakes. She asked them to "think about" bending their knees to land safely, and to "think about" where their arms were placed to help them balance. Even when the children played tag games to build cardiovascular endurance, and develop body management skills, they did so in an imaginative context. Tag games like "Collect the Tails" and strength building activities like "Rooster Fight" all required them to use their imagination. Rather than asking the children to participate in a series of monotonous repetitions of a skill, she set instructional tasks which tapped into their imagination, and she was able to make skill practice and fitness activities more meaningful, interesting, and from their perspective, more fun.

Physical activities that related to the children's imagination were not limited to the grade five physical education program at Chelsea Heights. Jill organized several noon hour clubs and activities throughout the year that appealed to the imaginations of the children. While I was at the school, the grade 4, 5, and 6 children had the opportunity to create and produce a creative dance performance to "The Circle of Life" from the movie The Lion King, and they presented their dance at an evening celebration of the arts involving other schools in the same school district. Both boys and girls came out to participate in the dance club, and on the night of the event the children wore large paper mache masks which they had made at a fine arts conference at the school during the previous school year. When I spoke with the children about having the opportunity to participate in this type of club or activity, they told me that "Mrs. H. always does neat things with us"(March 22, 1995).

Another event which appealed to the children's imagination and evolved from the physical education program was a juggling demonstration the grade two children presented to the grade five class. As both classes were involved in a juggling unit at the same time in their physical education program, they both made use of a juggling kit which they had borrowed from the physical education loan-out pool in their district. Both classes used an array of scarves, hoops, and juggle bugs, and as both groups had acquired and practiced many of the juggling moves, the grade two children invited the grade five class to watch an imaginary circus show of juggling routines which they had produced. This was followed by the opportunity for both groups to practice some of their skills together. It was a very spontaneous event that just seemed to evolve from the content and the interests of the children and the grade five children were thrilled to see the end result. They were extremely impressed with the narration, the music and the juggling skills their younger peers displayed. Jill valued opportunities for reciprocal teaching (Mosston and Ashworth, 1990) and for children to display their learning. Equally important was that she had a sense of humor that came through in her teaching. Jill had a collegial relationship with other teachers in the school, and although she was deemed to be the "expert" in their eyes, there was still an open exchange of ideas between her and some of her colleagues. The student juggling demonstration exemplified this. Her sense of humor was her asset; as Hellison (1995) suggests, "A playful spirit involves a lot of things, including being upbeat and enthusiastic (but only genuinely so), having fun with the kids, and celebrating with high fives or low fives or whatever the latest fad is" (p.59). Jill's creativity, enthusiasm, and playful spirit in organizing dance clubs or skipping clubs, and in creating productions with the children involving physical activity, demonstrated her belief that imagination and creativity have a place in the arena of physical education for young children.

For some of the ten-year-old children, recess activities also involved imaginative play. Aidan, one of the boys in the study who participated in the Circle of Life Dance spent each recess playing an imaginative game out on the playground with two of his friends. He shied away from the large group soccer game, and instead chose to play "Sonic," a running game he had created with two other boys:

Aidan: We have this Sonic and Knuckles club at recess, and we do that.

Debbie: Is that like pogs?

Aidan: No, its like running, you know how FAST Sonic runs? Well, I'm Sonic, and I can run as fast as Sonic probably because I'm faster now. (January 12, 1995)

On one of my travels around the playground, I saw several small groups of children in grades 4, 5, and 6 playing games which they had invented. I watched a group of girls playing what I thought was four square on a four square tarmac grid, only to discover that they did not have a ball to play with. Instead they created a game similar to frozen tag in which one of the players had to tag their partner on a body part, causing them to freeze, and balance in a square holding that part. If the person lost their balance then they became "it." After they explained their game to me I found out that they didn't have a playground ball to play with because another group of girls in their class was playing four square on another grid. So, they invented their own game requiring no equipment. In close proximity to them were another group of grade six girls skipping with a large rope, and a group of boys and girls who were playing a tag game around a set of bicycle racks and a classroom portable. The children in the older grades either played team activities such as soccer at recess time, or they chose to play imaginative games they could invent or create on their own.

Friends and Fun

I like biking because I can bike with my friends. (April 22, 1995)

From the children's perspective, having fun was having opportunities to be active in the company of friends. Each day at recess time and during physical education classes, the children would gravitate to those they felt comfortable with. Their friends appeared in many of their photographs, and those same children I saw smiling in the photographs of basketball and gymnastic activities were the children I saw together each day out on the playground. It was interesting to learn Jill's philosophy about organizing the children for games and other group activities. One morning we had a chance to discuss this very important issue, and she shared her view:

> I let them play with their friends. I let them go together...they still challenge each other. I think that it's most important for them to feel comfortable, so I let them play with their friends. (April 23, 1995)

Of course along with this philosophy came the preference of boys and girls to play with their own friends, generally being of the same sex. Jill commented on the fact that she let them choose their own groups on most occasions for small group competitive games, but she often assisted the children in matching teams once the groups were formed on their own. For example, when the children were involved in skill practice during a lesson on basketball skills, the girls and boys tended to cluster with their friends at a hoop. An interesting phenomenon was that the girls and boys separated themselves during most games lessons, with boys playing at one end of the gymnasium, and girls at the opposite. Although the children never spoke about this in our conversations, it was a common occurrence within their classes. This practice certainly contrasted with the daily soccer game outside at recess time, in which both boys and girls played together.

Only one of the girls in the class appeared to have difficulty getting along with the rest of her classmates, and it was obvious that she had difficulty playing with others in her class. There were many days that Valerie walked into the gym with a forlorn look on her face, and often found ways to opt out of the activities. A sore stomach or side ache, a trip to the bathroom, or a headache were just a few of the excuses she gave for not taking part. One day I was alone in the staffroom with the grade four teacher in the school, and we got onto the topic of children having difficulty relating to others. She informed me that she had taught Valerie the year before, and that Valerie had trouble relating to other classmates and she demonstrated very insecure behavior in the company of her parents. She felt it was a difficult home situation, and told me that the school had reason to suspect violence or abuse in the home. She said that Valerie's relationship with her mom and dad was a very strange one, and that during open house, parent-teacher conferences, Valerie demonstrated very "bizarre" behavior.

Valerie came to class angry about something or other most days, and I noticed that most of the other children ignored her. She seemed to identify with a small group of girls, and somewhat like them, she had difficulty working cooperatively with others. They frequently asked her to join in on an activity, and reluctantly she would accept their invitation and join in. Valerie was a reasonably attractive girl, well dressed and of average athletic ability. Her homeroom teacher and the physical education teacher also reiterated the fact that she was very pampered by her parents, and since the time she had started school, she had great difficulty getting along with her peers.

It was during one of their basketball skill lessons that I decided to play on one of the teams that was short a player, and I ended up playing against Valerie's team. Three cross court basketball games were going on in the gymnasium, with two groups using adjustable hoops on the wall and one group in the middle of the gym using two hoops on the gym floor. The children chose their own groups playing a combination of 4 vs 4 or 5 vs 5 basketball. The team I was playing on seemed to be evenly matched with the other team and the game was very active with lots of passing. A rule was in place that the team in possession of the ball had to pass twice before they could score. I noticed that about five minutes into play, she left the game and retreated against the wall, crying. When I approached her on the sidelines, she told me, "No one will pass to me." I suggested that she hold her hands up high and be ready for the ball. She told me that she had tried to be part of the game but no one would pass to her. I wondered why her teammates would exclude her, after all, these were her closest friends in the class. Paley (1992), in her book You Can't Say You Can't Play explores the concept of rejection, and examines the dynamics of rejection that come into play during the early school years. She summarizes the occurrence by saying:

> By kindergarten, however, a structure begins to be revealed and will soon be carved in stone. Certain children will have the right to limit the social experiences of their classmates. Henceforth a ruling class will notify others of their

> acceptability, and the outsiders learn to anticipate the sting of rejection. Long after hitting and name-calling have been outlawed by the teachers, a more damaging phenomenon is allowed to take root, spreading like a weed from grade to grade. (p.3)

Although Valerie had very few positive encounters with others, I noticed that Jill encouraged her and reinforced her positive efforts to cooperate in small group settings. However, the negativity she displayed toward others clearly diminished her opportunities to be an active participant in physical activities. As many of the activities required partner or group work, Valerie was at a disadvantage to take part because she had difficulty relating to her peers. Her constant state of despair did not invite friendship from other boys and girls around her. Many times within physical education classes and out on the playground I saw her resist the invitations of others to play or be part of the group. Arguments with other girls in the class, bouts of rejection and anger by her friends and toward her friends, set her apart from the laughter and excitement of the rest of the children in the class. Unlike Valerie, the others obviously felt secure and comfortable playing with their friends.

In her study with adolescent girls, Humbert (1995) found that being able to participate with friends was one of the most important reasons for liking physical education. She concludes that,

> This valuing of friends and relationships was evident with every group of young women with whom I spoke and was often one of the most important reasons for liking physical education, 'you get to be with your friends and it is not structured like the other classes, you can talk to your friends and that is really important'. (p.108)

Like these high school girls, the ten-year-old children I spoke with also viewed physical education classes as being a time to interact with friends. The boys and girls in the study explained to me that they enjoyed certain activities mostly because they had the security and comfort of friends. Gymnastics, stuntnastics, combatives and dance were all activities in which the children were asked to create a sequence or routine, and often these routines involved physical contact with a partner or group member.

One of the first lessons I observed the children participating in was a dance/gymnastic skill lesson involving the large blue gymnic balls. I noticed that many of the children clustered together in partners or groups of three, and remained close to each other throughout the entire lesson, even though most of the lesson employed an "individual goal structure" (Grineski, 1992). This was one of the few occasions that the physical education teacher had asked them to practice skills on their own for the entire lesson.

Perhaps the need to be in the company and security of others, could have been addressed within a cooperative goal structure that encouraged the children to practice their skills using the balls. Maria, who enjoyed most physical activities and seemed to enjoy "gym" as she called it, explained her preference for participating with friends: "I like to work with someone I feel comfortable with" (March 9, 1995). She also told me that she would not feel comfortable participating in a group with boys if there was any body contact involved. We talked about the importance of feeling comfortable, trusting those you are in physical contact with, and being able to take risks and share ideas in an activity. Both boys and girls enjoyed participating with their friends, and this was evident in the encouragement and laughter they shared with one another during their small group games and activities. The friendships I witnessed as the children walked out together at recess and played on the soccer field were many of the same relationships I saw in action in the context of their physical education program.

Conclusion

By listening to what the children say, I have come to realize that fun is not a term to be taken lightly, nor is it a vague term in relation to physical activity. It was the indicator which these children measured or judged an activity by, and it was directly associated with the nature of the activity and *how* it was taught.

Physical activities were regarded as fun when they were varied, and when the children had opportunities to explore and develop new skills and use a wide range of equipment and resources. To the children, fun was also associated with those activities that enabled them to be actively involved. Modified games played in smaller spaces and with fewer players, allowed for greater involvement, more activity time, and resulted in more fun!

Most importantly, activities which the children deemed to be the most fun were those that *challenged* their abilities. Activities that were challenging required them to use their skills. By applying the necessary skills they could take a shot in street hockey, juggle a scarf in a juggling stunt, dribble and shoot the basketball in a 3 vs 3 game, and create a group routine in gymnastics. The students associated challenge to those instances when the physical education teacher set expectations for the children to achieve, relating to skill learning.

The ten-year-old children in the study also shared their views about the importance of friends. Fun is about being active in the company of friends. It is a result of feeling secure and safe in an activity, and being able to trust those they were participating with.

None of this came to be, of course, without the careful planning done by the physical education teacher, Jill. Jackson (1968), in his examination of planning or what he defines as "preactive" teaching, suggests that preactive teaching is a process in which teachers should engage in careful and thoughtful deliberation in preparation for teaching. Jill demonstrated what Placek (1983) would identify as the teacher's ability to "blend theoretical knowledge and practical experience in order to produce an effective learning environment for students" (p.47). In her planning, she gave special consideration to the curriculum or subject matter, the interests and abilities of the children, and resources which would be appropriate for the age level she taught. Jill created yearly and unit plans, and came to class prepared every day with well constructed plans to promote student learning. Her office off the library spoke of physical education, and her collection of resources and teaching materials supported the fact that she went to great lengths to thoughtfully plan her physical education program.

My concern to promote learning in physical education has not changed as a result of the study; however, I have come to understand that if we really want children to experience success with physical activity, and continue being active as they move into adolescence and then into adulthood, we have to do more than pay lip service to the role of the child's interests and what challenges them. If we consider these important factors associated with learning, then we will naturally provide success oriented experiences that are educational, and fun.

CHAPTER FIVE

OUR WORLD IS A SOCIAL ONE

Introduction

> None of us operates alone. Alone we are incomplete, unfulfilled. Our humanness becomes whole to the extent that we can fully be at one with others. (Hellison, 1978,p.4)

In their desire to participate with friends and have fun, the children found themselves in social situations that challenged them with new opportunities and numerous dilemmas, from which they learned. At an age when their peers are becoming more significant in their lives, I saw them demonstrate their abilities, every time they walked into the gym. As they played badminton with a partner, climbed on the backs of friends in stuntnastics, made a chest pass to a partner, and skated at the community rink, I saw them display themselves to their classmates. As a researcher, and as a teacher, I came to see the significance of how they perceived themselves and others, and how they participated in group activities.

This chapter will examine some of the social issues that surfaced in my observations of the ten-year-old children in their physical education classes, and during their physical activities throughout the school day. It will also examine some of the issues which they wrote about in their Personal Activity Logs, and those which they spoke of in our conversations. Perspectives on fairness, getting along with others, cultural differences, and views on girls and boys, were heard from the students. I believe that elementary teachers need to look at some of these social dynamics that affect students' learning, and operate as the "hidden curriculum" (Apple and King, 1977; Bain, 1976; Dodds, 1983) within our classrooms. And I believe that by gaining a better understanding of how important these social issues are to children, and how they affect their participation in physical activities, we can better design and implement physical education programs that meet the needs of our students.

Comparing Oneself to Others

> I kind'a knew that I wasn't the fastest, I was slower than the rest. I didn't know at first, but when he put me in the group I could see why he did that. (Maria, February 1, 1995)

One of the most obvious interpretations the children shared throughout the study were those that centered on their conceptions of how their competence related to the ability of their peers. The ten-year-olds I listened to constantly defined their own ability by comparing their own performance to that of their peers:

Maria: Yeah, we had like a couple uphills and we had 5 downhills. People who went the long way got their legs hurt, and people who went the short way didn't.

Daniel: Whenever we got there I was like the last person.

Tim: Christi was the first, and I was the second.

Daniel: I was one of the last persons 'cause Michael was always wiping out.

Tim: He was one of the fast ones?

Daniel: Yeah, 'cause he left your group and started catching up with us.

Christi: I found it real easy. (February 1, 1995)

This conversation illustrates that when placed in the context of learning new skills, the children quickly began to develop notions of their competence by ranking themselves according to their performance. On many occasions, the children told me that they preferred to work with children who displayed a similar level of competence with a particular skill. Maria pointed out her anxiety when participating with someone who performs at a much higher skill level: "It's not fun if you're in the fast group, and you can't keep up. Everybody is waiting for you, and I wouldn't feel like going on that trip." (February 1, 1995) Similar insights came from others, who felt that it just didn't make sense to expect that everyone could ski together:

Debbie: Do you think that the groups worked better for you, or do you think that everybody should go together?

Christi: No, 'cause then it would be kind of crowded, 'cause everyone would have to be made to wait longer for people to like get up the hill.

Maria: And like the fast people would be like waiting for us and the slow people would feel bad for making them wait for us and stuff.

Tim: And the medium people won't be first. (February 1, 1995)

Comments like these indicate that these youngsters were aware of the frustrations that go along with learning skills that are too easy or too difficult, and the added pressures of meeting the expectations of keeping up to their peers. The children spoke about the importance of feeling comfortable with others when practicing skills that were new to them. Christi's confident view of herself became evident to me when she said that it was important to feel comfortable no matter what level you were working at, and that being "the best" was not the most important thing, "It didn't bother me that I was in the slower group for part of the day I was having fun." (February 1, 1995)

An interesting notion also related to their conceptions of competence levels, was that they defined success in terms of how they could master tasks rather than in terms of performing better than others. Especially in individual activities like swimming, and cross-country or downhill skiing, they wanted opportunities to work at their own level, and they viewed success in terms of personal performance. An interesting observation on their part was that they knew their instructors grouped them according to their ability:

Maria: I think that the instructors made three groups because, I think that they planned it ahead. I bet you they said, 'I'll take one group and you take the other one' and like all the people going slower behind, they will take the slower group, instead of the faster group.

Christi: I don't think that they planned it, I just think cause like he went fast and then slowed down and waited for people, and if he finds that there were too many people slowed down so they took them to the other group.

Maria: I bet you they thought that, because a lot of people hadn't skied before so they will go slower. They probably knew because they take a lot of groups out skiing. (February 1, 1995)

In their examinations of children's conceptions of their ability, Lee, Carter, and Xiang (1995) found similar views amongst 4th and 5th-grade children who spoke about the importance of mastering tasks, and defined success in this manner. The children in their study believed that their ability could be modified through effort. These researchers conclude that "students are more likely to maintain the belief that they have the ability to achieve if teachers encourage a mastery view of learning, adapt learning to individual student's ability, help students establish realistic goals, and discourage the social comparison process" (p.392). In listening to the children's' perspectives, I came to realize that mastering skills that were challenging gave them feelings of success, competence and enjoyment as they participated in their physical education program.

Fairness on the Playground

The issue of fairness was a constant in our group discussions and individual conversations. Most of the children brought up their concerns regarding fairness in relation to playing games in the context of their physical education classes and recess activities. Tim, who seemed very quick to point out right from wrong in many of our conversations, phrased it quite nicely by saying, "If it's not fair, I won't play." One day, during a discussion about team activities we got onto the topic of 'playing alone' and 'playing together'. He shared with me that he enjoyed playing soccer every day with the others, but only when the teams were "fair." Fairness was regarded by Tim, one of the boys in the study, as being far more important than winning:

Tim: At recess all I do is play soccer but most of the time I lose because its no fair when the other team has all the better players. Sometimes its fair when we have more players than them... when they have the better players. But if we win I don't feel so good so I'll join the other team and I lose.

Debbie: Do you like to win?

Tim: Yeah, I like to win with a fair team. So, if its not a fair team then I'll join the other team. (January 16, 1995)

As I watched the children each day on the playground I came to understand that many of their rules were made in an attempt to address the issue of fairness. Decisions regarding who would be on the same team, how big the playing field would be, who would play goal, or how penalties would be handled, were all made on the basis of fairness. Unfair situations were generally those which violated the children's opportunities for play, accomplishment, or personal safety. As Aidan asked me during our very first interview, "Can we write about anything in our books (journals)?

Like when our forts get wrecked, after we've spent time building them...that really bugs me! "(December 19, 1994)

The rules they created had a purpose, and they could be changed at any time and for any reason, in order to make the game fair. In my conversation with Christi, she described how she and her friends often adapted their soccer games to make the circumstances fair:

Christi: Now we are keeping those teams and then we, like, trade people sometimes, and then we see how it works out.

Debbie: Is there ever a problem with teams?

Christi: Yeah, well, sort of. Like everyone gets mad because we got this player and they got this player. Because this player is probably a better player so people are concerned about having the teams not fair.

Debbie: So they want to make them fair?

Christi: Yeah.

Debbie: When they are not fair and one team keeps scoring, then generally what happens?

Christi: Well, mostly if we keep winning and winning and the score is up to 10 nothing, then we switch players sometimes.

Debbie: Do you switch before the next game?

Christi: Yeah. Like if our team is winning then I will go on the other team just to help out. Usually someone suggests that. (January 19, 1995)

Christi and Daniel were the street hockey players in the group, and they emphasized the importance of making up rules in street hockey to discourage rough play and promote fairness. It became obvious to me that decision making played a major role in this process:

> Christi: If we, like, play street hockey, like we get our neighbors and they are mostly all boys and they play with us and we make up rules. We say no chicken shots, no body checking, and if somebody gets hurt you have to say sorry and then everybody has to make up and mostly we all pick the roughest stuff to make rules about.
>
> Debbie: That's interesting. What are chicken shots, Christi? Is that a cheap shot or something like an illegal play, like high sticking?
>
> Christi: No, like here is the goal area, and these are the corners, and we are over here (she points to center ice), and I shoot it and it goes in...that's a chicken shot. 'Cause you are this far away and it is a chicken shot, and you won't go up.
>
> Debbie: So why is that illegal?
>
> Christi: Because we don't have enough players and we don't have a goalie.(January 19, 1995)

Their ability to *make* rules is what Piaget (1950, 1954) highlights as a prerequisite for the level of reasoning and intellectual thought processes that are required for the ability to *learn* rules. Elkind (1981), in his book The Hurried Child, stresses the importance of rule making and states:

> One of the dangers of organized team sports for this age group is that they no longer have the opportunity to create their own games and rules and thus to acquire a healthy sense

> of the relativity of rules. I recall seeing a group of boys racing along the street when one yelled, 'Last one to the corner is a nerd.' One unfortunate youngster was tripping over his sneaker laces and had to stop to tie them. He shouted to the first boy, 'Not included!' To which came the swift reply, 'No say-backs'. Learning to create rules--even simple rules for otherwise uncomplicated street games--and to abide by those you have created is an important part of rule learning and mature social behavior. (p.105)

From the children's perspective, the issue of fairness became the criteria from which rules for play were created. Fairplay meant following rules, not ignoring them. Tim's interpretation of the three pass rule in newcombe ball supports this view:

> Well, in our team the good thing about it is that everyone gets a chance to play, not only the good players. Yeah, we let everyone even if they say, 'No I don't want the ball.' We still give it to them, cause everyone should get a chance to throw. (February 1, 1995)

On the playground, in the gym, or on the street, these youngsters exercised their ability to reason and make decisions in an effort to solve their own problems, and create games that were fair and made sense to them.

The children who participated in the study were very much against the practice of teachers punishing the entire group for the misbehaviors of only a few individuals. The example highlighted much earlier on in this discussion, in relation to the lack of time for physical activity, illustrates the dilemma Tim and Jeff found themselves in when their homeroom teacher, Mr. Morgan, took away the class soccer ball at recess over a dispute involving only three children. From the children's perspective, the fact that the teacher would take the ball away just because two or three children were fighting seemed unreasonable and totally unfair. In their opinion, those involved should have borne the consequences, and been removed from the game or asked to play on their own. The irony of the whole issue though, was that those children who went to the teacher to seek help in pursuit of fairness did so because an argument arose when three boys used their hands illegally in a soccer game. In their mission to seek justice and stop the irresponsible behavior of their peers, they experienced what they perceived as more injustice from the teacher.

Fairness in the Physical Education Classroom

The importance of the development of appropriate attitudes and fair play is supported by researchers in the field of physical education and sport (Hellison, 1978, 1995; Hellison and Templin, 1991; and Orlick and Botterill 1975). Hellison and Templin (1991) stress that the issue of fair play is important to students, and that teachers need to attend to social development and moral education within the physical education context. They suggest that personal-social development, often referred to as the affective domain, must provide a framework for the subject matter of physical education. In many of the physical education classes I observed, it was evident that the physical education teacher made a conscious effort to stop the class and debrief during situations that presented moral dilemmas to the students.

During a basketball lesson focusing on dribbling, the children were playing a game in which they all had to begin in one quadrant of the gym. They had to dribble their ball and use body management skills to protect their ball from the players. The challenge was to dribble continuously in a confined space, and protect their own ball while trying to touch another person's ball. If their ball was touched they had to move on to the next quadrant and continue dribbling. The students seemed to enjoy the game and, after a few minutes of play, the teacher must have noticed that Gerard, one of the boys in the class, had been touched twice but did not move on to the next quadrant. Other students had noticed too, and approached her to express their concerns.

To address this, Jill stopped the play and commented on how well most of the students had done, and she then pointed out the infraction by Gerard, which discounted his claim of achievement. Rather than stop at this point however, she explained to him the rationale behind the rules, and how unfair it would be for the others who had played by the rules, if he were to be recognized for being able to retain the ball during the dribbling game. He nodded and shrugged his shoulders in agreement, and the play went on again. Since he was not extremely well liked by the others, and was regarded as a troublemaker, I was surprised that there were no further comments, accusations, or discussions amongst the other students concerning the unfair play. Jill's acknowledgment of the unfair play satisfied their desire to bring justice to the situation.

Later on, when I asked one of the girls about the incident, she said, "Mrs. H. always tries to make it fair, and if someone tries to cheat, she usually stops the game to talk about it." I certainly witnessed this on more than one occasion in the context of the grade five physical education classes. Jill made an effort to attend to what Weiss and Bredemeier (1986) would define as the Built-In Dilemmas/Dialogue (BIDD) approach to confronting moral dilemmas related to fairness and student welfare. The BIDD approach is built on the structural-developmental work of psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg, and it can take the form of various approaches in the physical education environment. One approach is that the teacher takes time to ask students whether the game they have just played was fair for everyone; in other words, did everyone get a turn, did everyone have fun, and so on. A second approach is to create moral dilemmas in game situations, and have students debrief the games or situations to examine the advantages and disadvantages of particular rules or game structures. A third moral education approach is to link specific sport-related moral issues to general life situations. Hellison and Templin (1991) relate cooperation in physical education to real life by asking the questions, "How much cooperation is needed to play a competitive game? How much cooperation is needed to drive a car in traffic?" (p.102)

Jill used a combination of these three approaches, plus she provided the students with opportunities to examine the principles underlying the discipline procedures she used in her physical education classes. She also practiced what Weiss and Bredemeier refer to as the relevance of social learning theory for moral education. She modeled good sportsmanship, took time to explain and highlight the benefits of cooperation, and she acknowledged positive behavior. Although Weiss and Bredemeier believe that social learning is not as powerful a construct, they see such strategies as modeling good sportsmanship by teachers, developing sportsmanship codes with appropriate rewards and punishments, and providing explanations for sportsmanship as helpful in promoting moral education.

Hellison and Templin (1991) point out that a criticism of moral education is that it requires some time within the physical education program, which in turn limits emphasis on other program goals. A study by Romance, Weiss and Bokoven (1986) demonstrates that at least in one activity, skill development was not impeded by the introduction of the moral development model. During my observations of the children in their physical education classes, I found my thoughts centering around the question, "What is worth teaching in physical education?" and although I am not certain that I yet have an answer, I do believe that physical education lends itself to the teaching of responsibility through sportsmanship and fairplay. Hellison (1995) states that:

> Physical activity in instructional settings holds the potential for such development, because they are very emotional, interactive, and for some kids, attractive. Life in the gym provides seemingly unlimited opportunities for intervention and for the demonstration of personal and social qualities, not only in games but in exercises, drills, discussions, and informal student actions (which may include inactions). As one social worker told me, kids 'show more of themselves' in physical activity settings, and in the gym or on the playing field intervention can be more closely tied to immediate experiences than in traditional therapy sessions. (p.1)

As a teacher I believe that if we neglect to plan for and teach codes of sportsmanship and fairplay, then we are neglecting to teach those morals that assist children in conceptualizing right and wrong. We also are neglecting an opportunity to enable them to "question and understand why rules are needed" (Hellison and Templin, 1991, p.102). Through my observations of the interactions between the grade five children, and of their relationship with their teacher, Jill, and the other teachers in the school, I discovered that moral education was as much a part of the grade five physical education curriculum as it was part of the total school environment at Chelsea Heights.

As a researcher, I also came to realize that it is possible to gain insights from that which is not observed. It was a Wednesday morning and I could hear the children screaming as I walked down the hall toward the gym, and then I remembered that Jill was not going to be at school that day, as she was on the ski trails with the grade six class at a nearby city park. A substitute teacher was in to teach her classes for the day. As I made my way down to the gym I thought about what the children would be learning that day, and any suspicions I had turned out to be accurate. My prediction that the children would be playing large group games with the substitute teacher, and that it would be unlikely they would have instruction, was correct--they were playing murderball! The game was underway when I entered the gym, and excitement filled the air. Most of the screams I understood were requests such as "throw the ball" or "over here!"

The game seemed to carry on throughout the period with very few arguments and no stop in play. But just before the substitute teacher stopped the children and asked them to line up and go back to class, several children reported that one of the boys had cheated and caught the ball when he had been stepping out of the safety zone. Suddenly the accusation turned into a full blown argument involving two of his own teammates and three or four players from the other team. The teacher immediately shut down all discussion and asked the children to line up at the door to return to class. The teacher said nothing. It was difficult to ignore the mumbling at the side of the gym as the children lined up, and I realized that it was the first time that I had seen the children leave the gym angry. This teacher obviously did not view her role as one to promote the personal-social development of children, and a more serious message that she portrayed to the children in ignoring their pleas for justice was that they were not important enough for her to listen to. Hellison (1995) shares his view on listening to children by saying:

> Listening is another way to treat kids with dignity. When we listen, they feel as if they count, and we learn some things (which is especially important if our backgrounds are

> different)....Listening is also a necessary skill for carrying our individual decision-making and group meeting strategies. (p.56)

Unlike Jill, the substitute teacher had no intention of involving the children in solving their dilemma, or in deciding what solutions would be most appropriate. There were many occasions when I observed Jill taking time to counsel students individually, or as a group. In difficult situations like the one described earlier on involving the boy who did not play fair in the dribbling game, she demonstrated what Hellison would define as a sense of "genuineness" with the students. Jill cared enough about the children in her class that she would take time to help them solve their problems. Hellison elaborates on the importance of being genuine with children in teaching responsibility:

> It means being oneself (to a point) rather than trying to be cool. It means expressing one's humanity in appropriate ways....Most of all, it means caring sincerely about students and believing in their essential dignity and worth. Otherwise talking and listening to kids won't have validity. (p.56)

At Chelsea Heights, the promotion and support of their physical education teacher for fairplay, was something that these ten year old children valued, and they were quite overt in reasoning with their peers and in sharing their pleas for justice with their teacher, when the need presented itself.

The issue of fairness also presented itself in how the children viewed their teacher's decisions. During many of the group interviews, the children spoke of the importance of fairness, and they described ways in which their physical education teacher made an effort to ensure that things were fair in group and individual activities. For example, they spoke of her attempts to divide the children into evenly matched teams:

Debbie: Do you have evenly matched teams when you play?

Tim: Yeah, look at soccer.

Debbie: Well, would Mrs. H have divided the class into two teams the way the substitute teacher did?

Daniel: No way, never. She always makes a balanced team.

Christi: She goes like this....(Christi points) 'that side, that side'.

Debbie: Or does she say choose the side you want to go on, for large group activities?

Maria: Well, sometimes she gives us the choice, but then after that if it's not fair she calls everyone to the center and then she goes 'that side, that side'. (April 13, 1995)

In order to ensure equal opportunities for all learners to be successful, Jill made an effort to create an equal playing environment for her students. This was important to the children, and they recognized her efforts to address fairness in their physical education program at Chelsea Heights.

Tim, who was quick to point out unfair situations in physical education class, and demonstrated the appropriate social skills to support and assist others during activities, expressed concern about what he viewed as unfair teaching practices at the ski hill during their downhill ski unit. Downhill skiing was part of the grade five physical education program at Chelsea Heights, and many of the children in the class, like Tim, were participating for the first time. After the first day of skiing, I had the opportunity to ask Tim how he felt about the experience. An excerpt from his journal illustrates how his view of the issue differed from the instructor's:

Time 8:41 Feb. 7, 1995

O.K. O.K. I'll answer this question, but I won't like to. I went to Sun Valley to ski. The people there aren't fair. Like Steven

> got TWO CHANCES to be upgraded but I only got ONE! And when I told one of the upgraders, she said, 'Who's counting?' 'I'm counting!' I even asked Steven if he try (tried) twice and he said 'Yes,' and I bet the upgraders heard him. NOT FAIR! Anyway I kind of enjoyed it. Oh...and on the bus David was breaking a rule. He was eating chips and there were crums (crumbs) everywhere! On the floor on the seat, on him, even on me!

Tim's interpretation of the incident, was that the instructor discounted his feelings and his plea for fairness. As he told me in a follow-up interview, "They didn't seem to care what I said" (February 9, 1995). Due to the fact that this was not an isolated incident, I began to wonder about the problems that can arise when instructors from outside organizations teach children within the context of school programs. On a second visit to the ski hill two weeks later, Tim became subject to more unfair treatment when he failed to make a sufficient number of turns down the hill on his second day of skiing. In trying to understand his viewpoint, I empathized with him when I read his journal entry:

> 8:42 February 21, 1995
>
> Now you gotta hear what happened last time I went skiing. First like always the people there aren't FAIR! Hey wait a minute I just made a ryime (rhyme). Anyway when you go down a hill your suppost (supposed) to turn and turn right? But I didn't know. They never told the beiggers (beginners). How are we to know? It just isn't fair, and so I go down the hill not turning and I get a "W" which means warning. And if I go down a hill without turning again I have to go down a baby hill for the rest of (the) day!! Lucky it nevered (never) happen (happened) to me but I (got) the "W" anyway.

Because Tim was one to please others, was well thought of by his teachers, and demonstrated a sense of personal and social responsibility in physical education classes, I knew his argument was legitimate, and that his actions would not have been intentional. What angered Tim was that the instructor did not recognize or take into account his skill level, or offer him assistance in any way. Instead, the instructor assumed that Tim was showing off, playing the dare devil role on the hill, and risking the safety of others.

The warning placard which Tim was given to wear on his ski jacket was a public announcement to others that he had not followed the rules of the slopes, when he actually acted with no intent to break the rules. What bothered me in this situation was that the instructor was quick to find fault with Tim, the learner, instead of taking the time to find out why he went straight down the hill. Labeling a child with a "W" brought to mind an image of the traditional stereotype of a teacher placing a dunce cap on a child's head, and instructing the child to sit in the corner!

Of course, within a physical education class, the practice of posting a public warning on a child if they perform a skill incorrectly would be frowned upon, to say the least. In trying to make sense of this incident, some important questions came to mind. Was participating in this ski program a positive experience for Tim? Would he choose to carry on with downhill skiing as a result of these experiences? I believe that the type of instructional practices he experienced were totally inappropriate, and that in a true "learning" situation, the learner should be given additional instruction if necessary, in order to perform the skill safely and effectively. I wondered about the type of knowledge this instructor possessed. Did he know much about Tim, as a person, and was he knowledgable about young children, about learning, and about teaching young children physical education? I began to doubt if the instructor had a broader knowledge of these areas beyond his knowledge of downhill skiing. In a recent study (Melnychuk, 1990), similar concerns about having guest instructors teach specific units within the physical education program, were expressed by a female high school physical education teacher: "unfortunately these people often don't have the teaching skills or understanding to work with a 'typical' PE. class" (p. 199). From Tim's perspective, the instructor treated him with disrespect, and did not recognize him as an individual on the hill. Hellison (1995) states that "the content is certainly one vehicle for teaching responsibility, but the person of the instructor is even more important" (p.54). Other researchers in the broader educational field (Denton, 1972, 1974; Noddings, 1992) also hold a similar view that the teacher is key to the teacher/student relationship. As Noddings (1992) writes, "Educational research...has made the error of supposing that method can be substituted for individuals" (p. 8). Denton (1974) argues that teaching is a "special mode of being-in-the-world, a mode which cannot be reduced to anything other than itself" (p.99). Denton (1972) advocates that the teacher must truly embody or live what he or she teaches. Hellison (1995) applies this term specifically to his Levels approach to teaching social responsibility, and suggests that the instructor needs to "live the Levels, to embody the Levels" (p.54). He states that this embodiment has the following dimensions:

*Sense of purpose
*Respect for students and their individuality
*Listening
*Genuineness
*Vulnerability
*Positive confrontation
*Intuition
*Steadfastness (outlast the kids!)
*Self-reflection
*Sense of humor
*Playful spirit (p. 54)

Hellison also suggests that embodying the Levels means that the instructor really has to believe in and cherish the moral education of children, in order to truly embody it. In reflecting on the ski instructor's relationship with Tim, it seems obvious that many of these qualities were not present, and because of this, the learning and teaching relationship was flawed. Tim felt that his instructor ignored his individual needs in learning to ski, and treated him unfairly because he could not demonstrate specific skills. An interesting phenomenon arising from this incident is that as a learner, Tim went away not with a new understanding of the skills he needed to demonstrate competence in skiing; rather he went away thinking he had been treated unfairly. The message that he received was that rules were more important than people. He interpreted the actions of his instructor to assist him in making meaning of the event. Several educational researchers (Apple & King, 1977; Denton, 1974) hold the premise that the teacher and learner in any learning environment are always in a state of negotiating meaning, and as Apple and King (1977) state, "Meanings of objects and events become clear to children as they participate in the social setting" (p. 349). The message that Tim learned from his experience at the ski hill was that the rules of the slopes were more important than he.

A few days after reading his journal and discussing the incident further with Tim, I happened to meet the grade 6 teacher, Mr. Voss, and Jill, in the staffroom. Mr. Voss had accompanied the grade 5 and 6 children to the ski hill the day Tim got the "W" placard for what was deemed to be violating a ski hill rule. I took the opportunity to share with him Tim's incident, and I asked his views on the practices of the hill. Upon hearing my concerns, Mr. Voss answered quite frankly, "Well, you know Debbie, they have to have some way to keep the kids in line." I recall feeling quite surprised by his answer, and the fact that he seemed to trivialize what was a real issue to Tim, and to me. He could not understand or relate to how Tim interpreted the event. What bothered me was that this man was a teacher and advocate of young children, and yet he did not recognize inappropriate teaching practices within the context of his own school program. Jill, who stood quietly and listened to the conversation, later commented on how she, too, at times, had concerns about the effectiveness of instructors from outside organizations. Tim's frustration with the injustice, and the reaction of Mr. Voss, the grade six teacher, remained with me for many days to follow, and I wondered how often teachers in elementary schools sacrifice appropriate instruction when accessing assistance in areas that require specialized knowledge. My guess is that when outside instructors are involved, issues such as fairness, fairplay, and sportsmanship are either ignored, or dealt with in a superficial way.

The children viewed fairness as being part of their physical activity experiences, and it was a social issue that, when addressed properly within the context of physical activity, could enhance the quality of their participation. In their efforts to achieve fair playing conditions, they related to others, developed a sense of trust in their physical education teacher, and they strengthened their own feelings of dignity and self-worth.

Cooperating With Others and Success

For most of the ten-year-olds in the study, their ability to cooperate with others and be accepted by their peers was very important. During their physical education classes I observed many examples of children making an effort to support others and cooperate with their classmates while participating in a physical activity. When I asked the young children about what they had to do to be successful in physical education, they told me that working well with others was often the most important factor in determining whether they were successful or not in an activity.

As I watched the children in their physical education classes, it became apparent to me that many of the children shied away from working with some of the "behaviorally limited" children because they felt that their ability to be successful in an activity was hindered by the behavior of these individuals, especially in those activities which required the children to share ideas and work cooperatively to create an end product. Mosston (1972) defines these kinds of activities in physical education as being "productive" in nature, rather than "reproductive," and believes that in terms of teaching physical education, the teacher should provide opportunities for decision making, divergent thinking and creativity. Mosston's Spectrum of Teaching Styles is a continuum of specific teaching styles, each of which can stand alone, yet is integrally connected to the styles that precede and follow it on the continuum. At one end of the continuum is command style teaching, in which all decisions are made by the teacher, and at the other end is teaching through discovery, in which the student has the greatest level of autonomy in decision making. Jill certainly employed many of the teaching styles on the continuum, and she often integrated several approaches within a single lesson. The children were certainly receptive to many types of opportunities to explore different ways of performing a skill, and within most of her lessons it was common for Jill to provide opportunities for the children to experiment, and select their own ways of practicing a skill. Statements like, "Show me one way of hitting the hoop," or "You might try two hands in making the chest pass to your partner," were examples of how the teacher encouraged the children to make decisions about performing with little or no direct assistance.

When a skill was modeled, however, Jill would sometimes break the skill into its components or steps, and almost rehearse the skill "in slow motion" for the children. This was observed on many occasions during their physical education classes, when the children learned a new skill, such as striking a badminton birdie, or performing a front roll and landing on the large gymnic balls. A practice that was consistent in Jill's teaching was that she always provided the children with the opportunity to experiment with a new piece of equipment and try it on their own for a few moments, before providing any direct instruction.

The difficulty did not lie with individual experimentation, however, in so much as it did with how the children brought their ideas together in a group situation. Where the students were creating an end product, such as a pyramid in stuntnastics, or a sequence in gymnastics, the success of the group depended on how well the group could work together. Although the children in the study told me that they enjoyed creating their own sequences, and deciding which skills they would include, they shared with me their frustrations of working with others whose expectations differed. As Maria explained to me:

> Sometimes when you are working with a partner and they are not like you, and they don't try their best then it ruins everything. So that is a bit of a problem. Sometimes you try really hard and then it ends up really bad 'cause you don't get to really concentrate on what you are doing. (January 12, 1995)

Maria felt that her expectations for herself in wanting to succeed in a physical activity were threatened by the differing expectations of others. She told me that there were certain individuals in the class that she would never choose to work with because they always got into trouble.

Stemming from their desire to succeed, the children often demonstrated individual responsibility to support and encourage others around them who were less responsible. I wished I had had a tape recorder in the gymnasium the day I listened to and observed Tim's attempt to encourage Michael, one of his group members in gymnastics, to join in, share his ideas, and participate. Michael suddenly became upset and decided not to participate when Daniel had joined the two to make a group of three. Michael sat, with his arms folded, adjacent to the gymnastic mat that the boys were using in their sequence. He refused to participate. Tim knelt down beside him and in a very soft ,but comical voice, said:

> Oh...oh...We've just been hijacked! I think that this train has been hijacked and we've lost one of the cars! Yes, indeed its true, one of our cars has been thrown off the track! (January 10, 1995)

Within a few seconds Michael was talking to them again, and he then slid over to join in again and participate. Tim was obviously successful in his efforts to show concern and help Michael, and he did so in such a way that left Michael's dignity intact. Later on in an interview I had an opportunity to ask Tim about the incident, as I was curious about how he came to using such an effective strategy. Our conversation went as follows:

Debbie: You were really trying to make him laugh and get involved again. That's very giving on your part. Some people might not have taken the same approach; they might have just sat there and argued with the person.

Tim: Yeah, I got the train idea in grade 4 in reading in Miss Bryan's class. Each member of our row had a train's name and we were all on the track. I was the Silver Express, Daniel the Golden Arrow, Jamie was Blue Lightning, and Michael was the Silver Bullet. Every time you don't do something in your group then either your train gets hijacked, you miss the train or someone threw you off.

Debbie: So what was Michael?

Tim: I think that he was hijacked because he was with us in the beginning but then Daniel came on board and then he broke off.

Debbie: So what happened to make him break off?

Tim: Mrs. H. told us to go into a group of three, and first just Michael and I were together, but then Daniel joined us. Daniel and I then agreed to do something that Michael didn't want to do, and we said that it was two votes to one. He said 'no' right away and just sat there at the side of the mat and then we tried it (the idea) ourselves but it didn't work. Then we tried the train story to get him back in the group.

Debbie: Do you think that he left because he wasn't able to do what you wanted him to?

Tim: No, that's not Michael, he's really good in phys. ed., like he's a really good goalie in soccer. He can almost do anything, but he doesn't really like doing stuff that isn't his way. (January 16, 1995)

Tim's effort to assist and extend his sense of responsibility beyond himself is what Hellison (1985) would identify as a higher level of personal and social responsibility that the learner can work toward in social behavior. In a more recent adaptation of his model, Hellison (1995) defines the learner's ability to be responsive to the well-being of others as the ultimate goal, or Level IV in his personal responsibility model. He recognizes that working at Level IV is easier said than done, and that it requires the interpersonal relations skills of "listening and responding without being judgmental or dogmatic, helping without being arrogant, helping only if the other person wants the help, not becoming a rescuer, and learning to help the others resolve differences peacefully and productively" (p. 18). Hellison also states that, "Level IV students possess interpersonal skills, act out of compassion for others, do so without expectations of extrinsic rewards, and contribute to their community" (p. 18).

Tim was also able to transfer his learnings to life outside of the gymnasium. On the playground, and during lunch hour activities such as intramurals, I had the opportunity to see Tim show concern for the well being of others during game situations, and he was highly respected by his classmates. Although Jill told me that she did not always intentionally plan for the learning of social skills in her physical education classes, she did reinforce positive social interactions in game and group situations. She described a strategy which she used frequently in her physical education classes.

At the beginning of a modified game or group activity, she would tell the children that at the end of the lesson she would ask them to identify one social skill that they used well in participating together. Generally this would take the form of a compliment, and the children would either share the compliment with the entire class, or with their group or team. One of the positive outcomes of this practice, she said, was that the some of the children were now complimenting each other on their own, without being told. This certainly became part of many reciprocal teaching (Mosston and Ashworth, 1990) scenarios, although she often asked the children to give feedback on their partner's performance related to particular skills, effort, or quality of performance. From the children's perspective, however, getting along with others meant having greater opportunities to participate and be successful, whether they were playing a game of 3 vs 3 basketball, or performing a group gymnastic routine for the class. Dyson (1995) in his recent study examining students' perceptions of their physical education program found that 3rd and 5th-grade children also perceived "cooperating with others" (p. 397) as one of their personal goals in physical education.

On more than one occasion Jill told me that Michael lacked self-confidence, and that he had "come a long way" in showing initiative to get involved in activities and become more self-directed. He was very quiet, and one might mistake his introvertedness at times as a form of negative behavior, rather than as a sign of his insecurity. There were many classes, however, in which Michael cooperated with others in group situations, interacted with others to make decisions, and displayed satisfaction with his accomplishments. The following excerpt from my personal journal exemplifies Michael's moments of success:

> The three boys, Tim, Michael, and Jeff, were in a group attempting some of the stunt combinations they had learned in previous lessons. Jill had asked them to demonstrate their sequence, as they had practiced the sequence to the point that they illustrated a smooth flowing, fluid routine that was dynamic. It entailed a change of speed, and excellent control. The boys seemed eager to demonstrate for the class....This was the same Michael I saw in trouble a week ago? Michael gave eye contact to the others as he moved, and he seemed to lead the change of actions. A big smile came across his face when everyone clapped after their demonstration. (January, 16, 1995)

Incidents such as the one described above were common within the context of this physical education classroom, and as I observed and listened to the children talk and share ideas with their classmates, I sensed their desire to achieve and be successful. Another fieldnote demonstrates this concept:

> Susan watched other groups as they practiced their routines, and as I listened to her group wrestle with their ideas, they seemed to have difficulty coming up with two ideas that worked well together. As her eyes traveled to different groups around the gym, I heard her say, 'Look at those guys, they have a person on the bottom...let's try that idea. I'll be on the bottom if no one wants to.' (January 16, 1995)

Because so much of their skill learning and skill practice was in the company of others, working cooperatively was almost a prerequisite for carrying out a task, or meeting a challenge presented by the teacher or by other classmates.

From Different Worlds

As a researcher within the school and physical education setting, I began to realize that the personal and social development of the children I observed was far more complex than the behaviors which they demonstrated. Their feelings toward one another, their values, attitudes, beliefs, and self-perceptions, were not always observable in the context of their countless interactions. More important, I verified my own belief that physical education teachers have to make informed decisions, taking into consideration these attitudes, beliefs, and self-perceptions. An incident that brought this to the forefront for me during my fieldwork was one that involved a Muslim boy in the grade 5 class. Himza was fasting as part of his family's religious rituals, and his parents asked that he be excused from physical education classes and any vigorous activity for ten or twelve days until the fasting period ended.

It was a Monday morning, and just as the equipment helpers were setting out a bin of basketballs and a pile of hula hoops on the floor, Himza walked up to Jill and told her that he was fasting that day and he wouldn't be able to participate. I heard her ask Himza if he could help her out by organizing some of the shelves and containers of equipment in the storage room for the first part of the class, and then he could observe the others, "You can help by organizing this shelf if you'd like. It would help us a lot." As she walked out of the equipment room back into the gym, another boy in the class ran up to her, basketball in hand, and asked her why Himza was not participating that day. I overheard her answer the boy by saying, "He is fasting today and he cannot exercise because he gets weak" (February 6, 1995). Although the room appeared quite orderly, Himza busily went about the task of straightening a few tangled skipping ropes, balls, and paddles, while Jill taught the rest of the class.

Jill said that this was a common request from a few of the families, and that in previous years she had been faced with the challenge of accommodating the needs of these students. She recalled several incidents during the previous year when a student was fasting and complained of headaches, lightheadedness, and feeling weak after any sort of vigorous activity. Jill was a white female, and although many of the students she taught were of different ethnic backgrounds, and some might have even been considered "at risk" in terms of their home life and socioeconomic status, she did not spend time trying to adopt or "fit in" to any of their cultural norms and practices. As in the case of Himza, she demonstrated respect for his cultural practices, and she tried to accommodate his needs as best as she could in her physical education program. Kellison (1995) advocates that having respect for students is still the most important quality a teacher can possess:

> The teacher's sincere concern for the kids and respect for them and their culture are far more important....Respect for the culture and especially for the kids is a key to accepting differences. The approach I have found most useful is to listen to my students. I begin to learn their theories and perceptions of life and school and physical activity and something of their culture. (p. 60-61)

Despite Jill's efforts to accommodate the students' cultural differences within her physical education program, she was still faced with the challenge of dealing with attitudes of racism involving a few of the boys in her class. An incident that shed light on this social problem involved Himza, one of the Muslim boys in the class, and Michael, a native boy. A modified basketball game in which Michael and Himza were opponents, became somewhat rough and the two boys involved began pushing each other as they went after the ball. Jill noticed the aggressiveness and stopped the play to reinforce the rules with them. Just as she was about to start the game again, the period came to an end and she asked the children to put away their equipment and line up at the door.

As the children walked toward the door, Himza looked at Michael and grumbled, "If you weren't such a stupid Indian," and moved over to the wall behind a couple of his classmates. Michael stood in line glaring at him, somewhat embarrassed, but said nothing. Jill went directly over to Himza and said, "You have a lot of nerve saying that, when we have made accommodations for you in this class." She looked at Michael and said, "And Michael, you are the better man for not saying anything." All of the children stood in silence, and after Jill told the group to return to their homeroom, she made her way over to Himza. She told him that his behavior was unacceptable, and that when problems arise in a game he should use other ways of handling them, rather than resorting to pushing and name calling.

After class Jill and I talked about the incident, and she told me that although Michael seemed to back off from the situation, she suspected that his style was to react after the fact, and she suspected that the problem would surface again, either in class or out on the playground. I saw her inform the homeroom teacher about the incident, who also happened to be the assistant principal, and she spoke to the principal, just so he was aware of the situation. Sure enough, a few days later on the playground, Michael lashed out at Himza during a football game at recess, and resulted in a fist fight. The two boys ended up in the office and the counselor was called in.

Although the racial name-calling was an isolated incident in Jill's physical education class, and involved only some of the children, the social dynamics within the group of students seemed to play a much more significant role in their learning than I had ever thought possible. More competitive situations seemed to give rise to instances of roughplay, aggressiveness, and in this case, the racial undertones that existed in the group.

Boys and Girls Are Good at Different Things

An interesting notion that seemed to surface from many of our conversations, was the way boys and girls viewed themselves, and each other. The ten year old boys and girls who participated in the study had already developed preconceived notions that boys and girls were good at different physical activities and, as many of them shared with me, "Boys and girls are good at doing different things...and they don't like to play the same things" (February 22, 1995).

I was surprised to find out that almost all of the boys I spoke with felt that gymnastics was an activity for girls. As mentioned in a previous section entitled "Novelty, Variety and Fun," the grade 5 physical education program at Chelsea Heights offered a wide variety of related gymnastic activities for the children to develop skills and participate in, activities such as stuntnastics, partner work, gymnic ball routines, large apparatus work, and rhythmic gymnastics (with ribbons). Both the boys and girls in the study felt that girls were "more flexible than boys" in terms of their physical ability to perform certain movements, like the splits. One of the boys told me that on "free choice" days the girls would take out the gymnastic equipment to play with, and the boys would take out more "sport-related" equipment:

Debbie: Those are scoops, does anybody play with those?

Aidan: Yeah, some girls. Some girls take out a whole bunch of stuff that we use for gymnastics.

Debbie: Oh, do they? What do the boys mostly take out?

Aidan: Floor hockey, soccer, volleyball, they take out one of the plastic balls and they throw it up high and it hits the roof and comes back down.

Debbie: That's interesting. How come the girls take out all of the gymnastic stuff?

Aidan: Not all of it. Just some of it.

Debbie: Why do you think that the boys don't?

Aidan: The boys are more into sports. Only some of the girls are into sports. (January 12, 1995)

I wondered how the boys had come to believe that gymnastics was "a girls' thing" especially when their teacher had offered so many different forms of gymnastics, and such a wide range of partner and group activities in which both boys and girls demonstrated success. An obvious discrepancy presented itself when Tim, who had told me in another conversation that girls were better at gymnastics, happened to demonstrate one of the best sequences in class one day with his group. Both Jill and I discussed this, and commented on the fact that many of the boys were equally as skilled, if not better, in some of the gymnastic activities they participated in. An observation Jill made after Tim's group demonstrated one of the best sequences in the class was, "They (the boys) are just as capable of doing good work, even though they think that they are not as good."

In her research focusing on student participation and interaction patterns, Griffin (1983) reported similar opinions among many boys at the middle school level, who reiterated comments like, "Gymnastics is a girls thing...Only wimps and fairies take gymnastics."(p. 74) In her study, only 16 of the 69 7th-grade boys elected to take gymnastics as an elective, with the other choice being flag football. Griffin found that when these boys did participate, three different participation styles emerged:

> 1. <u>Serious participation</u>-Voluntary participation characterized by on-task behavior, repeated attempts at skill performance, and asking for help from a teacher or another student;
> 2. <u>Frivolous participation</u>-Voluntary or required participation characterized by clowning, half-hearted attempts at skill performance, teasing or laughing at other's mistakes, and approaching the event as a non-serious novelty;
> 3. <u>Reluctant participation</u>-Required participation only or in rare instances, voluntary participation characterized by one trial attempts at skills. (p. 75)

Within the grade 5 physical education class, all three styles were represented in some form or another by the boys, and an interesting phenomenon was that the girls were very much aware of the different levels of involvement that the boys displayed. Some of the girls told me that one of the reasons the boys did not do as well in gymnastics was that they spent too much "goofing around":

Debbie: So do you think it boils down to ability, or do you think it boils down to being able to work with others?

Christi: Getting along....The boys don't like gymnastics. Some do, like Tim.

Maria: Yeah, 'cause let's say she puts Jeff or Eddie in our group they only get our group in trouble or something. (February 16, 1995)

The notion that some of the boys did not take gymnastics seriously was apparent to Maria ,who pointed out, "Some of the boys waste class time and they don't do a very good job, and then they don't have very much to show." The notion that the poor performance of some of the boys in gymnastics was related to their lack of effort was supported by all of the girls in the study. The words of one of the girls best illustrates this point: "I think that the boys could do the same amount as the girls, if they tried, but they think that it's a girls sport more or less."

During one of the many lessons I observed in gymnastics, I recall seeing the same group of boys having difficulty cooperating in their group and coming to a consensus on what they were going to do for their sequence work. Even as the teacher moved around the gym and offered assistance and redefined expectations, they were still off task. I wondered again, was the task too difficult? Or perhaps the expectations set by the teacher were too easy, and maybe the boys did not feel accountable to the extent that they were motivated to produce a sequence demonstrating some degree of quality. Or was this an issue of peer pressure or a lack of personal and social responsibility? The teacher always set the expectations for the group work, and in addition to asking all of the students to demonstrate at the end of each lesson, she occasionally videotaped their sequences.

The young girls in the study also commented on the boys' behavior in dance lessons. They said that the boys tried to "be cool" in dance classes, and they would add what they called "rap" movements to their dances in order to feel comfortable. The morning we talked about this, the girls began to imitate the boys during our interview. I can still see them as they got up from their chairs, and mimicked the way the boys danced in the gym! Griffin (1983) noted that, "Boys participated in 'girl appropriate' events either frivolously or reluctantly, thus limiting their own opportunity to learn by approaching many events in a non-serious way" (p.83). In a subsequent interview with both the girls and boys, we discussed once again the notion of preferences, and the boys made comments like, "I hate dancing" or "We think that it's kind of sissy, like this... it's like for dweebs or something" (April 13, 1995).

Discouraging remarks came from all three boys, whose comments reflect how they felt about the skill level and preferences of girls:

Debbie: You mentioned before that you thought some individuals don't like aggressive games, they like something a bit calmer, where there is little chance of rough play.

Daniel: Like Valerie, she only likes to do something like gymnastics.

Tim: Yeah, you don't have to sweat.

Aidan: Yeah, you don't have to get contact.

Debbie: Do you think that there is a difference then between how girls and boys play, and what they prefer to do?

Tim: OH, YEAH! But then some of the girls are what I would say "sissy," they don't play what I say is good sports. Usually they go around like Marina, afraid of the ball. Some girls are weaklings. They can't stand some rough stuff, like Terra, she plays soccer but like she kicks the ball and goes 'ouch.'

Aidan: Same thing as Jeff.

Debbie: So it's not just the girls?

Tim: Terra was different though. You know how you were like passing to me, like a powerball....It was fast!

Daniel: When Steven was near the net and he like kicked it hard and it hit Terra right in the back, and she just went down. Like anybody could have taken it... well she should have stayed with it. (February 8, 1995)

From the boys' perspective, only the "active girls" (as Daniel phrased it) were good at playing sport related activities like soccer and basketball. Even the girls agreed that the reason only a few of them played soccer outside at recess each day was that the game was too rough. A couple of the boys even went so far as to say that girls participate with boys just in order to be more like them. The following conversation illustrates how they saw physical activity as a means for women to achieve equality with men in the world:

Debbie: Do you think that boys and girls like similar activities, at this age, or do you think that girls like different things and boys like different things?

Aidan: Boys and girls like different things except for soccer cause most of the girls play soccer.

Tim: Yeah, but some things like ladies are trying to be like men, like ladies are equal to men that means like ladies have to do the hard work, right? Right. So if they do that then they should be able to play the things that men are playing, right? (February 22, 1995)

What became distinctly clear as I listened to both boys and girls about their physical activity preferences was that they had definite ideas of what activities were more suited to girls, and to boys. I wondered where their attitudes originated from. What caused these boys to think that activities such as dance and gymnastics are "girl's" activities, and that team games or sports are for boys? Perhaps the attitudes of parents, the descriptions of sport heroes, and the impact of television in the world of sport, have provided powerful hidden messages about the kinds of activities girls and boys should get involved in. I wondered about the influence of the physical education program at Chelsea Heights. Was it influencing the attitudes of these ten year old children regarding gender and physical activity, or was it simply challenging their already existing beliefs about what physical activities girls and boys can participate in?

Boys and Girls Playing Together

Actions speak louder than words, and I came to realize the truth to this tenet when I watched how girls and boys played together in their physical education classes, intramural activities, and recess games. Although I would never assume that all girls participate in team activities in the same way, I witnessed many instances of what Griffin (1984) would define as "non assertive behavior" in the participation patterns of the ten-year-old girls I observed.

Over the course of my fieldwork I had the opportunity to watch several of the intramural games that many of the grade 5 and 6 children participated in over the lunch hour. Each team had approximately nine or ten players and an equal representation of boys and girls from both grade levels. With nine or ten players a side, each team had to pass the ball three times before they could play the ball to the opponent's side. As most of the points were awarded for team involvement and effort, fairplay and good sportsmanship, as opposed to winning, it was interesting to see the children make an effort to pass the ball to different players on their team. The players tended to cheer each other on, and support their teammates. One noon hour, I had the opportunity to watch a semi-final game involving the "Red Dogs" and the "Wolverines." Hoping to get a good view of both teams playing, I sat adjacent to the court at the center line. The Red Dogs were leading 11 to 4, and as they passed the ball over the net to the

Wolverines, a boy playing the position near the front of the net caught the ball and turned as if he were going to pass it to the girl next to him. Just as he was about to pass the ball to her within his 3 second time limit, I heard the girl say, "No! Not to me! Not to me!" He then turned quickly to a boy in the second row behind him, and passed the ball and the play continued.

I was quite surprised by her reaction, and I wondered why she had chosen not to take the pass, especially when her team had the ball in control, and she was in a perfect position to receive a pass. Anxious to hear the children's perspective on the game, we met the following morning for an interview. Their conversation focused on the game the day before, and they were extremely excited about the comeback of the Wolverines, who ended up winning, 15 to 8. I shared with them my observations of the grade 6 girl who gave away her opportunity to play the ball, and I asked them why she might have behaved the way she did. The following dialogue reflects the opinions of the boys and the girls regarding the incident:

Debbie: O.K. Aidan, there was a girl on your team who was in the front row, and the boy next to her received the serve. He caught the ball and turned to her to pass. She was looking right at him and said, "Not to me, not to me!"

Maria: That was Hayley.

Debbie: Why do you think she did that in that situation?

Aidan: 'Cause I think she wanted to throw it over last.

Tim: Yeah, she thought she would score.

Christi: No. No, I don't think so, I think that she was afraid that she'd drop it.

Jennifer: Yeah, the second person was going to throw it to her. She's going, 'Not to me! Not to me' 'cause

> sometimes she thinks that she will drop it.
> (February 15, 1995)

While all three of the girls I spoke to doubted the self confidence of the girl in the game, Tim and Aidan felt that the girl declined the pass in hopes that she could be the one to receive the ball last, and pass it back over the net. Griffin (1984) would describe the young girl's behavior as an example of "Giving Away" (p.35). She defines this category of girls' participation styles as one which includes "immediately passing to boys upon getting the ball, rarely taking a shot on goal when in a position to do so, or declining the opportunity to run for a touchdown, go out for a pass, or play a high interaction position" (p.35). In another study, Solomons (1977) discovered that even when girls were included in game play, they tended to give away scoring opportunities to boys. When I asked the group why Hayley would choose to play newcombe ball if she were afraid to receive the ball, Christi told me, "She wants to be part of intramurals, she's just afraid she'll make a mistake." (February 15, 1995)

The most discouraging discovery for me was that the boys and girls I listened to spoke often about making accommodations for girls in game situations in order to make the games "more equal" (February 22, 1995). As Christi and Maria reasoned, "Like in newcombe ball, the people, mostly the girls who can't throw that well, like Susan and Valerie, well, we let them move up." (February 1, 1995) In one of my interviews with only the boys present, they were quick to share the fact that they "allowed" the girls to play by different rules in soccer, even when they were playing together on mixed teams:

Debbie: You told me that out on the soccer field, that actually the girls had different rules that they could push the boys during the game: why do you do that?

Daniel: Well, because I like that because then its harder to beat them. It's always easy for me to beat the girls, except Christi, cause she is so good. So through her legs I just try and get around her then she knocks me over, then its harder for me to get around.

Debbie: So pushing makes it more difficult for you?

Daniel: Yeah, we need challenges!

Tim: That's what equal is. They push us and we can knock them down!

Aidan: Girls can hit boys, but boys can't hit girls!

Debbie: Who made up that rule?

All: BOYS!!

Debbie: Why did boys make up that rule?

Tim: 'Cause they were coo-coo. 'Cause they say we have to be a gentlemen, and girls can take advantage of us in this world, and they can hit boys. I never made the rule, those boys long time ago that are dead.

Debbie: Do the girls actually push?

Daniel: Yeah, except I just get surrounded by four girls at one time.

Aidan: We stop the ball and they push, and then we keep on going and they push. Like Christi, when I got up she just knocked me right back down.

Tim: Yeah, that's how they get the ball. (February 22, 1995)

From the boys' perspective, the girls were also very quick to blame the boys for any instances of rough play in a game situation. As Daniel described:

> Yeah, and like whenever we play soccer and one of the girls gets hurt then she blames it on a boy. If Jamie got hurt or like any of the boys got hurt, they just like sit aside for a little while and then they start playing again. They don't blame anybody like the girls do. They say, 'It's your fault that I fell.' (February 22, 1995)

The notion of having special privileges was not obvious to the girls themselves. The girls felt that the boys were only interested in having them on their team in physical education classes or during recess play, when they were playing well. Christi and Maria's reference to an incident that occurred on the playground illustrates this point:

> Christi: Like Jeff, like he says that the girls suck. Now we don't want them on our team, we can have five players against the rest of you 'cause you have all the girls. Anyway, and we always end up winning, and then they say, 'Oh let's have the girls back.
>
> Maria: Like one time they asked me and Leah to go to their team just because they were starting to lose, on that team. Me and Leah said, 'No we help them.'(February 1, 1995)

In my observations of the girls and boys playing together on the playground, I witnessed interactions like this one on several occasions. Although they played on mixed teams, the boys appeared to get angry when the girls were scoring and playing well. The girls basically ignored the comments, and sometimes spoke out against the boys' wishes to rearrange the teams. Unlike the adolescent girls studied by Griffin (1983) and Humbert (1995), the ten-year-old girls

I observed were not yet as socially concerned about how the boys viewed them. They spoke up to voice their opinions when they had to. Like Griffin (1983), however, I noticed that the girls rarely hassled the boys during physical education classes, or on the playground.

Conclusion

In listening to what these six ten-year-olds had to say about their own abilities and their relationships with others in the school setting, I came to realize that their participation in physical activity opened doors to a social world which was more than simply the milieu in which the curriculum was taught, it *was* the curriculum. It was how these children came to understand and practice their own values, morals, and interactions with others who they participated with. After observing them share ideas with one another, create games and rules, demonstrate what they had learned, and relate to their teachers, I found myself reflecting on Nel Noddings' (1992) view that physical activity programs are holistic in nature and have the potential to educate in that way:

> The physical self is only part of the self. We must be concerned also with the emotional, spiritual, and intellectual self, and clearly these are not discrete. We separate and label them for convenience in discussion but it may be a mistake to separate them sharply in curriculum. (p.48)

The children in the study were adamant about the fact that physical activities had to be fair, and that rules regarding play had to exist for a reason and make sense. These ten year olds also demonstrated that they are capable of creating rules in game situations and enjoy opportunities to do so.

The boys and girls in the study recognized the efforts of their own physical education teacher in debriefing moral dilemmas, and in helping them solve problems arising in group situations. They did feel, however, that some teachers and instructors involved in teaching and supervising school programs enforced rules giving little consideration or respect to them as *individuals* who had feelings. In other words, they did not model or live out what Hellison (1995) would label as the TPSR Model, or the Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility Model. The six children did not appreciate instructors who *talked* about the importance of getting along with others, and showing respect for others, when they themselves did not *demonstrate* those qualities in their interactions with the students.

The children viewed being successful in physical education as the ability to participate cooperatively with others in different physical activities. They enjoyed group challenges, and they experienced much pride and satisfaction when their efforts were recognized. They also demonstrated that they were able to transfer social skills which they had learned in other contexts to the physical education setting.

Although they made efforts to affiliate themselves with their peers, there were various cultural influences that affected the participation of some children in physical education classes. Religious beliefs and rituals had to be respected by the teacher, and explained to other children in the classroom setting. Many different interactions and participation styles (Griffin, 1983) existed amongst girls and boys, and, as Griffin states, on some occasions "the boys tended to limit each others opportunities to learn by clowning" (p.83). A few made fun or trivialized what they saw as "girl appropriate" activities such as different forms of gymnastics, or dance. They defined gymnastics as a "girls' thing" and they said that girls prefer calmer activities, while boys prefer rougher games. Girls also gave away opportunities to play within game situations, and in games that the children created on the playground, separate rules were sometimes established for girls.

As I observed the ten-year-olds at Chelsea Heights in their physical education classes, and I listened to their social interactions with friends, classmates, and teachers, I came to understand that they did not cling to a narrow view of the "physical self" (Hellison, 1995, p.1). Rather, physical education classes, and other times in which they could be physically active throughout the school day, gave them opportunities to demonstrate and extend their personal and social qualities.

CHAPTER SIX

INSIGHTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The experiences and perspectives of the six ten-year-old children I spent time with at Chelsea Heights have provided important and valuable insights about how they viewed and participated in physical activity. Like many teachers of elementary aged children, I have never really critically examined my own teaching from the perspectives of the children or "the consumers" (Graham, 1995, p. 364) within my care. Part of the reason I never attempted to examine my own teaching of physical education in this way is that it requires a lot of time to observe, talk to, listen to, and take time to get to know students. I must also admit that my understanding of my own teaching was limited to concentrating on the 'written' curriculum in physical education and the development of my own teaching behaviors. Perhaps I was consumed with the challenge of trying to get the children to meet the goals of the program rather than trying to design a program that met the needs of the students. I now realize that my uncertainty regarding the physical education curriculum, and whether it contributes to the development of positive attitudes toward physical activity, relates to the fact that I really did not consider the interests of children and how they view physical activity. Graham (1995) states that research in physical education focusing on the child's perspective reminds us that students have different needs and interests. He states that,

> Good teachers already know this and try to reflect it in their programs. Hopefully, what will be helpful to these teachers are new insights and perspectives that can be gained only from spending considerable amounts of time listening to, observing, and interacting with students in nonteaching roles. Poor teachers on the other hand, are probably aware that some students are different, but somehow that seems to be the students' problem. The motto of these programs might be 'one

> size fits all'--the students are expected to fit the program and not vice versa. (p. 479)

Graham also points out that most physical educators would likely agree that one of the primary purposes of physical education is to guide youngsters in the process of becoming physically active for a lifetime. If we want to be successful in achieving this outcome, we will have to have a clear understanding of what practices in teaching physical education are best suited to meeting the needs and interests of children. As I listened to and observed the ten-year-old children in the study, I became more aware of the significance of their perspective in coming to better understand the teaching/learning relationship. How they view the world and their physical activity experiences can provide physical educators and classroom teachers with valuable insights as to what are appropriate and inappropriate practices in within school physical education programs and community physical activity programs.

During my experiences with the children. I have thought often about the current practices in teaching physical education in elementary schools. Many classroom teachers are faced with teaching physical education, and have few or no undergraduate courses in the discipline. Unfortunately, many do not even value physical education, and this is evident in that they spend very little time, if any, planning their physical education programs and assessing student progress. A more discouraging thought is that very few elementary teachers in Alberta devote as much professional development time to the area of physical education as they do in other subjects (Serfaty and Lumby, 1995). The opportunity to spend time with the six ten-year-old children at Chelsea Heights has also given me the opportunity to gain insights into Jill's role as a physical education specialist and her influence in designing the school physical education program. Jill made yearly and daily plans to guide her in her teaching, she accessed many facilities within the community, and she demonstrated leadership within the school by serving as a resource person. My experience working as a physical education consultant in 64 elementary schools over the past ten years has made me realize that in many schools where physical education is not valued, children lose out on participating in a well planned program where they experience a wide variety of activities. My concern for sound educational practices in physical education programs for young children has led me to refocus my thinking on life in the gymnasium and some very practical questions. How can teachers, and community recreation leaders, design and implement physical education and physical activity programs to better meet the needs of ten-year-old children, so that they will have developmentally appropriate experiences that encourage positive attitudes toward physical activity? And how can parents work with the school to support their children's physical activity interests? How can parents encourage their children to be physically active during their leisure time?

Implications for Parents

In listening to the six children at Chelsea Heights share their views about physical activity, and in learning more about their leisure time activities, I would encourage parents of other ten-year-old children to consider the following recommendations.

1. The children I spoke with were spending much of their leisure time in front of the television screen. They were watching between 18 and 22 hours of TV every week, not including the time they spend playing video games and using personal computers. Unfortunately, many of the television programs they were watching depict violence and aggression, and children seem to idolize many of the characters depicting these traits. The Canadian Institute of Child Health (1994), in their report on the health status of Canada's children, states that children are more aware of violence in the home, in the community and around the world "Television in virtually every home is filled with stories of violent acts, both real and make-believe. Children and youth are growing up in a society permeated by fear and violence" (p.xvii). I have also learned that many of the children were watching TV after school because they were not allowed to go outside and play until their parents arrive home from work. According to the Canadian Council on Social Development (1993), over one-fifth of the children in Alberta aged 6 to 12 years spend time alone each day while parents are working or studying. Many of the children in the study spoke

about coming home from school and having the added responsibility of supervising younger siblings. When the children do play outside, they tend to play in the spaces where they feel safest such as in their yards and driveways, as most of the children are not permitted to go to nearby parks or playgrounds without adult supervision. The many photographs taken by the children depicting images of TV monitors, computer screens, video games, and street hockey remain foremost in my mind. Although Torrance (1991) indicates in the Campbell Survey Results For Youth that heavy and light TV watchers have almost identical profiles in terms of time spent on physical activity, time watching TV is highest in the 10 -14 age group, and drops steadily thereafter. If children are spending 18-22 hours per week watching television, are sedentary for most of the school day, and then come home to watch TV and sit to do homework assignments, then when do they have time to be active? Parents must become more aware of their children's activity levels, and encourage them to play and be active. They ought to supervise them during after school hours, or provide supervision, so that they can encourage more opportunities to be physically active.

Parents also need to be aware that in some cases children's participation in physical activities with other neighborhood children is limited because of roughplay, aggression, and bullying. Many of the children told me that they did not play with other children on their street because they "were too rough." On many occasions the youngsters spoke about feeling unsafe playing with certain children in their neighborhoods. Parents may need to continue support and efforts that work towards developing safe communities, so that our youth feel safe in local parks and play areas. Children need safe environments to play in, and they need to feel secure in order to be physically active.

Although there are many social influences that seem to affect children's participation in physical activity, parental encouragement is still a powerful predictor of a child's participation as an adult (Fox and Biddle, 1988b). In a recent study examining parental and psychological influences on children's attraction to physical activity, Brustad (1993) found that higher parental encouragement was linked to greater perceived competence by children. The findings of this study were consistent with Eccles and Harold (1991) who found that children's motivation-related cognitions, such as perceived competence, are shaped by parental interaction characteristics. Brustad's study showed that parents who express greater encouragement are more likely to provide opportunities for children to be physically active and to communicate higher expectancies of their child's ability in physical activity. Fox and Biddle (1988b) state that, "Parents are responsible for the child's early skill development and also initiation into recreational physical activity habits and attitudes" (p.111). In listening to these ten year olds, I have learned that having the support of parents and a sense of security while participating in leisure time activities is important and essential for children's continued participation.

2. The ten-year-olds in this study wanted opportunities for input into their leisure time activities. Parents of children this age might take time to ask their children what they like and dislike. Too often, parents assume that children this age are not capable of having choices and making decisions about how they will spend their leisure time. Many of the children in the study spoke about participating in certain sports and community progams because their parents wanted them to. They stressed that they would like to have choices, and some input as to what activities they would participate in. If parents took the time to ask their children what they are interested in, they might be better able to provide opportunities for physical activities that appeal to the interests of the child.

Providing that there is a strong physical education program at the school, parents should communicate with teachers to find out about the kinds of physical activities their children show an interest in within the school program. I believe that it is imperative for physical education teachers and classroom teachers to share this information with parents, and to make this an integral part of the student's progress report. If parents and teachers worked together to support the child's interests, and encouraged children to play an active role in determining what activities they would participate in, then physical education programs might be more relevant to the child, and have a greater influence in shaping the development of lifelong positive attitudes.

Implications for Teachers

Based on my research of how six ten-year-old children perceive physical activity, and on my experiences with these six children at Chelsea Heights, teachers and community instructors involved in the planning and implementation of physical education programs for ten-year-old children may want to consider the following recommendations.

1. A basic requirement for children in the classroom setting is that they need to feel safe while participating with their peers in physical activities. The children in the study spoke about not wanting to play with certain classmates threatened their safety by playing rough and displaying behaviors that were disruptive to others in the class. Maslow (1987) and Katz (1977) emphasize that, in order to learn, children need to feel secure about themselves and others around them. Both researchers support the view that the child's sense of psychological security is a need which is basic to engaging in higher levels of thinking, achievement, or independence.

In learning physical skills, children may be under a great deal of tension, they may be afraid and insecure. It is important that teachers be aware of this and not force them to do tasks they do not feel comfortable doing. Instances of rough play, teasing, and rejection also create tension in the classroom, and it becomes difficult to establish any sense of trust or community with students in these circumstances. Elementary teachers can work with children to establish expectations for behavior when children are practicing and performing skills. Teachers must establish management routines so that children realize the importance of personal safety, and personal and social responsibility when participating with others. Teachers need to talk about these strategies and the rationale behind them with children, model the strategies, and reinforce positive behaviors with their students. When children begin to view themselves as worthy, responsible, and competent, they will act that way in physical education classes.

2. One of the most important factors that I discovered which influenced the children's liking for an activity was the degree of "self-determination " (Deci, 1992, p.44) or degree of choice that they perceived to have in relation to the activity. The ten-year-olds in the study valued the

opportunity to make choices within their physical education program, and they are capable of creating rules and games, and making decisions about equipment and how they will use it. Elementary teachers may want to provide opportunities for children to make decisions in physical education classes, and they need to recognize that children's interest, motivation, and self-esteem is linked to the degree of self-determination children feel in relation to that activity.

Teachers need to go beyond "command style teaching" (Mosston, 1972) and incorporate other teaching styles such as reciprocal teaching, problem solving, and cooperative learning. Skill teaching needs to encourage children to think about how they are performing a skill, instead of simply performing task after task set by the teacher. Mosston suggests that the opportunity for children to make decisions within a command style context are almost non-existent "since all decisions are made by the teacher, and decisions require cognitive activity, the opportunity for growth along the intellectual channel is curtailed" (p. 42). Teachers need to engage children in different task styles so that children can make decisions about the performance of tasks and specific skills.

Whether their decisions relate to which actions they will include in a gymnastic sequence, how fast they will dribble a ball, or how far away they will stand from a target, ten-year-olds value opportunities to make decisions when participating. In terms of curricular applications, if our goal is to encourage children to make lifelong decisions about physical activity, then it should only make sense that we involve children in decision making processes within our physical education programs. Kohn (1993) advocates the importance of involving children in decision making experiences:

> It goes without saying that a 16-year-old can approach a decision in a more sophisticated way than a 6-year-old and therefore can usually be entrusted with more responsibility. But this fact is sometimes used to justify preventing younger children from making choices that are well within their capabilities. Moreover, the idea that we must wait until children are mature enough to handle responsibilities may set up a vicious circle; after all it is experience with decision-

> making that helps children become capable of handling them. (p.14)

Teachers of elementary children need to recognize that there is a connection between physical and intellectual development, and that if we only focus on the child's performance in physical education classes then we might not be adequately preparing them to make decisions regarding physical activity as they move into adolescence.

Educational research in the area of motivation and self-esteem (Deci, 1992; Deci, Neslek, and Sheinman, 1991; Kohn, 1994) indicates that providing children with choices also increases their self-esteem. Alfie Kohn (1994) says it best by stating:

> We ought to work *with* students rather than doing things (Old School things or New Age things) *to* them. Contrary to what some in the self-esteem movement seem to hold, students do not come to believe they are important, valued, and capable just because they are told that this is so or made to recite it. On the other hand, they are even less likely to feel that way when they are compelled to follow directions all day. Students acquire a sense of significance from doing significant things, from being active participants in their own education. (p.282)

For this reason, I believe that it is imperative for elementary teachers to consider incorporating decision making opportunities within the context of teaching physical education, as it plays a critical role in the child's motivation to be physically active, and in the formation of their self-esteem.

3. The ten-year-olds in this study equated fun with participating in a wide variety of activities within their physical education program. Physical education programs for elementary aged children should be characterized by a variety of units that allow children to learn and practice a wide range of physical skills.

Teachers should take this into consideration in designing their yearly plans, so that children are not faced with long, drawn-out units in any one of the program dimensions within the physical education curriculum. Teachers often limit the experiences of their students by offering a small number of sport related activities that have been traditionally offered in the school program. Physical education equipment and resources should be suited to children at the elementary level, and teachers should keep themselves informed and abreast of new activities and resources that are developmentally appropriate for children. They should plan well sequenced and varied programs to ensure that children will have opportunities to learn new skills and games, and be exposed to a variety of activities.

4. Ten-year-old children need to participate in activities which *challenge* their abilities. Rather than being "skill-drilled" in physical education classes, they need opportunities to practice skills within the context of modified games and activities. The children in the study frequently spoke about the importance of being challenged within physical education classes. They found game-like situations to be more relevant and challenging in practicing motor skills, compared to individual skill practice. Deci (1992) emphasizes that tasks become interesting to the individual when they are perceived to be "optimally challenging, in other words, that are not fully mastered but are not so discrepant as to be frustrating" (p.51). Physical education teachers of children this age should make an effort to make skill practice more challenging by gradually increasing the complexity of tasks from simple to more complex (Petersen, 1992).

In teaching games, teachers may want to consider giving more attention to developing the concept of opponent or defender (Graham, 1992) and they need to increase the complexity of game situations instead of moving from individual skill practice directly into large group games. Seefeldt (1979) and Petersen (1992) support the idea that small group games help children through a transition into understanding and combining fundamental skills in large game situations. Teachers of this age group should realize that children "are not miniature adults" (Petersen, 1992) and they need to practice skills at increasing levels of difficulty. She alludes to the fact that teachers frequently jump very quickly from individual skill practice to the full version of the game, or a large group modification (such as line soccer). She outlines the benefits of small group progressions by stating,

> Small group games (two versus two, three versus three, four versus four) are developmentally appropriate because they allow students many more practice opportunities than large group games and do so without emphasizing scoring, strategies, rules, and positions that complicate large group games...Small group games allow students to think about similarities with drills and tc focus on their skills, not on what position they're playing or what they need to do if the ball goes over their own goal line. (p.38)

From the six children's perspective, small group games provided them with more opportunities to be actively involved, have fun and to practice skills in a challenging context. I would suggest that teachers consider the importance of *optimal challenge* in relation to motivating children to participate in physical activities, and by doing so they will set expectations for students that encourage them to "stretch" (Deci, 1992) their capacities and skill level.

5. From these children, I have also learned that there are many social dynamics that affect their learning in physical education. During our discussions they told me that "getting along with others" was crucial to their participation. They perceived cooperation to be one of the most important indicators of their success in physical education. They spoke often of the importance of working cooperatively with others in order to accomplish group challenges and physical tasks. The physical education teacher at Chelsea Heights held the children accountable for their behavior toward others. She modeled positive behaviors and respect for the students, and she reinforced these behaviors with the children during physical education classes.

The voices of children have prompted me to take a more critical look at Placek's study (1983) focusing on teachers' conceptions of success in physical education. She found that the teachers in her study "were more concerned about student behavior than about transmitting a body of knowledge" (p.49). Results of her research indicated that teachers concentrated on keeping students "busy, happy, and good" (p.55), rather than focusing on student learning. From the children's perspective, I have learned that the ability to get along with others is much more than a prerequisite for their participation and learning. It is part of learning, it is part of the physical education curriculum. Many physical activities require teamplay and social interaction with others. Activities become the social context in which the children learn and develop physical and social skills. The children repeatedly told me that they enjoyed group challenges and participating with their classmates. From the children's perspective, success in physical education classes was defined by how well they could cooperate with peers while participating.

The six ten-year-olds involved in the study were also very concerned about the notion of fairness in relation to participating in physical activity. They viewed fairness as being more important than winning, and they are very capable of creating rules to construct fair contexts for playing, both on the playground and in physical education classes. These children are at an age when they are becoming less egocentric and more aware of their peers, and they are very sensitive to how others view them. Their moral reasoning is maturing in relation to the development of higher cognitive levels of thinking (DeVries and Kohlberg, 1987). Within the physical education classroom, these children recognized the efforts of their own teacher in debriefing moral dilemmas, and they viewed her as being a powerful role model and advocate for fairness.

Within this study the children expected teachers to use fair grouping strategies, listen with respect to their concerns, and model fairness in their own teaching. Within the context of physical education, elementary teachers may want to include physical activities that promote mutual dependency (Hellison and Templin, 1991) such as outdoor pursuits or adventure education and cooperative games. They may purposefully model and reinforce moral values such as "playing fair and winning graciously" (Hellison and Templin, 1991, p.49), and, as moral dilemmas surface within the context of physical activity, teachers may want to use these real life situations to engage children in problem solving and moral reasoning. The six children I worked with respected teachers who valued fairness, and they did not appreciate teachers who neglected to live out characteristics of what Hellison (1995) would label as the TPSR Model (Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility Model). Considering this, teachers may consider using children's authentic experiences within the classroom and school community to promote moral education and develop self-esteem. Rather than using 'canned' self-esteem and fairplay programs that tend to focus on the self or the individual (Kohn, 1994, p.277), we need to recognize that there are endless possibilities within the context of physical education to promote the personal-social development of children.

6. From my observations of the six grade five children at Chelsea Heights, I learned that the children we teach are not all alike. They come to us from different cultural backgrounds and from different worlds, and sometimes their beliefs are very different. From my experiences with these children, I learned that religious beliefs and cultural practices such as fasting can affect a child's participation in physical activity. Teachers should be sensitive to the cultural beliefs of the children they teach, and accommodate children's cultural differences within the physical education program. When appropriate, they may want to plan alternate activities for these students, in their effort to teach or demonstrate tolerance and acceptance of cultural differences. Hellison and Templin (1991) suggest that doing this "will show an interpersonal sensitivity to students" (p.33). They quote Swisher and Swisher (1986, p.39) who support this view by saying, "What teachers can do is to accept a culturally flexible view about students for whom they are responsible. Accept students without conditions and communicate that differences are not problems to be remediated." Since teachers are significant role models for young children, they might assess their own beliefs about multiculturalism, and how their beliefs relate to curriculum and instruction in the context of physical education.

7. The ten-year-olds in this study held definite views of their own competence levels, and they were very much aware of how their own skill level compared to that of their peers. However, I learned that these children also defined success in physical education in terms of how they mastered skills, rather than in terms of performing better than others. This finding is significant, as it implies that teachers need to encourage a mastery view of learning at the elementary level, and they need to provide

experiences that allow children to perceive their efforts as being valuable in reaching their goals. If teachers use strategies that promote performance norms and social comparisons, they may be creating an unhealthy atmosphere in the class that fosters competition. These six children enjoyed activities that challenged their abilities, and as Csikszentmihalyi (1990) suggests, "flow" occurs when the opportunities for action are in balance with the individual's skills. Teachers should accommodate a variety of skill levels within the context of their physical education teaching, and they should not expect identical performances from all children.

From the ten-year-old children at Chelsea Heights, I discovered that these boys and girls viewed each other as having different competency levels in relation to certain activities. The boys viewed gymnastics as a "girls' thing" and felt that girls preferred "calmer" activities, while boys prefer rougher games, or sports. Also, in my observations of the children in extra-curricular activities, and within the physical education program, I learned that the boys and girls differed in their participation styles. I observed girls giving away opportunities to play within game situations, and I witnessed boys making accommodations for girls in group games. The children told me that separate rules were often established for girls when the children played on mixed teams. Both boys and girls told me that they preferred to participate with other children of the same sex in activities such as gymnastics and dance. Teachers may want to consider these preferences when grouping students for instruction in these activities. They need to create a comfortable atmosphere for both boys and girls to participate in. Teachers also should be sensitive to how their own students, both boys and girls, perceive one another and how they play together. As many boys and girls at this age still seem to enjoy playing together in certain activities such as small and large group games, teachers should provide more of these opportunities in order to foster and maintain mutual respect amongst boys and girls. This is critical as these children move toward adolescence.

Creating Meaningful Experiences for Children: Considerations for School Administrators and Teacher Educators

It is imperative that school administrators and teacher educators consider the insights highlighted in this study, as they both play a major role in the education and professional development of elementary teachers faced with the challenge of teaching physical education. School administrators might consider the perspectives of ten-year-olds, and provide for more time in the school timetable for physical activity. They might create school policies that encourage and promote physical activity, and do not discourage it (e.g. discipline policies that deprive children of physical education and recess). They also need to be able to monitor and evaluate school physical edcuation programs to ensure that they are meeting the needs of children in their schools. More importantly, elementary school administrators might value the perspectives of ten-year-old children so that they know what to strive for in their school physical education programs, and recognize appropriate practice when it exists.

Chelsea Heights was one of the few elementary schools within a larger school district to have a teacher on staff designated to teaching physical education; and unlike most specialists, Jill was not able to spend all of her instructional time teaching physical education. As the trend in most elementary schools in Alberta is for the *classroom* teacher to teach physical education (Serfaty and Lumby, 1995), and since many have few or no preservice courses in the area, it is imperative that school administrators consider the recommendations from this study in determining whether or not a teacher is capable of teaching physical education to meet the needs of children. As I stood next to the principal one day in the gym, while watching an intramural game, he asked me how my research was going, and we began to talk about Jill's expertise and enthusiasm and how the students she taught seemed to benefit from her program. Near the end of our conversation he looked at me over the top of his glasses and remarked, "I really should have her teach more phys ed, shouldn't I?" The quality of Jill's program was obvious, and well known in the school. The principal did not have to look far to see that Jill was a resource person, a teacher who assisted other teachers with program planning, booking facilities, and acquiring resources. She provided leadership and direction in organizing school-wide activities, and she was a role model in demonstrating the importance of physical activity for all. It was natural for other teachers to seek her advice, and share their successes with her. As one teacher at Chelsea Heights worded it, "She's a spark in our school."

Jill, too, spoke about the support she received from her principal, "He always asks me if I need anything, and when I make requests about buying something new for the kids, he asks for my rationale, or when I want to plan something, like a special event, he's pretty good about it" (April 23, 1995). Jill's principal also provided financial support for Jill to attend provincial conferences and workshops relating to physical education, and supported her efforts to offer professional development to other teachers in the school and greater school district. Although Jill told me on several occasions that she wanted to assume more teaching of physical education in the school, she emphasized that one of the drawbacks of teaching only physical education, was that she would not be able to integrate concepts with other subject areas. As the present Alberta Education Guide to Education *ECS to Grade 9 Handbook* (1994) advocates an integrated approach to learning, this is a dilemma for most administrators staffing their schools. However, by examining Jill's role in the school, I witnessed how the entire school benefited from her expertise. Perhaps elementary school administrators need to become more aware of the benefits of having teachers on staff who have expertise in physical education, and that they realize these teachers can provide leadership within the school setting (Serfaty and Lumby, 1995). Administrators might have a greater chance of breaking away from supporting traditional practices in physical education that are better suited to the needs of teachers than students.

Teacher educators, too, need to consider the issues and views held by the children in this study in relation to physical activity. Our future teachers will be better prepared to offer developmentally appropriate physical education programs if they respect children enough to listen to their perspectives in relation to physical activity. Teacher education programs need to be more effective in bridging traditional activity courses with child development theories and learning strategies, so that teachers have a better understanding of how young children learn, and of what thinking and learning strategies need to be taught in the context of physical education. From the children, I have learned that as educators, we have much to learn from listening to the child's perspective, and from the importance they place on enjoyment in learning. The importance of enjoyment in learning is a topic that Mesic (1993) addresses in her magazine article, "The Pleasure Principle". She quotes Csikszentmihalyi by stating:

> In all academic subjects there is a problem with the quality of the teaching and the course work. 'We have these curricula--colorless, everything taught the same way,' says the professor, 'and it's all just noise if the kid does not make an emotional connection.' (p.115)

If teachers, administrators, and teacher educators listen closely to the voices of children, and consider their perspectives in relation to physical activity, then it might be possible for all involved to create curricular experiences that ensure success and enjoyment for children, and provide a basis for the development of lifelong attitudes towards continued participation in physical activity.

Conclusion

The five months I spent with the six ten-year-old children at Chelsea Heights has certainly changed my perspective on children, and my understanding of how they participate in physical activity. Watching them on the playground and in physical education classes, and listening to their perspectives, has given me the opportunity to understand the nature of their physical activity experiences, and the social contexts in which they find themselves.

As a teacher, I know that my views on teaching physical education have changed as a result of working with these children, and I believe that my future curricular decisions will be more informed, and hopefully more relevant to children, based on what I have learned. I can only hope that the children, too, have gained something from participating in the study. As one parent shared with me, only a few weeks after I began my research with the children, "It's interesting, you know... Maria's talking about physical activity at home, and the importance of being active...she's never thought about that before." Also rewarding were the reflections of a young girl, who near the end of our time together, commented, "Debbie, you know, I think you'd make a good teacher. You really should be a teacher." As Vivian Paley (1986) advocates, listening to what children say can only lead us to providing experiences that are both relevant and meaningful for them. In providing opportunities for children to be physically active, our *first* challenge is to be able to consider a perspective other than our own.

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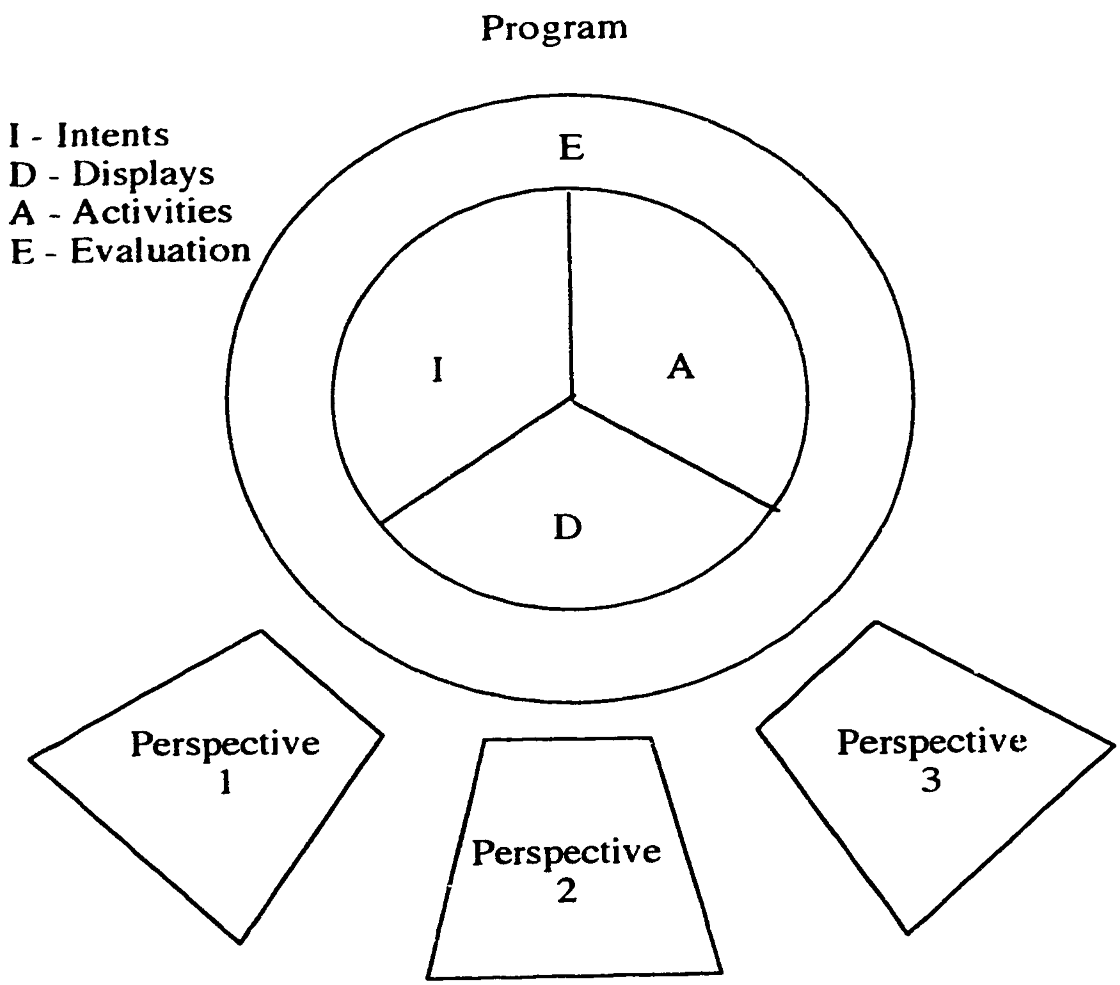
APPENDIX



Perspectives:

On Teachers
On Students
On Knowledge
On Curriculum

Figure 1. (The IDA/E Model). Holistic Model of Curriculum Development. Aoki (1978). Adapted from the EDSEC 503/504 Curriculum Foundation and Inquiry Handbook.

HISTORY

Research element	Research focus
CONTEXT	*Macro social organisation* Values, traditions, forms of social and economic organization and power relations. For example legally sanctioned forms of ownership, control and distribution; interlocking directorships, state intervention. As they are implicated in the sector below.
SETTING	*Intermediate Social organization* Work: Industrial, military and state bureaucracies; labour markets; hospitals; social work agencies, domestic labour; penal and mental institutions. Non-work: Social organization of leisure activities, sports and social clubs; religious and spiritual organizations.
SITUATED ACTIVITY	*Social Activity* Face-to-face activity involving symbolic communication by skilled, intentional participants implicated in the above contexts and settings. Focus on emergent meanings, understandings and definitions of the situation as these affect and are affected by contexts and settings (above) and subjective dispositions of individuals (below).
SELF	*Self identity and the individual's social experience.* As these are infuenced by the above sectors and as they interact with the unique psychobiography of the individual. Focus on the life-career.

Figure 2. Research map. Adapted from New Strategies in Social Research (p.72) by D. Layder, 1993, Cambridge, MA: Polity Press.

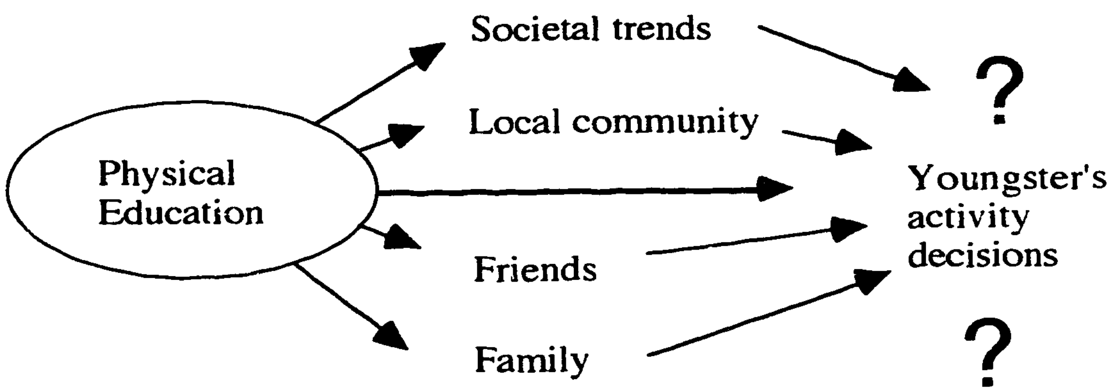


Figure 3. (Physical Education and Social Influence on Activity Decisions). Adapted from Fox K. and Biddle, S. (1988). The child's perspective in physical education part 3: A question of attitudes? British Journal of Physical Education, 19 (3), 107-111.