

A Study of Previously Disengaged Physical Education Students Within a Modular Physical
Education Course

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Abstract

This study examined the impact of student choice on students who had not enjoyed their previous physical education experiences. The research question was: does student choice have an impact on the experiences of grade 10 students who have not enjoyed their previous physical education experiences?

Literature on lifelong physical activity, problems with Canadian health and society, engaging disengaged students, and student choice were all examined in the second chapter. Literature specific to physical education was also examined; this included discussions on programmatic challenges, student motivation, and student choice. The promotion of lifelong physical activity is the major goal of many physical education curricula. Researchers have shown that students who enjoy their physical education classes are more likely to be active later in life. Currently many students do not enjoy their physical education programs. Allowing students the opportunity to choose what sports and activities they will be involved in within their physical education class has been shown to have a positive impact on student motivation and enjoyment. Absent from the body of literature is an examination of the role that choice in physical education plays in increasing motivation and enjoyment for students who have not enjoyed their previous physical education experiences.

The study sought to learn about the experiences of students who have not enjoyed their previous physical education classes and what impacts they felt it may have on promoting lifelong physical activity adherence. Through purposeful sampling the study focused on the experiences of four students who were identified through a pre-study field investigation survey. Participants volunteered to take part in a one-on-one semi-structured interview with the researcher.

The interviews provided a wealth of information on five themes. The themes that were most strongly represented in the interviews were: intrinsic motivation, self-determination, climate, engagement, and perceptions. The participants of the study were intrinsically motivated, felt a sense of self-determination, enjoyed the climate of their class, and were engaged in their learning. The participants also noted that their perceptions of physical activity had changed. Ultimately, the study showed that choice could have a profoundly positive impact on physical education experiences for students who have not previously enjoyed physical education.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	i
Abstract	iii
Table of Contents	v
List of Figures	ix
Chapter One	1
Introduction	1
Student Engagement	3
Intrinsic Instead of Extrinsic Motivation	4
Coming to the question	6
Statement of Problem	9
Research Question	11
Secondary Questions	11
Assumptions	11
Delimitations	11
Limitations	14
Definitions	14
Disengaged Students	14
Extrinsic Motivation	15
Impact	16
Intrinsic Motivation	16
Intrinsically Motivated Student Learning	16
Lifelong Activity	17
Lifelong Learning	17
Modular Physical Education	18
Motivation	18

Special Physical Education	-----18
Student Choice	-----19
Student Engagement	-----19
Traditional Education	-----19
Organization of the Thesis	-----20
Chapter Two	-----22
Review of Literature	-----22
Lifelong Physical Activity	-----23
Problems with Canadian Health and Society	-----24
Problems with Current Physical Education Models	-----26
Motivation in Physical Education	-----31
Engaging the Disengaged	-----36
Student Choice	-----38
Student Choice in Physical Education	-----42
Physical Education Enjoyment Inhibitor Figures	-----46
Summary	-----50
Gap in Literature	-----51
Chapter Three	-----52
Methodology and Method	-----52
Methodology	-----52
Researchers Position	-----52
Methods	-----56
Context	-----58
Tools	-----60
Data Collection Instruments	-----60
Data Analysis	-----61
Ethical Guidelines	-----62

Summary	-----	63
Chapter Four	-----	65
Presentation of Collected Data	-----	65
Study Timeline	-----	66
Participant Introductions	-----	70
Anna	-----	70
Dave	-----	73
Tina	-----	75
Eric	-----	77
Protection of Non-Participants Privacy	-----	79
Mechanisms for Participant Choice	-----	79
Themes	-----	81
Intrinsic Motivation	-----	82
Self-Determination	-----	89
Climate	-----	94
Engagement	-----	98
Perceptions	-----	99
Summary	-----	102
Chapter Five	-----	104
Discussion of Data Collected	-----	104
Conceptual Framework	-----	104
Consistent Responses	-----	106
Problems with Physical Education	-----	107
Engaging the Disengaged	-----	108
Choice	-----	110
Dissonant Responses	-----	111
Bombardment Games	-----	111

Elementary Physical Education Specialists	-----112
Research Questions Answered	-----114
Impact of Choice on Wellness 10 Experiences	-----114
Impact of Choice on Student Engagement	-----114
Impact of Choice on Intrinsic Motivation	-----116
Perceptions of Physical Activity Outside of School Hours	-----120
Perceptions of Physical Activity Later in Life	-----122
Unanswered and Emergent Questions	-----123
Research Process	-----126
Challenges	-----127
Changes	-----131
Personal Growth	-----132
Transferability of Study	-----133
Study in Context	-----134
References	-----136
Appendices	-----144
Appendix A - Prairie View High School Wellness 10 (Modular PE) Semester 1	----144
Appendix B – Prairie View High School Wellness 10 (Modular PE) Semester 2	----146
Appendix C – Interview Guiding Questions	-----148
Appendix D – Participant Identification Survey	-----150
Appendix E – Invitation to Participate/Assent Letter	-----151
Appendix F – Parental Consent Letter	-----153
Appendix G – Transcript Release Form	-----155

List of Figures

Figure 1: Inhibitors to Lifelong Physical Activity	-----46
Figure 2: Students with Positive Physical Education Experiences	-----47
Figure 3: Impact of Choice on Lifelong Physical Activity	-----49

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE THESIS

“if our goal is quality, or a lasting commitment to a value or behavior, no artificial incentive can match the power of intrinsic motivation” (Kohn, 1993b, p. 68).

Lent (2006) argued that student engagement is directly related to motivation. Experts agree that the current educational model lacks in the ability to engage students, and therefore, is not meeting the needs of our students or society. Despite many challenges to traditional pedagogy through the 20th century (Dewey & Dewey, 1915; Dewey, 1916; Neill, 1960), few changes have been realized (Abbott & Ryan, 2001; Kohn, 1993b). This traditional educational model has come under increased scrutiny as its many flawed approaches to motivating students have been revealed. Traditional education is characterized by rote memorization that Blankstein (2007) termed “drill and kill” (p. 3). Blankstein’s term is used in relation to rote memorization’s negative impact on student interest in the material covered. Lent (2006) added to the conversation on the failure of traditional instruction to engage students by commenting that lecture as a teaching method is not effective at engaging students. Kohn (1999) disagreed with students remaining passive in their education and explained that traditional instructional models show a lack of respect for students by not allowing them to have decision making opportunities. A further complication is that students are provided standardized curricular material that is not interesting to them, and lacks relevance and applicability to their lives (Abbott & Ryan, 2001; Kohn, 1999; OECD, 2000). Evaluative practices are also flawed. Citing evidence from decades of research on the psychology of adolescent motivation, Kohn (1993b, 1999) harshly criticized

systems of punishment and rewards that accompany evaluation for taking away from the students' learning and motivation to learn. Traditional education has focused on separating subjects, tasks, and students from each other (Kohn, 1999). Kohn (1996) asserted that it is the organization of the learning experience—not the student—that is to blame for classroom management problems.

High school students agree with the experts; the traditional education system is broken. Azzam (2008) reported on a recent large scale study of American high school students that had staggering results: 50% percent of students reported being bored every day they were in school; 75% lacked interest in coursework; 39% stated that school lacked relevance; 33% had very limited interaction with teachers; 22% had considered dropping out of school. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development reported in 2000 that 15-20% of students in their representative countries were dropping out. These findings support Abbott and Ryan's (2001) claim that traditional education, created for an industrial society, does not work in contemporary times. The ineptitude of the current system of education calls for drastic, immediate, and systemic reform (Abbott & Ryan, 2001; Kohn, 1993b; Kohn, 1999; OECD, 2000; Schlechty, 2002).

Despite the many challenges mentioned, it is important to note that education has been successful. Ben Levin (2005), a former deputy minister of education in Manitoba and a self-described critic of education, wrote that education in Canada is "in reasonably good shape" (p. 49). Levin continued, "Canadian education certainly has shortcomings, but it also has great achievements and shows considerable continuing strength" (p. 62). Levin cited soaring high school graduation rates (Statistics Canada reports that graduation rates are reaching 90%) and post-secondary enrollment, as well as performance on international exams as evidence of the

strength of Canadian education. High expectations by society are the main reason for the many, and perhaps unfounded, criticisms of Canadian education (Levin, 2005). However, with so many educational researchers and writers calling for reform it seems clear that some reform is possible and required. Is Canadian education sufficient as Levin stated or is it in need of significant reform? Can Canadian education be improved?

Student Engagement

Educational literature contains many references to the term student engagement, but what type of student behavior does this term identify? Schlechty (2002) identifies five possible student responses to a given task: *rebellion*, *retreatism*, *passive compliance*, *ritual engagement*, and *authentic engagement*. Student rebellion is characterized by a student's task refusal and accompanying disruptive behavior. Students who retreat are those that refuse the task but are not disruptive. Passive compliant students attempt to avoid consequences; however, they attempt as little work as is possible. Most educators would agree that rebellion, retreatism, and passive compliance are not desired student responses. Ritual engagement is the engagement in the task not for the task itself but for an associated extrinsic motivator. Students who are ritually engaged can produce outstanding test scores, yet they are less likely to be lifelong learners than authentically engaged students who are driven to learn by personal interest (Schlechty, 2002). This view of interest-driven student engagement is widely held by educational writers (Certo, Cauley, Moxely, & Chafin, 2008; Easton, 2008; Hung, Chee, & Seng, 2006; Lent, 2006; Wang & Kang, 2006; Wilhelm, 2007). For the remainder of this thesis, the term student engagement is used to describe intrinsically motivated student learning.

Audas and Willms (2001) called engagement a “crucial determinant of success in school” (p. iii). Lent (2006) echoed this thought when he explained that if students were engaged they received benefits in all aspects of their schooling. Audas and Willms (2001) noted many behavioral and psychological responses of engaged students: improved attendance, preparation for classes, homework completion, attention to lessons, increased participation in school activities, strong sense of belonging, better social ties and bonds with students and teachers, increased perceptions of safety of school, and greater likelihood of valuing school success. Students who are engaged in their learning have also been shown to be happier (Gabriele, 2008) and more motivated (Gabriele, 2008; Kohn, 1993b, 1999). Students who are engaged are less likely to drop out of school (Audas & Willms, 2001; Easton, 2008; OECD, 2000; Willms, 2002). Due to the many positive effects of engagement, it was not a stretch in 2007 when Willms and Flanagan stated “student engagement is an important schooling outcome in its own right” (p. 47). Schlechty (2002) pushed even more strongly for engagement by calling for student engagement to become the central role of teachers.

Students will not automatically engage. “Schools need to work hard to engage students in their learning” (Easton, 2008, p. xiv). This hard work involves confronting many long held traditional educational paradigms. A paradigm shift is needed that will dramatically alter education to make it more engaging for students.

Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation

Motivation drives learning (Abbott & Ryan, 2001). There are two recognized types of motivation. Extrinsic motivation is motivation based on attaining some form of external reward. Intrinsic motivation is motivation based on interest in the learning itself (Pittman & Boggiano,

1992). Education has been dominated for the past century with a series of rewards and punishments that are very behaviorist in nature, and are very much founded in a belief in extrinsic motivation. However, many experts now agree that education needs to do away with the series of rewards and punishments and move towards systems that foster intrinsic motivation (Abbott & Ryan, 2001; Deci & Ryan, 1992; Kohn, 1993b; Lent, 2006). Kohn (1993b) stated “what matters most is not how motivated someone is, but how someone is motivated” (p. 257). Intrinsic motivation has been identified as a strong predictor of how well students will achieve in school (Deci & Ryan, 1992; Kohn, 1993b; Lent, 2006; Sun, Chen, Ennis, Martin, & Shen, 2008). Extrinsic motivators have been shown to stand in the way of long-term recall, creativity, and self-esteem (Deci & Ryan, 1992; Kohn, 1993b).

Despite the failures of extrinsic rewards to allow students to engage in their learning, the reason that extrinsic motivators have been so pervasive in education appears to be based on the behaviorist idea that humans are not easily self-motivated; an idea that has been proven to be false (Deci & Ryan, 1992). Kohn (1993b) examined many studies of human motivation and concluded that

we are beings who possess natural curiosity about ourselves and our environment, who search for and overcome challenges, who try to master skills and attain competence, who seek to reach new levels of complexity in what we learn and do. (p. 25)

In fact, Kohn (1993b) looked to the research to prove that intrinsic motivation is more effective than extrinsic motivation at any age. If humans really can be intrinsically motivated, based on the strength of the research on the positive effects of intrinsic motivation on schooling outcomes, it is clear that there needs to be a major paradigm shift towards intrinsic motivation playing a central role in education. It is important to note that the presence of extrinsic rewards or other

controlling events decrease intrinsic motivation, and therefore extrinsic rewards and controlling events must be removed (Abbott & Ryan, 2001; Deci & Ryan, 1992; Kohn, 1993b). Intrinsic motivation is an important outcome in its own right and needs to become the goal of education (Kohn, 1993b; OECD, 2000).

To move education towards intrinsic motivation, Kohn (1993b) recommended first removing the factors that thwart intrinsic motivation including extrinsic motivators. Deci and Ryan (1992) added that while intrinsic motivation is innate, children will develop varying levels of it based on their experiences with autonomy and competence. Fostering intrinsic motivation is important; teachers cannot make a child be motivated, but rather need to help the child discover their own motivation (Kohn, 1993b). Deci and Ryan, Kohn, the OECD (2000), and Schlecty (2002) all recommended student choice to help foster the development of intrinsic motivation. The literature clearly shows that allowing students to be self-determining increases intrinsic motivation, and intrinsic motivation is the way to student engagement. If Canadian education can in fact be improved, should student choice be part of the reform?

Coming to the Question

I always loved physical education class. I was thrilled to have a break in my otherwise mundane day, which most often included sitting in a desk listening to a teacher for each one-hour class, to head to the gym or the field and have the opportunity to run around and have fun. It was clear to me from an early age that I would want to be active for the rest of my life. As a young child I was very active, both in free play with friends and family and in organized sport. Through elementary school I participated in a wide variety of sports and activities and thoroughly enjoyed most of these opportunities. In grades 8 and 9, I was captured by two sports

that I participated in for the first time; wrestling and football. These sports became my passion, and my coaches became my mentors. The realization that I wanted to teach physical education emerged early in high school, largely as a result of my experiences as a high school athlete.

Even during my early experiences with physical education as a student, I was aware of the discrepancy between those who loved physical education and those who loathed it. Many of my friends and I entered the gym with great energy and fondly looked forward to almost every lesson; however, many of my classmates entered the gym and seemed to immediately try to avoid activity. Commonly, my classmates would forget their gym clothes, ask to sit out, be sick or have injuries, or complain about specific activities that we were going to be involved in. This discrepancy between students who loved and loathed physical education became far more troubling for me as I began my teaching career.

Reading the curriculum guides, it was clear that my major objective was to help facilitate students moving toward a life filled with physical activity. It did not take long for me to realize that the discrepancies that I witnessed as a student were even more obvious as a teacher. Some students were like me and lived for physical education, many students were not; this discrepancy becomes clear when investigating the decline in physical education enrollment in non-mandatory classes. It dawned on me that the students who were totally engaged in physical education class were quite likely to be involved in activity after high school, even without too much intervention on my part or that of other teachers. Shekitka (2002) noted that students who enjoyed high school physical education were more likely to be active after high school. What about those students who have had poor experiences in physical education? What was the likelihood that they would be active as adults, especially if their physical education experiences continued to turn them off of physical activity?

I began reading works on critical theory (Friere, 1970; 1998; Giroux, 2004; Rothstein, 1996; Walker, 1990). The authors views challenged me to think of physical education in a new way. Through critical examination of physical education practices I was able to identify students who did not enjoy physical education as students who were potentially oppressed within their physical education classes. The potential oppression within physical education classes can be based on athletic ability, gender, and/or activity preferences. Students who feel oppressed within physical education classes are clearly less likely to enjoy their experiences.

Physical education classes were always positive experiences for me. However, I found that perhaps my most positive learning experience in high school occurred in a different subject. As a high school student, one powerful experience that stood out for me was my Drama 30 class. My teacher took time at the beginning of our course to allow the students to select topics and activities of interest to us. She called this process *negotiated curriculum*. She then structured our course to cover the major curricular objectives, as well as the content we had selected. Drama was a class that I had enjoyed throughout high school, but this class stood out as being far more special than my previous three drama classes. The difference—without question—was the opportunity for me and my fellow students to shape the course content to meet our personal interests. I was reminded of my experiences in this class when I attended a professional development opportunity on November 15 and 16, 2006 where the speaker was the provocative John Abbott. Abbott challenged the assembled teachers to rethink their current practices. One challenge that stood out for me was his concern for power relationships in the school. Essentially, he asked why teachers would ever make a choice that students were able to make for themselves? Thinking through this question lead me to dramatically alter the way I taught Special Physical Education 30. I used my experience as a student in Drama 30 as a framework

for offering students the opportunity to select the activities that our class would participate in during the semester. I loved the experience of empowering students to be involved in the decision-making process. Student responses were also very strongly positive; similar results were found in a study conducted by Ha, Johns, and Shiu (2003), where students noted a great desire to be involved in the creation of their physical education program. I continue to offer Special Physical Education 30 using the negotiated curriculum model. My positive experiences with student choice lead me to pursue a deeper knowledge of student choice, and to consider other methods to offer students choices within the physical education setting.

My thoughts were furthered by the strategic plan of my school division that has called upon teachers to more actively engage our students. I have been closely tied to this initiative through my appointment as Learning Leader, an in-school instructional leadership position. This position has allowed me to become deeply involved in educational literature, professional development, and conversations around engaging students in their learning. The process of student engagement includes a move towards increasing students' intrinsic motivation. Much of my focus has been on my teaching area of physical education, and how to better meet the needs of students within the physical education setting. It is apparent to me that to facilitate the development of intrinsically motivated students in physical education there is a need for major reform in teachers' professional practices. This thesis represents my contribution to this important idea.

Statement of Problem

Physical inactivity is an epidemic in Canada. Inactivity paired with increases in sedentary activities such as watching television and playing computer games, and poor dietary

choices has lead Canada into an obesity crisis (Carriere, 2003; LePetite & Berthelot, 2006).

Children and adults are less physically active than they were in previous generations. This is due in large part to individuals spending large amounts of leisure time partaking in sedentary activities (LePetite & Berthelot, 2006; Rattigan & Biren, 2007; Shields & Tremblay, 2008).

There are alarming effects of this widespread physical inactivity; obesity and diabetes are rampant across demographic groups. Health problems associated with inactivity can be and need to be prevented (LePetite & Berthelot, 2006). Physical education programs are involved in an important preventative battle to help keep students motivated to be active outside of school time and throughout their lives. Based on mounting evidence that the societal trend towards physical inactivity is only growing stronger, it appears clear that it is a battle that preventive programs are losing. Physical education programs may better aid this preventive struggle by adapting to reflect modern society. There are many excellent physical education programs; yet some programs fail to be interesting and relevant to some students. Currently, physical education programs are failing to engage some students in meaningful activity that may foster positive relationships with an active lifestyle. Many students have poor experiences in physical education classes. Shekitka (2002) noted that students who had positive experiences with physical education were more likely to be active after high school; it is then fair to say that students with poor experiences in physical education will be less likely to continue to be active outside of curricular time and later in life. The challenge then is to create physical education programs that are reflective of modern society and are interesting and motivating for all students and will ultimately help facilitate students becoming lifelong participants in physical activity. Can physical education programs be improved to better facilitate the development of physically active lifestyles?

Research Question

- Does student choice have an impact on the experiences of grade 10 students who have not enjoyed their previous physical education experiences?

Secondary Questions

- In what ways does student choice facilitate student engagement in physical education?
- In what ways is student choice in physical education intrinsically motivating?
- In what ways have opportunities for choice in physical education class changed students' perceptions about being active outside school hours?
- In what ways has choice in physical education class changed students' perceptions about being active later in life?

Assumptions

My first assumption is that the students and staff at “Prairie View High School” will be interested in allowing me to conduct the study. I assumed that there were students at the school in grade 10 who had poor previous experiences with physical education. Further, was assumed that student choice had actually impacted student motivation and that students would be willing to share this information with me through the interview processes.

Delimitations

There were many limits that I had to draw for this study. There are two main curricular programs used in physical education, of which I was aware, that allow students to have a say in

what they are learning (*cf.* Condon & Collier, 2002; Hill & Cleven, 2005b). Of these two programs (see further description of each in chapter two), Condon and Collier's appeared to offer students more opportunity to impact on their day to day activities in the gym. This is based on students being offered multiple activities in which to choose from for each module (or block of classes), and should ensure that students are always involved in an activity that they directly choose themselves. Hill and Cleven's program calls for surveying the whole class and determining activities based on the collective input of students. This program will allow students to take part in some activities of their choosing, but will also mean that some activities that are offered were not voted for by certain students in the class. For this reason I have delimited the study to a program of choice similar to Condon and Collier's (2002).

For the purpose of keeping this study to a manageable size and a reasonable conclusion date, I have delimited this study to closely examine only one choice program and the students who are active within it. Condon and Collier's (2002) model is based on allowing students to select which units of study (modules) they experience during their semester. These choices are allowed when multiple classes all have their physical education periods concurrently. The students are not obligated to stay with their assigned teacher, but rather may take part in the session lead by any of the teachers in that class period. Teachers organize their modules to begin and end at common times to allow for natural entry and exit points for all students. This allows for students to select activity modules based on personal interests. As only this one choice program will be examined, I have employed a purposeful method of sampling.

Creswell (2005) defined *purposeful sampling* as selecting sites that are information rich for a particular trait. I have located a school with a choice program in physical education that is similar to the one described by Condon and Collier (2002). This school was a high school

located in Saskatchewan that has been assigned the pseudonym Prairie View High. This study, for the purposes of proximity, focused on only one school division in Saskatchewan. To ensure that the students selected had current recollections of the class, the study was delimited to students who were enrolled in grade 10 physical education at Prairie View High during the 2008-2009 school year. Further, the study was delimited to one snap shot that took place in the spring of 2009. The number of students enrolled in grade 10 physical education at Prairie View High for the 2008-2009 school year was large. Only grade 10 students who were 16 years or older were invited to participate in the study: the reason for the age restriction is examined in later chapters. Bogdan and Biklen (2008) suggest that, based on the labour intensity of qualitative research, novice researchers undertake small studies. Therefore, consistent with Bogdan and Biklen's suggestions, I selected a small group of participants whose perceptions were further examined through interviews. The study was further delimited to students who self-determined that they did not enjoy their previous physical education experiences (only students who answered with a rating of 1 or 2 on a standard 1 through 5 response Likert scale to the question "*I enjoyed my previous physical education experiences*", were invited to take part in the study). Delimiting a study in this fashion is similar to what Berg (1995) described as *field investigation*. Further, as detailed within the section titled *ethical guidelines* and found in chapter three, the study will be delimited to only students who volunteered to take part in the study (by writing their name on the otherwise anonymous survey) were included. The number three to five was selected for the potential to receive a wealth of information, but to also keep the study within reasonable time limits.

Limitations

The school selected was new to offering the student-choice model and only offered it in their grade 10 physical education program. Therefore, only students in grade 10 were invited to participate in this study, as the grade eleven students were not exposed to choice and the grade 9 students would not experience choice until the next school year. The study was also limited by its participants; depth of the research depended on the willingness of participants to share information. The study was also limited by the participants' ability to reflect on experiences of past physical education classes as well as articulate their current experiences. The study was limited by the inability to conduct a pilot study that was originally planned; more details are provided in chapter four. Additionally a limit to the study was the short time period in which I had to work. This short time period was imposed by the school division that did not allow students to be involved in studies during the summer months.

Definitions

The following subsections provide definitions for key terms used within the body of this thesis.

Disengaged Students

Student engagement is a term that has become popular in educational literature. The opposite of an engaged student is one who is disengaged. Easton (2008) examined struggling students noting that there are a wide variety of students who struggle and they express their struggle in many different ways. Using Schlechty's (2002) model of student responses; students who fall into the categories of rebellion, retreatism, and passive compliance all would be

classified as disengaged students. Disengaged students have one characteristic in common: they do not like school (Audas & Willms, 2001; Schlechy, 2002). Azzam (2008) reported staggering percentages of American high school students who were bored in school every day, and found their course work to lack relevance. There are many disengaged students (Audas & Willms, 2001; Easton, 2008). It is troubling to note that many disengaged students are likely to drop out of school (Audas & Willms, 2001). Dropout is not a sudden occurrence, but rather based on an accumulation of processes of disengagement (Audas & Willms, 2001). Clearly, finding ways to engage disengaged students needs to be a priority for educators.

Extrinsic Motivation

Extrinsic motivation is a term used to define any type of behavior that is performed for predetermined or assumed rewards (Deci & Ryan, 2002; Standage, Duda, & Ntoumanis, 2005). Deci and Ryan (2002) identified a continuum of extrinsic motivation that allows for individuals to be motivated by a mixture of extrinsic factors and self-regulated behavior. The continuum begins with external regulation where individual's level of self-regulation of the behavior is very low and the control of the external stimuli is very high. The continuum of extrinsic motivation ends with integrated regulation where the individual is more controlled by self-regulation than they are the external stimuli, yet the external stimuli do influence the behavior. Extrinsic motivation has been shown to undermine student creativity and effort (Kohn, 1993b; OECD, 2000).

Impact

For this study the word impact referred to both positive and negative changes. These changes may be, but are certainly not limited to, changes in the participants' attendance, behavior, competence, and happiness. The word was intentionally selected to be part of the research question so that the research question would not show a bias towards preconceived notions of either positive or negative outcomes. Impact, then, will be changes perceived by the individual that emerge as a result of choice.

Intrinsic Motivation

In its simplest sense, intrinsic motivation can be defined as motivation for interest's sake. Deci and Ryan (2002) noted that intrinsic motivation could only be achieved once students have internalized the learning. Therefore, to be intrinsically motivated means that students are not interested in external rewards or other external factors not directly related to the learning. Intrinsic motivation has been identified as the most desirable source of motivation for enabling students' learning (Ferrer-Caja & Weiss, 2000; Kilpatrick, Hebert, & Jacobsen, 2002). Interest, enjoyment, effort, and persistence have consistently been used as indicators of intrinsic motivation in previous studies (Ferrer-Caja & Weiss, 2000).

Intrinsically Motivated Student Learning

Intrinsically motivated students are students who engage in learning for the sake of learning itself and the positive feelings involved in that learning (OECD, 2000; Schlechty, 2002). The OECD (2000) stated, "intrinsically-motivated students...employ strategies that demand more effort and that enable them to process information more deeply" (p. 28). Due to the deeper

learning that can be achieved through intrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation has been suggested to be the better of the two motivational types (the other being extrinsic motivation) for learning outcomes (Kohn, 1993b; OECD, 2000; Schlechty, 2002).

Lifelong Activity

Lifelong activity means having students pursue physical activity, and or live an active lifestyle, after they depart from the school system. This is a major goal of physical education curriculum (Alderman, Beighle, & Pangrazi, 2006; Corbin, 2002; Saskatchewan Education, 1994). Lifelong activity, much the same as lifelong learning, requires the skills and interests needed to be and remain active (Corbin, 2002). Corbin (2002) stated his belief that self-management skills were more important than motor skills for lifelong activity. Therefore, Corbin promoted a gradual weaning of students to move them towards independence in physical education, so that students would continue to lead active lifestyles after leaving the school system.

Lifelong Learning

Having students actively pursue further learning after they leave the school system is a major goal of education (OECD, 2000). Lifelong learning has as a precursor the skills and interests needed to pursue further learning. The OECD (2000) stated that lifelong learning is more important than ever, noting that in developed nations there are new careers frequently emerging, and many unskilled jobs disappearing. This challenge has presented a need for “more frequent renewal of knowledge and skills” (OECD, 2000, p. 18); for this reason, the OECD has called for education systems to promote lifelong learning since 1990.

Modular Physical Education

Modular physical education refers to the dividing of the school year or semester into a series of short activity blocks. It is a student choice model whereby students have the ability to choose which particular activity they wish to be involved in during each unit (or module). The program that will be examined in this study is very similar to the program described by Condon and Collier (2002). It is important to note that the modules are instructive in nature with students learning skills and rules appropriate for each activity.

Motivation

Motivation can be used to explain many different types of behaviors. For the purpose of this thesis motivation is referred to in its effect on students' learning. Students can range from amotivated to highly motivated for any given task. Motivation is complex; the OECD (2000) noted that student motivation could be effected by four major groups of factors: physical, psychological, social, and educational. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation will both be examined. Motivation is important for schooling as students who are motivated, and in the right way, are more likely to learn (Kohn, 1993b; Schlechty, 2002).

Special Physical Education

Provincially, the secondary school courses for physical education are called Physical Education 20/30; however, the more common local name for the classes at the 20 and 30 levels (grades 11 and 12, respectively) is Special Physical Education (SPED). SPED classes are designed to introduce students to lifelong activities, including an emphasis on individual sports and activities (Saskatchewan Education, 1994). However, SPED classes are optional and many

students do not take them. The aim of special physical education classes is lifelong participation (Saskatchewan Education, 1994).

Student Choice

Student choice can be described as allowing students to play a major decision making role in their own education (Kohn, 1993a). For the purpose of this study the emphasis will be placed on students making choices related to which activities to be involved in the physical education setting. The choice program examined in this study was similar to that described by Condon and Collier (2002).

Student Engagement

Schlechty (2002) noted that there are different types of engagement: ritual and authentic. Ritual engagement is when students are driven to succeed for reasons other than the learning; such as for external rewards. Authentic engagement will be referred to simply as student engagement for remainder of this study. Student engagement has become an often-used catch phrase in education. Student engagement refers to students being highly interested and involved in their learning; essentially students engaging in their schooling for intrinsic reasons.

Traditional Education

Traditional educational practices date to the beginning of modern education during the industrial revolution (Abbott & Ryan, 2001). Despite hundreds of years filled with dramatic change, many classroom practices remain similar to those used during the time of the industrial revolution. Whether or not a significant pedagogical change is required is the subject of debate.

Levin (2005) stated that Canadian education is doing fine. Others have attacked traditional practices. Freire (1970) termed traditional education the “banking system” and saw it as a structure in place that served to maintain power of some and oppress others. Kohn (1993b) has been a harsh critic of behaviourist systems of rewards and punishments that are engrained in North American schools. Davies (2007) criticized the system of evaluation that seems to have as its sole purpose the ranking of students. The OECD (2000) noted that reform to traditional educational practices are underway in most OECD countries. The OECD has recommended a significant change to traditional education—that of moving education to be student centered.

Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is organized into five chapters. In this first chapter I provided background information on the topic, as well as introduce my research position and question. I outlined the limitations and delimitations for the study. Relevant definitions were also introduced in the first chapter.

In the second chapter, I provide a review of literature relevant to student choice in physical education. Herein, I also address the poor state of health of Canadian citizens and how poor physical education programming is failing to improve Canadian activity levels. I conclude the second chapter by calling to attention a gap in the literature that this current study will attempt to address.

In the third chapter, I introduce both the methodology and the method to be utilized in the current study. I include within the chapter a discussion of my position as researcher. Furthermore, I explore constructivism, and I identify the ties to this study as I envision them. I propose qualitative research, specifically interview, as the method of data collection for the

study. I conclude the chapter with an examination of the ethical requirements that were followed.

In the fourth chapter, I introduce the timeline for the study from the time of submission of the ethics package, until the last interview was complete. I introduce the participants who were involved in the study. The main focus of the fourth chapter is to present the data that was acquired through the interview process. The data presented is organized into themes.

In the fifth chapter, I answer the research questions. The answers are derived by examining and combining the collected data and the literature reviewed in chapter two. Other insights are made, these include congruencies and dissonance from previous research. Additional questions that have arisen from the research are asked. I also examine how the study potentially could have been conducted in a more efficient and precise manner. In the final chapter, I also outline my experience as a researcher. I conclude the thesis by placing the study into context.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

My purpose in this chapter is to review literature on lifelong physical activity, problems with Canadian health and society, engaging disengaged students, and student choice. Physical education programs, along with other important preventative groups and programs, are at the frontlines of this important preventative battle to help keep students motivated to be active outside of school time and throughout their lives. Based on mounting evidence that the societal trend towards physical inactivity is only growing stronger, it appears clear that it is a battle that preventative programs including physical education are losing. Many physical education programs have not adapted to the needs of contemporary society. Some school based physical education programs struggle to provide courses that are interesting and relevant to the majority of students. Many students have poor experiences in physical education classes.

An in-depth examination of literature specific to physical education includes discussions on programmatic challenges, student motivation, and student choice. The ultimate goal of this literature review is to guide the research question: Does student choice have an impact on the experiences of grade 10 students who have not enjoyed their previous physical education experiences?

This chapter begins with an examination of the major goal of physical education programs: lifelong activity. Following a discussion of lifelong activity there are sections addressing problems with Canadian health and society and problems with current physical education models. Motivation in physical education is examined, followed by a discussion on

engaging disengaged students. Literature on student choice and student choice in physical education are discussed. The chapter concludes with a summary of the chapter including a model created to pull the literature together and an examination of the gaps in literature surrounding the research question.

Lifelong Physical Activity

In Saskatchewan, as in many places around the world, the major objective of physical education programs is developing students who will remain active for their lifetime (Saskatchewan Education, 1994). Researchers informed us that positive physical education experiences increase the likelihood of students continuing to be active for life (Alderman et al., 2006; Gibbons & Humbert, 2008; Lee, 2004; MacPhail, Gorely, Kirk, & Kinchin, 2008). MacPhail et al. (2008) stated, “enjoyment has consistently emerged as an important motive for participating in physical activity or sport, and is the strongest predictor of commitment, or the desire and resolve to continue participation in an activity” (p. 345). If having positive and enjoyable physical education experiences helps lead to the major goal of lifelong physical activity, negative experiences are detrimental to achieving this target. Chung and Phillips (2002) noted that students who do not enjoy physical education tend to avoid physical activity in their daily lives. Further, students will be more likely to continue to be active if they are empowered with the skills and confidence necessary to be active (Alderman et al., 2006). Literature noted that physical education programs need to create environments that are motivating to students so that they can achieve these skills and competencies (Alderman et al., 2006; Beyer, 2008; Wallhead, 2007). Corbin (2002) included the thought of the importance of passing the responsibility to be active on to the students: “if we make all the decisions about what to do and

when to do it, youth become dependent on us. We may help them temporarily, but we will have done little to develop lifetime habits” (p. 137). Corbin called for a stepped approach to move students towards independence and lifetime activity. Student needs and interests must be considered. The goal of lifelong activity is one that needs to be reached in order to address the poor state of health of the Canadian populace.

Problems with Canadian Health and Society

Physical inactivity is a problem that has become more pervasive with modern society. Inactivity needs to be of major concern to all citizens in Canada as it has major implications for our health care system (Carriere, 2003; LePetite & Berthelot, 2006). Levin (2005) noted that schools have a great economic importance for Canadian society as they are charged with addressing social problems, including improving physical fitness. Physical inactivity starts young. *Canada’s Report Card on Physical Activity for Children & Youth* (Active Healthy Kids Canada, 2007) stated “that 91 per cent of Canadian children and youth do not meet the guidelines ... which recommend 90 minutes per day of moderate to vigorous physical activity” (p. 6). The report card further exposed how physical activity continues to decrease with age. The report card issued a failing grade for Canadian children’s physical activity. Not surprisingly, the report card also issued a failing grade to Canadian children on the measure of being overweight and obese. The report noted that an increasing number of Canadian children are obese or overweight, a total now reaching one quarter of all children.

Obesity has been an often-researched topic in Canada in recent years (Carriere, 2003; LePetit & Berthelot, 2006; Shields & Tjepkema, 2006; Shields & Tremblay, 2008). Researchers have noted the importance of controlling obesity for maintaining personal health and for the

broader integrity of Canadian medical care (Carriere, 2003; LePetite & Berthelot, 2006).

Obesity is more pervasive in the Maritime and Prairie provinces, where over 25% of the adult population is considered obese (Sheilds & Tjepkema, 2006). The large percentage of obese adults is particularly concerning for Canadian society as a recent study has brought to light the relationship between obese parents and obese children. Carriere (2003) found that children who live with an obese parent are significantly more likely to become obese than children living with parents of healthy weight. This has contributed to the rise in obesity levels across all age groups in Canada over the last 25 years, a trend that appears likely to continue (Sheilds & Tremblay, 2008). Those who are overweight or obese are likely to experience what LePetite and Berthelot (2006) called “relatively common” (p. 45) increases in weight. LePetite and Berthelot, who studied a large Canadian sample for eight years, found that these “relatively common” increases in weight occur gradually over time and also occur for individuals who are in the normal weight range. It is significantly less common, only 10% of study participants, for obese or overweight individuals to decrease their weight significantly (LePetite & Berthelot, 2006). Based on the small number of individuals who are able to effectively lose, and maintain weight loss, LePetite and Berthelot recommended Canada adopt obesity interventions that are preventative in nature.

Clearly Canadians need to control the spread of obesity. In the United States obesity is also an extremely important issue; Rattigan and Biren (2007) wrote that “childhood obesity has more than tripled in three decades” (p. 35). Thomas (2004) called obesity a “public health burden” (p. 150); an obesity epidemic is already having an impact on the health care system (Green & Reese, 2006). Green and Reese (2006) cited environmental factors including television food advertisements and sedentary lifestyles as reasons for the obesity epidemic. The

issues of physical inactivity and obesity may lead to many other health and psychosocial problems.

Rattigan and Biren (2007) noted that children are far less active than they were 30 years ago. One major change in the last 30 years is the amount of time that people spend watching television, playing video games, and sitting at the computer. The idea of screen time is a fairly new problem. Many children and adults spend their working and leisure hours in front of screens; this disturbing trend is only getting worse (Active Healthy Kids Canada, 2007; 2009). *Canada's Report Card on Physical Activity for Children & Youth* (Active Healthy Kids Canada, 2007) gave Canadians a D- on the indicator of screen time. The report card noted that children between 10 and 16 spend on average six hours per day being sedentary in front of a screen. Shields and Tremblay (2008) noted that the increased time Canadians now spend involved in low metabolically active (meaning few calories are burned) sedentary activities such as screen time are more likely to blame for the rise in obesity than increased caloric consumption and lack of leisure time activity; neither of which has changed too dramatically in Canada in recent years. Sedentary screen time is also, noted the report card, a significant risk factor for anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem (Active Healthy Kids Canada, 2007). Clearly the large amounts of time spent inactively at the screen cuts into peoples' opportunity to be active. Another concern is that studies have shown "that sedentary behaviors, particularly television viewing, adopted in childhood track into adulthood" (Shields & Tremblay, 2008, p. 26). Movies, television shows, the internet, and games are very engaging; to combat screen time and inactivity, physical education and physical activity also need to be seen as engaging.

Problems with Current Physical Education Models

Physical education for many students is not engaging. Physical education, as currently practiced, does little to meet the needs of many students, and for some falls well short of the stated goal of promoting lifelong physical activity (Corbin, 2002; Ha et al., 2003; Johnson, 2003; Locke, 1992; Mohr, Townsend, & Pritchard, 2006; Wallhead, 2007). A major study that examined physical education programs in all 50 American states and the District of Columbia noted that there are still too many poor physical education practices that are common in U.S. schools (Lee, Burgeson, Fulton, & Spain, 2006). Authors have pointed out that most physical education programs remain much as they were 50 years ago including the same sport offerings (Ha et al., 2003; Shimon, 2007). The following problems with physical education practices may lead to poor student experiences and ultimately students disengaging from physical education and physical activity.

Concern has been expressed that the majority of the sports and activities offered are not those that are most often continued for the remainder of students' lifetimes (Active Healthy Kids Canada, 2009; Beyer, 2008; Corbin, 2002; Johnson, 2003; Mohr et al., 2006). Often the same sports and activities are repeated at various grade levels (Beyer, 2008; Ha et al., 2003; Humbert, 2006). This repetition leads to high school students being less engaged in their physical education classes than they were in middle school when the sports and activities were novel (Ha et al., 2003). This drop in interest in activities is especially prevalent for team sports (Ha et al., 2003). Authors have scolded physical education programs for their overemphasis on offering interschool sport activities in the curricular programs, despite the fact that these activities are not often activities that are continued late in life (Corbin, 2002; Ha et al., 2003; Hill & Cleven, 2005b). Clearly the activities traditionally offered are not motivating for many students

including a large number of high school students, students not interested in team sports, and many girls. This lack of motivating activity choice is especially alarming because researchers have found that students who are disinterested in the content of their physical education class are influenced in a negative way towards both their physical education class and physical activity (Morey & Karp, 1998).

Girls' and boys' physical education programs, even when run separately, often appear virtually the same. The major problem with conducting girls' and boys' physical education classes as one and the same is that research has shown that the majority of girls do not enjoy the same activities that boys do (Azzarito, Solomon, & Harrison, 2006; Corbin, 2002; Couturier, Chepko, & Coughlin, 2007; Gibbons & Humbert, 2008; Ha et al., 2003; Johnson, 2003). Girls are less likely to want to be involved in activities that they view as gendered (Azzarito et al., 2006). Girls wish to be involved in activities that are lifetime activities, yet are seldom afforded the chance (Gibbons & Humbert, 2008). Couturier et al. (2007) recommended examinations of physical education activity selection to ensure that the needs and interests of girls are considered. In coeducational settings, Gibbons and Humbert discovered that girls perceived that their teachers were more interested in their male peers' needs than their own. Azzarito et al. noted girls are often in subordinate roles to the boys who dominate the class; this can lead girls to feel a sense of alienation. Girl's dissatisfaction with physical education is clear, as most girls do not continue to take physical education classes once they become elective (Gibbons & Humbert, 2008).

Another traditional practice in physical education that has come under increased scrutiny of late is the focus on physical fitness. Corbin (2002) is an advocate of leaving the non-motivating 'get them fit policy' out of physical education to move towards programs based on

physical activity instead. Fitness goals often seem out of reach for many students and these students tend to give little effort in fitness activities (Corbin, 2002; Kilpatrick et al., 2002; Xiang et al., 2004). These fitness activities can decrease students' confidence and ultimately cause disinterest in the subject altogether (Corbin, 2002; Green & Reese, 2006). Corbin noted how ridiculous it is to focus on fitness when our goal is lifelong activity; noting that many lifelong activities do not require high levels of fitness or outstanding motor skills. When examining physical activity after high school, there is a greater adherence to exercise programs that are activity based than there is with fitness-based programs (Kilpatrick et al., 2002).

Many students feel alienated in physical education class. Often this alienation is based on inappropriate practices. Corbin (2002) believed that physical education needed to help all students develop positive self-perceptions; clearly alienating practices are not appropriate when trying to achieve the goal of lifelong activity. Lee et al. (2007) reported concern with the widespread use of such practices in current physical education programs in the United States. The practices of students standing in lines, watching from the sidelines, and captains selecting teams take away from activity time that could be used to help develop competency. These practices, by their very nature, alienate some students. Another practice of concern is the widespread play of elimination games, where the lowest skilled players who need the most practice are often the first removed from the game. Bombardment games, such as popular *dodgeball* games, can also humiliate, alienate, and eliminate students. Hopper (2000) noted that many physical education teachers, especially new teachers, taught their classes as they were taught and as they were coached. This may create further student alienation, because most students in physical education classes are not elite athletes as many of their teachers were. It does not seem to be a stretch to imagine students being turned off of a class based on the

unrealistic expectations of elite athletics. These inappropriate practices can demoralize students and help form negative attitudes.

Physical education instruction traditionally has been through teacher-centered approaches such as demonstration and drill and practice. Evidence has been collected that students, especially girls, would prefer learner-centered approaches (Gibbons & Humbert, 2008; Johnson, 2003). There is also evidence that most students are more motivated by task oriented goals (Ferrer-Caja & Weiss, 2000; Kilpatrick et al., 2002; Shen, McGaughtry, & Martin, 2008; Xiang et al., 2004); yet competition and ego-oriented goals are common in physical education classes (Johnson, 2003). Another concern is who designs the curriculum. Many students would like to be involved in selecting class activities (Gibbons & Humbert, 2008; Kilpatrick et al., 2002), yet they are seldom allowed any decision making ability—resulting in a sense of lack of control (Kilpatrick et al., 2002). Unfortunately, curricula are designed by teachers and administrators who often fail to create meaningful courses based on students' interests. Rather, courses are often designed based on facility restraints and teachers' interests and competencies (Ha et al., 2003).

Problematic practices led Locke (1992) to call physical education “a programmatic lemon” (p. 362). Humbert (2006) realized that many problems have not been addressed because physical educators have not had conversations with students to determine their needs. There is clearly dissonance between what students are interested in and what is currently being offered. Too often these problems lead to negative experiences for many students. To make the appropriate changes it is important to know what students are looking for and what motivates students in physical education.

Motivation in Physical Education

Intrinsic motivation, which is based upon student interests, has been proven to be successful in predicting school achievement (Deci & Ryan, 1992; Kohn, 1993b; Lent, 2006; Sun et al., 2008). Many studies have focused on physical education in particular to examine what motivates students (MacPhail et al., 2008; Shen et al., 2008; Standage, Duda, & Ntoumanis, 2005, 2006; Sun et al., 2008; Xiang et al., 2004). The study of motivation in physical education is especially important as motivation is the key to students either immersing themselves in, or withdrawing, from the class (Lee, 2004). It is further important to study motivation in physical education, as future physical activity appears to depend on positive physical education experiences (Alderman et al., 2006; Gibbons & Humbert, 2008; Kilpatrick et al., 2002; Lee, 2004; MacPhail et al., 2008). Interestingly, one study (Shen et al., 2008) examined motivation in physical education and compared it to mathematics. The study determined that motivation in physical education needs to be examined separately from other subjects as there is a great variance in the importance of different motivational factors.

Recently, the study of motivation in physical education has focused on Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory (Ferrer-Caja & Weiss, 2000; Johnson, 2003; Kilpatrick et al., 2002; Lundberg, 2007; Shen et al., 2008; Standage et al., 2005, 2006). Deci and Ryan (2002) theorized that there is a continuum of types of motivation. Amotivation, or the lack of motivation, sits at the bottom of the continuum. Extrinsic motivation sits in the middle with four identified levels of extrinsic motivation: external regulation, interjected regulation, identified regulation, and integrated regulation. *External regulation* is characterized by control of behavior based fully on extrinsic factors. *Interjected regulation* is when an external factor has been internalized. *Identified regulation* is recognizing external motives and consciously valuing them for internal

reasons. *Integrated regulation* is the most autonomous of extrinsic behavior where much of the behavior is internalized. At the top of the continuum is the optimal motivational type, *intrinsic motivation*. The theory also holds that there are three innate psychological needs that are essential for optimal functioning: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2002). Individuals engage in activities to meet these needs (Deci & Ryan, 2002; Lundberg, 2007) and the level to which these needs are met predicts the motivation type of the individual based upon the continuum of self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 2002; Standage et al., 2005). Studies have proven the application of self-determination theory to the physical education setting (Ferrer-Caja & Weiss, 2000; Shen et al., 2008; Standage et al., 2005, 2006). The studies of self-determination theory have come to similar conclusions that are well summarized by Ferrer-Caja and Weiss (2000):

Events that provide opportunities to satisfy persons' needs to feel competent and self-determining in dealing with the environment will maximize intrinsic motivation.

Intrinsically motivated persons will maximize effort and persistence in optimally challenging activities and experience interest and enjoyment that increases and sustains participation. (pp. 267-268)

Self-determined students are intrinsically motivated students and intrinsically motivated students are more likely to adhere to activity than are extrinsically motivated students (Kilpatrick et al., 2002).

The first of the innate psychological needs described in self-determination theory is autonomy. Autonomy refers to the degree to which individuals feel as though they have played a role in determining the course of action. One way to achieve student autonomy is to allow students to make decisions in their physical education class. Much recent literature in physical

education holds that student choice must be made central to physical education programs (Alderman et al., 2006; Ferrer-Caja & Weiss, 2000; Ha et al., 2003; Kilpatrick et al., 2002; Pagnano & Griffin, 2001; Sun et al., 2008). Choice will be examined at length later in this chapter. Autonomy has been proven to be of great importance to the motivational climate of physical education classes.

Competence, another innate psychological need identified by self-determination theory, has also been proven to be an important motivator in physical education (Alderman et al., 2006; Ferrer-Caja & Weiss, 2000; Johnson, 2003; Kilpatrick et al., 2002; Lee, 2004; Standage et al., 2005, 2006; Xiang et al., 2004). Competence is the feeling of ability to achieve an assigned task. It is important to note that competence is based on an individual's sense of their own ability level, which has led some authors to refer to it as *perceived competence* (Ferrer-Caja & Weiss, 2000; Hashim, Grove, & Whipp, 2008; Lee, 2004; Shen et al., 2008). Literature noted the importance of physical education settings where perceived competence is based on mastery goals, that is learning the topic, and not on performance goals, or performance against others; students will more readily engage if it is mastery not competition based (Ferrer-Caja & Weiss, 2000; Kilpatrick et al., 2002; Shen et al., 2008; Xiang et al., 2004). Kilpatrick et al. suggested setting goals that are moderately difficult so that they are at once challenging and attainable. In order to allow students to achieve mastery goals, it is important to allow them time to develop their skills so they can develop the feelings of competency (Alderman et al., 2006). Students will feel more competent and have a better chance of reaching levels of competence if they receive positive feedback (Kilpatrick et al., 2002) even though positive feedback is an extrinsic motivator. Perceived competence can be destroyed through critical analysis of student skills and abilities (Thomas, 2004). As students age, their feelings of perceived competence diminish (Lee,

2004), therefore it may be even more important for older students to be afforded the time to develop their skills.

Relatedness is the innate need to feel a sense of belonging. Authors have pointed out the importance of allowing students to develop social relationships and teamwork (Hashim et al., 2008; Kilpatrick et al., 2002; Lundberg, 2002; MacPhail et al., 2008). Peer interaction and cooperative learning can go a long way to developing students' sense of belonging in physical education (Hashim et al., 2008). Self-determination theory and the three innate psychological needs help explain motivation in physical education; however, there is much more literature on the topic.

Other studies of motivation in physical education have identified the key motivating factors of activity value, situational interest, parental encouragement, and fun and enjoyment. Students will be more motivated by activities that they value (Xiang et al., 2004). Value is tied to competence, in that students are more likely to attach value to an activity in which they feel they can have success (Sun et al., 2008; Xiang et al., 2004). Students are also likely to attach greater value to activities that they find to be relevant and interesting (Johnson, 2003; Sun et al., 2008; Xiang et al., 2004), or new and novel (Hill & Cleven, 2005b). The value placed on activities is also associated with previous knowledge (Sun et al., 2008). When students value an activity they are more likely to engage (Chung & Phillips, 2002; Sun et al., 2008). The challenge is that different students value different activities.

Sun et al. (2008) identified another potential motivator that they thought could be controlled for the whole group: *situational interest*. Situational interest is not related to the task itself; rather with the design of the task and the set up. To create situational interest the authors noted the importance of five things: novelty, optimal challenge, attention demand, exploration

intention, and instant enjoyment. When any one of these five items is present, students may find the task to be situationally interesting. The authors wrote that “situational interest should be considered a critical component in the curricular/instructional process” (p. 68). A motivator that is harder for teachers to manipulate is parental encouragement. Lee (2004) noted the importance of students being supported in their efforts in physical education. Johnson (2003) wrote “in order to get students to want to achieve, teachers must first get students to believe that their physical education class is an important part of their education and that it is applicable to their life outside school” (p. 20). Perhaps this statement needs to be modified to include the importance of having parents support what physical education teachers are trying to achieve, so that parents can be supportive of children’s experiences.

Another commonly researched motivator in physical education literature is *fun and enjoyment*. It seems simple enough: if students enjoy what they are doing, they will be motivated to continue. Students who enjoy their physical education experiences are more likely to be physically active (Alderman et al., 2006; Gibbons & Humbert, 2008; Lee, 2004; MacPhail et al., 2008). Literature suggests that physical educators should place student fun and enjoyment as central goals in all programs (Hashim et al., 2008; Humbert, 2006; MacPhail et al., 2008). Many factors can influence student enjoyment in physical education. Much of what students find to be motivating also can lead to fun; including peer interaction, perceptions of competence, task mastery, and parental encouragement (Hashim et al., 2008; Humbert, 2006). In their study of grade eight, nine, and ten physical education students, Hashim et al. (2008) discovered that *activity-generated excitement* had the highest correlation with physical education enjoyment. Activity-generated excitement is the excitement students derive from feelings of competence, novelty of task, value, and/or interest in a specific activity. Other factors identified in the study

with high correlation to fun are teacher generated excitement, and other-referent competency. *Teacher-generated excitement* is conveyed to the students by a teacher who shows genuine interest in the activity and/or the students. *Other-referent competency* refers to how well individuals other than yourself feel you are doing in the class. Sources of other-referent information may include teachers, parents, and classmates. It appears clear that physical education teachers can create fun and enjoyment for their students by providing exciting activities, an exciting environment, and the students with positive feedback. It is unfortunate then that there is a sharp decline in enjoyment in physical education as students grow older (Hashim et al., 2008). The decline in enjoyment seems to suggest that it will be important for secondary physical educators to learn how to reengage students who have had poor previous experiences, and as a result, have disengaged.

Engaging the Disengaged

Increasingly student engagement is becoming a stated goal of schools and curriculum (OECD, 2000; Willms & Flanagan, 2007). This is a goal that will require a significant paradigm shift if it is to be reached. Many students in classrooms today are not engaging in their learning (Kohn, 1999; Schlechy, 2002). Disengaged students act in many different ways in the classroom setting, but one thing they have in common is a strong disinterest in school (Audas & Willms, 2001; Schlechy, 2002). A common topic in educational literature is how to engage students who are disengaged.

There is agreement that teachers can help engage disengaged students in many ways. Teachers looking to better engage their students should be upbeat, and provide fun and interesting learning environments (Easton, 2008; OECD, 2000). Teachers with a clear passion

for their subject area have also been identified as having a role in reengagement (Easton, 2008). Disengaged students are similarly looking for teachers who do more than teach; they require teachers who will care about their many diverse needs (Easton, 2008; OECD, 2000). Students who lack the necessary skills are likely to disengage (Audas & Willms, 2001); these students need to feel safe in their learning environment (Easton, 2008; OECD, 2000), including a feeling of safety from the fear of failure. Studies show that students will better learn and engage if they do not fear failure (OECD, 2000). Importantly, teachers need to have high expectations for all students (Lent, 2006; OECD, 2000). Lent (2006) explained that expectations for students are self-fulfilling prophecies; therefore, teachers need to expect excellence from all students. It has also been recommended that for disengaged students, classroom management needs to be altered away from steadfast rules and towards guiding principles (Easton, 2008; Kohn, 1996).

Teachers can also play a role in helping students develop a sense of belonging in the school. Interaction with teachers outside of class time is important for disengaged students (Audas & Willms, 2001). Easton (2008) supported advisory periods where students meet for non-curricular time with a teacher, these periods are seen as a means to helping attach students to their schools. It is also important for disengaged students to develop a sense of belonging with a group of peers in the school. Audas and Willms (2001) noted that one cause of high school dropout is students lacking peer relationships in their school; these unattached students often seek relationships with peer groups outside the school that may have negative implications for the students schooling.

Disengaged students need to find a sense of belonging in the school; they also need to feel a sense of belonging with the curriculum. Individualization is a powerful way to engage disengaged students (Blankenstein, 2007; Easton, 2008; OECD, 2000). Blankenstein (2007)

noted that disengaged students will be bored quickly unless they are presented with relevant and interesting content and are taught using methods that match their learning styles.

Teachers with authority to design courses based on students interests have also been noted to engage disengaged students (Easton, 2008; OECD, 2000). Teachers with this freedom are better able to adapt courses to meet the collective needs and interests of the group as well as of individual students. Students are engaged more easily when the curriculum they are involved in is relevant to them (Easton, 2008; OECD, 2000). One excellent way to ensure relevance to students is to allow them choice. Choice has been shown to be a powerful motivator for disengaged students (Easton, 2008; OECD, 2000). Many different types of choices can motivate; being able to select (a) classes, (b) what and how they will learn, and (c) how they will present their learning are all choices that can easily be given to students. Easton (2008) noted the engaging power of a modular style of choice. She described schools with more than one class per grade level where the teachers at that grade level each offered different units and the children in those classes had the option of which unit of study they would take part. Choice appears to be a powerful tool to help students find interest and relevance in their studies, and therefore, a powerful tool to engaging the disengaged. To summarize the importance of choice, Easton wrote “choice is one way to engage students in their own learning. Without choice, students—and not just those who struggle—may disengage from learning or learn little” (p. 101).

Student Choice

A lack of choice can harm student motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1992). Kohn (1993a) argued that it is lack of choice more than any other factor that leads to student burnout. Harper (2007) contended that controlling environments can in fact destroy intrinsic motivation. The

opposite of control is choice: students are more intrinsically motivated when they are granted decision-making power (Deci & Ryan, 1992; Harper, 2007; Kohn, 1993a, 1993b; Lent, 2006; Schlecty, 2002). Allowing students to take responsibility for their learning can be a powerful tool for engagement. Abbott and Ryan (2001) stated, “the brain is predisposed to learn and to take responsibility for it” (p. 15). If students have the ability to guide their own education, it seems counterproductive to have adults making decisions that students could make for themselves. There needs to be a transition that Abbott and Ryan termed “intellectual weaning” (p. 15)—a process where students gradually gain autonomy and become independent learners (Abbott & Ryan, 2001; Fisher & Frey, 2008).

Allowing student choice is important for many reasons. When students have the power to make decisions related to their education, achievement increases (Davies, 2007). Choice allows for students to take control of their learning, which allows students to feel empowered and comfortable with their learning (Bigelow & Vokoun, 2005; Blankenstein, 2007; Easton, 2008). A major goal of education is readying students for society; allowing students to have a say in their education promotes democratic principles (Easton, 2008; Kohn, 1999). Students are more intrinsically motivated when they are granted decision-making power (Bigelow & Vokoun, 2005; Kohn, 1993b; Lent, 2006). Based on this motivation, students who are empowered to be self-determining, complete more tasks in less time, have better recall, are more creative, are more regular attendees, and enjoy higher self esteem and perceived competence (Kohn, 1993b). Most importantly, students are more engaged when they are able to control their own learning (Bigelow & Vokoun, 2005; Certo et al., 2008). When it comes to student engagement “there is no question about it: choice works” (Kohn, 1993b, p. 223).

The choices that students make occur in a continuum from small choices to large and elaborate choices that dramatically impact their learning. Schlecty (2002) encouraged teachers to allow students options on how they will learn. Other choice models allow for the determination of the material to be covered; the largest degree of choice being a completely inquiry-based curriculum where students and teachers collaborate to determine all course content (Bigelow & Vokoun, 2005). Whatever the choice model used, or the size of the choices to be made, it is clear that student choice is empowering, motivating, and engaging. Kohn (1993a) wrote “it is frankly difficult to understand how anyone can talk about school reform without immediately addressing the question of how students can be given more say about what goes on in their classes” (p. 4).

One large experiment on student power and decision-making was the subject of Neill’s (1960) book *Summerhill*. Summerhill School is located in Leiston, Suffolk, England. The school run by Neill was an experiment in raising “healthy, free children” (p. 4). The school was established in 1921 after Neill, who had been a teacher in regular schools in England, saw problems with the school system. He saw schools as being “based on an adult conception of what a child should be and how a child should learn. The other way [the regular English school’s way of education] dated from the days when psychology was still an unknown science” (p. 4). The school was vastly different than other schools: students and staff were seen as equals, students did not have timetables, nor were they made to attend classes. The school was set up essentially free of any rewards system, rather the students learned for the sake of learning; “free children take to mathematics. They find joy in geography and in history” (p. 31). Neill was writing about students’ ability to learn based on intrinsic motivation. By Neill’s account, the

school was a great success in raising students who were interested in learning what they wanted to learn and were free from adult imposed fears.

Reviews of Summerhill were mixed. In 1970, a collection of essays responding to Neill's radical approach to education was published entitled *Summerhill: For and Against*. Neill came under fire by some educators who despised his progressive form of education. One common argument against free education was made by multiple authors based on a report by British government inspectors that identified the intrinsic motivation to learn that the students possessed; however, it also noted the meager achievements of Summerhill students (Ames, 1970; Rafferty, 1970). Many other criticisms were made of Neill's approach to child rearing, among them the thought that he was a master educator and his feats could not be replicated (LeShan, 1970), that the student teacher ratio was low at Summerhill and free schooling would not work in mass education (Hechinger, 1970), and that he did not focus on teaching methods (Montagu, 1970). Other arguments were made on morale and religious grounds, especially targeting Neill's lack of concern over topics such as stealing, masturbation, and premarital sex (Rafferty, 1970). It is interesting that with the intentional lack of religion at Summerhill, that one of Neill's strongest supporters was an ordained priest. Reverend John Culkin (1970) wrote in support of Neill's ideals based on the changing times as a result of the emerging of television culture and the electronic age. Other supporters wrote of the special importance of free schooling for struggling students (Holt, 1970; Montagu, 1970; Papanek, 1970). More of the authors agreed, at least in part, with the ideals of Summerhill. Despite the debate over Neill's model of free schooling, Summerhill still exists as a free school today; and student choice is widely sought by many educators, including many physical educators.

Student Choice in Physical Education

There is a great wealth of literature on the importance of student choice specifically to physical education. In referring to the common practice of student choice days, whereby teachers allow students to do whatever they want for one period, Pagnano and Griffin (2001) warn that choice must be given with intent, structure, and student and teacher accountability. The choice data that will be discussed in this section is not based on informal open gym days, rather well structured programs of choice in physical education.

There is strong consensus that allowing students to be involved in selecting activities in the physical education setting is intrinsically motivating (Alderman et al., 2006; Condon & Collier, 2002; Ferrer-Caja & Weiss, 2000; Ha et al., 2003; Kilpatrick et al., 2002; Sun et al., 2008). There are many reasons why choice acts as a motivator in physical education. Choice allows for students to select activities in which they feel they can be successful (Condon, & Collier, 2002; Shimon, 2007; Standage et al., 2006, Xiang et al., 2004). The ability to be successful, or feel competent, in an activity has been shown to motivate students (Hashim et al., 2008; Shen et al., 2008; Standage et al., 2006; Xiang et al). Students are able to choose sports and activities that hold meaning for them (Hill & Cleven, 2005b; Shimon, 2007). Hashim et al. (2008), when examining enjoyment in physical education, discovered that the strongest predictor of fun was activity-generated excitement; clearly through choice students can choose activities that excite them. Students are also able to select more diverse curricular offerings and try new activities (Gibbons & Humbert, 2008; Hill & Cleven, 2005b). Students are also afforded the opportunity to select sports and activities that would not normally be offered to their gender, but in which they may be interested (Shimon, 2007). Largely based on interest, students who have been allowed choice of activities have been shown to stay engaged in that activity for a longer

period of time (Condon & Collier, 2002). Allowing students to determine the activities they will be involved in increases the opportunities for coeducational activity. Hill and Cleven (2005a), in their study of six schools in California, found that “a majority of the students felt all of the activities should be offered in coeducational environments” (p. 191); however, this does disagree with Humbert’s (2006) finding that most boys and girls wanted segregated classes. Condon and Collier (2002) used student choice successfully as a way to address lack of student participation. Students are excited by the very idea of choice; in their study of over 5000 high school students in Hong Kong, Ha et al. (2003) found that there was overwhelming support from students to be involved in the design of their physical education curriculum. Seventy-five percent of respondents wanted to be involved in the creation of their class; this led the authors to support ongoing student-teacher collaboration. Hill and Cleven (2005b) reported that students who feel as though they have influence over the activities that are offered:

are less likely to demonstrate negative attitudes or experience frustration and stress.

Furthermore, if students are able to assist in the selection of their physical education activities, they may feel more pride in, and ownership of their physical education program. (p. 6)

Examinations of girls’ physical education shed light on the fact that choice is even more important as a motivator for girls (Azzarito et al., 2006; Gibbons & Humbert, 2008; Ha et al., 2003; Hill & Cleven, 2005a; Ishee, 2005; Johnson, 2003). In the study of Hong Kong high school students, 82% of female respondents wanted choice compared to 67% of male respondents (Ha et al, 2003). Girls who experience choice in physical education are more likely to be engaged and less likely to be amotivated (Azzarito et al., 2006; Ishee, 2005). When girls have the chance to be involved in activities that interest them, they will participate (Gibbons &

Humbert, 2008). Gibbons and Humbert, after interviewing middle school girls, noted the girls' desire to have a wide variety of activity offerings and some role in the decision making process.

Declining interest in physical education as students age is a harsh reality that may be effectively combated by implementing choice. This challenge makes choice a necessity for high school programs (Beyer, 2008; Ha et al., 2003; Ishee, 2005) and recommended for middle school programs (Johnson, 2003). In high school, students experience their last mandatory physical education classes; therefore it is imperative that they enjoy these last experiences. Lundberg (2007) indicated that students who experienced activity choice within mandatory physical education classes were more likely to enroll in elective physical education courses and also were more likely to be active during their leisure time. Self-management is also learned through choice, which will help students learn to self-direct their activity for their lifetime (Condon & Collier, 2002). Speaking to the role that choice plays in moving students towards the ultimate goal of lifelong physical activity, Corbin (2002) stated, "our work with intrinsic motivation indicates that choice is central to autonomy, and autonomy is central to lifetime physical activity adherence" (p. 138).

Ha et al. (2003) stated, "students' interests and views must be included into the curriculum design and implementation" (p. 194). It is important to note the position of the Saskatchewan physical education curriculum, which is very much in favor of allowing students the opportunity to make decisions (Saskatchewan Education, 1994). The curriculum guide does not determine which activities need to be offered, but rather suggest six recommended activity areas and stated, "student needs and interests must be considered" (Saskatchewan Education, 1994, p. 11) in selecting activities. An activity interest template is provided in the secondary physical education curriculum guide to assist the process of student choice. Further evidence for

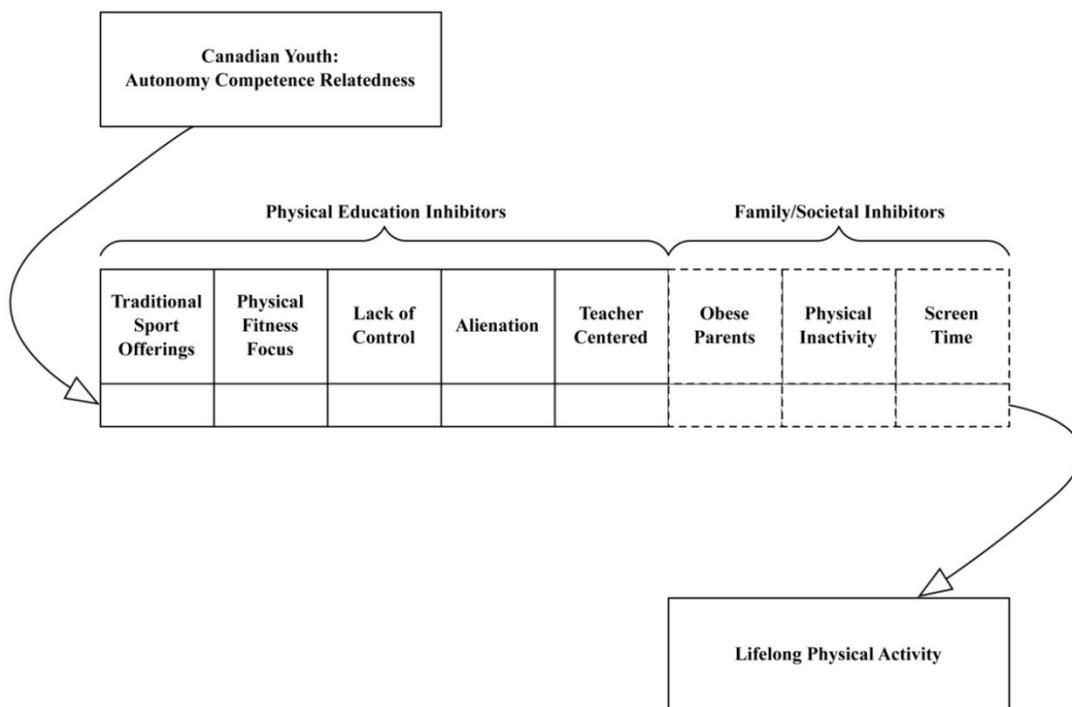
the support of choice in Saskatchewan curricula is in the core curriculum. Saskatchewan Curricula are designed around the core curriculum. The *common essential learnings* and *adaptive dimension*, as part of the core curriculum, are to be made central to all subject areas. There is a great deal of flexibility built in through the adaptive dimension, which recommends teachers and students deciding which activities will be offered in the course. Independent learning, one of the six common essential learnings, is defined as allowing students to make important decisions regarding their education. Based on the centrality of the core curriculum and the core curriculum's pro student choice stance, it is clear that choice is not just recommended; rather, it is mandated in Saskatchewan.

There are different models for how to get students involved in selecting their course content. Hill and Cleven (2005a, 2005b) recommended teachers survey students on a yearly basis to determine what activities the students deem to be interesting. Humbert (2006) recommended listening to students to hear their needs. Condon and Collier (2002) described a choice program that can be referred to as *modular physical education*. In this program there is more than one sport offering at all times. The semester is divided into a series of modules. Students select which activity they would like to take part in for the duration of each module. In a case examined by Condon and Collier, there were two middle years classes booked into the gym at the same time. They utilized the two assigned teachers and one community volunteer for each module. For every module, each adult ran one activity section to ensure the students had a choice of three different activities. This also served to decrease the student-to-teacher ratio and allowed for more feedback and more activity time. Student responses to this model were very positive and solidified the literature; choice is fun, motivating, and ultimately very appealing to students.

Physical Education Enjoyment Inhibitor Figures

The figures represented in figures 1-3 were developed to organize the literature reviewed, and to help frame the present study. The figures examine a selective group of inhibitors that are by no means comprehensive.

Figure 1: Inhibitors to Lifelong Physical Activity



The figure begins on the left with Canadian youth and their three innate needs, as described by Deci and Ryan's (2002) self-determination theory and concludes on the right with the fulfillment of the goal of physical education, lifelong physical activity. In between Canadian youth and the goal of lifelong physical activity are the barriers, or inhibitors outlined in the literature, to achieving a physically active lifestyle. These inhibitors are categorized into three groups. The first group, physical education inhibitors, are framed by a solid border to identify that all children experience them to varying degrees, through mandatory physical education classes. The other two categories, family and societal inhibitors, are framed by a broken boarder to symbolize that not all children experience these inhibitors, or that they are experienced to

greatly varying degrees. The inhibitor of physical inactivity can be both a family and a societal factor. The figure suggests that in order to facilitate youth becoming active adults they need to have as positive an experience as possible overcoming each inhibitor. A strongly negative response to any one inhibitor may cause the youth to disengage from physical education and never realize the goal of lifelong physical activity. By outlining five potential inhibitors related to school physical education programs, the figure clearly notes the importance of positive physical education experiences to moving students towards active lifestyles.

Figure 2: Students with Positive Physical Education Experiences

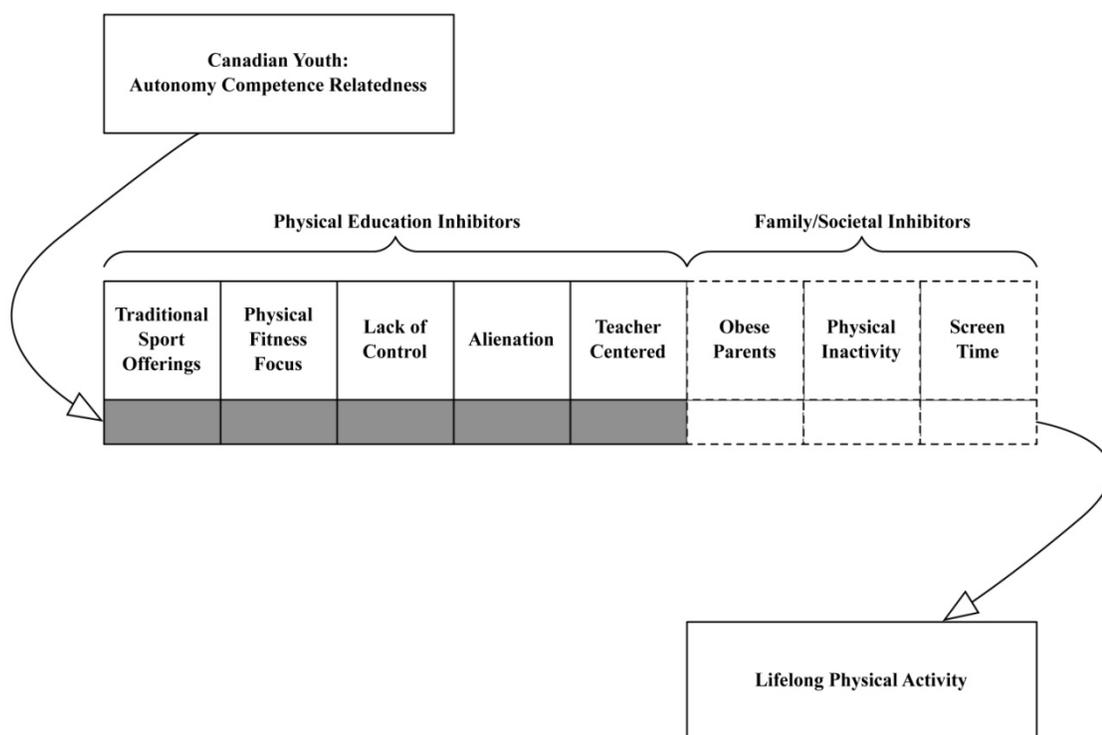


Figure 2 examines the response of a student who greatly enjoys their physical education experience. The filled in area represents inhibitors that either no longer function as inhibitors or that are actually facilitators. Even though the student experiences the potential inhibitors in their physical education class they may enjoy the overall experience enough not to notice the potential

inhibitors. They may also be gifted enough athletically that possible barriers for some may in fact act as facilitators for their activity. For example, a student may excel at traditional team activities; therefore, continually playing team activities will help them build feelings of competence. This phenomenon of inhibitors serving as facilitators may also be true for the focus on physical fitness, where students have already achieved high levels of physical fitness. These students are less likely to feel alienated in their classes as they are less likely to be the last students selected, passed to, or the first students eliminated from games. The figure assumes that these students will not feel powerless in the physical education environment that they enjoy. Based on enjoyment and competence, these students are not likely to feel inhibited by the teacher-centered approaches in the class. Therefore, it is assumed that for some students the inhibitors are not inhibitors at all; rather, they can act as facilitators for lifelong activity. Unfortunately, many students are not gifted athletes and have been inhibited from enjoying their physical education classes. In Figure 3, I demonstrate how choice may help facilitate lifelong activity for students who have disengaged from physical education.

Figure 3: Impact of Choice on Lifelong Physical Activity

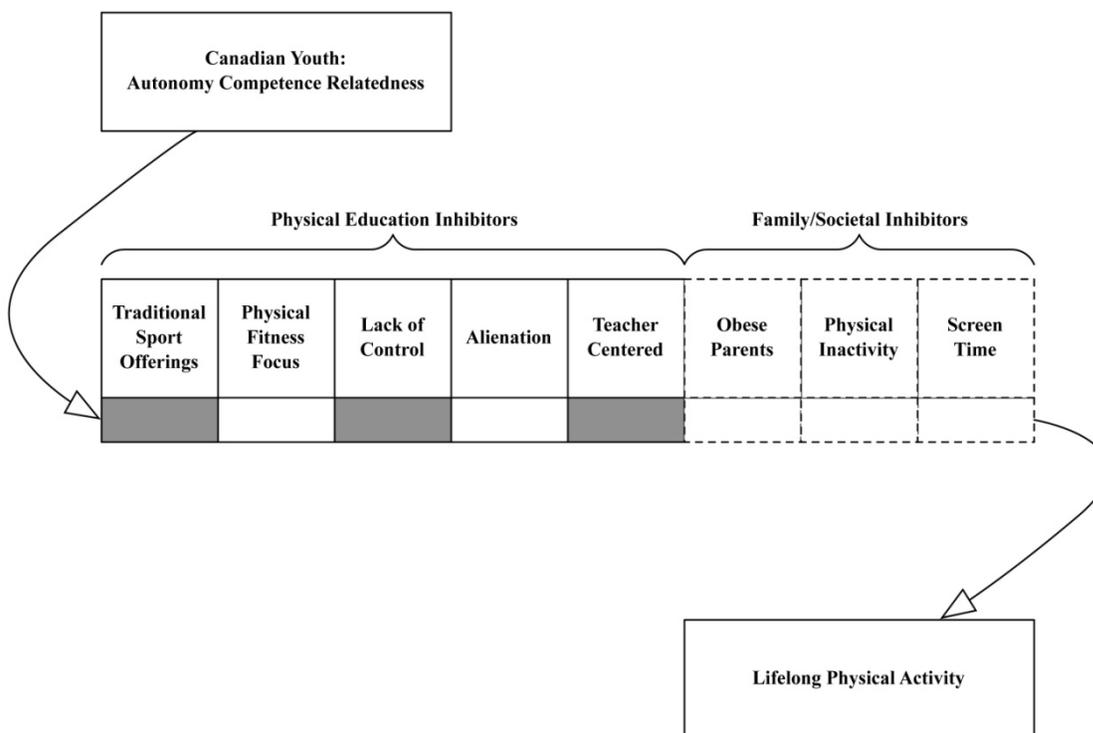


Figure 3 illustrates the role that choice may play in moving students, who are not strong athletes or who have disengaged from physical education classes, towards achieving a lifetime of physical activity. Choice counteracts at least three major inhibitors within the physical education setting. Choice clearly allows for students to select activities that are novel or are of interest, thus counteracting the inhibitor of traditional sport offerings. Students are given considerably more control over their education, thus allowing students to feel they are in control and also to feel as though they are operating within a student centered educational model. It is important also to note that attitudes towards physical fitness may also be changed if students are afforded the opportunity to select how they will address the fitness approach within the class. In addition,

students may feel less alienated with the physical education setting if they partake in activities with a group of students who share a similar interest as choice would allow.

The figure also illustrates that choice alone will not ensure that all students become active adults. Alienation may remain in physical education classes, particularly if traditional practices such as the selection of teams through captains, bombardment games, and elimination games persist. Students whose fitness levels are low may still find the fitness focus of classes to be disengaging. The figure also illustrates that even with controlling some of the physical education based factors through choice; there are also family and societal inhibitors that cannot be controlled. The figure illustrates that choice should help to move students towards the goal of lifetime activity; however, it holds no grand delusions that choice will be able to move all students towards this end.

Chapter Summary

Research informs us that allowing students choice is one means to move students towards intrinsic motivation to learn. The goal of physical education, lifelong activity, appears attainable if students are provided with enjoyable, motivating, and engaging experiences. The physical health of Canadians in relation to obesity and inactivity highlights the need for stronger preventative measures including more responsive physical education programs. The literature reviewed suggests that physical education programs require alterations to reinvent students' experiences. One such change that has been repeatedly recommended is meeting students' innate psychological needs of autonomy by involving students in determining the activities in which they will participate.

Gap in literature

The literature on choice clearly points to the motivational effects that choice can have. In the studies of choice, most researchers have used interviews to ascertain valuable information from participants. The students interviewed, however, are not identified as students who have previously enjoyed or disliked physical education. Based on the knowledge that many girls have traditionally not enjoyed physical education, there is literature on choice and its impact on girls. There seems to be a gap in the literature regarding students, especially boys, who have not enjoyed previous physical education experiences. How will choice impact the experiences of disengaged students in physical education? Literature has not yet provided a satisfactory answer.

CHAPTER THREE:

METHODOLOGY AND METHOD

Although they are not the only means to promote activity, physical education programs are at the frontlines of an important preventative battle to help keep students motivated to be active outside of school time and throughout their lives. Based on mounting evidence that the societal trend towards physical inactivity is only growing stronger, it appears clear that the challenge is only getting larger. Many physical education programs have not adapted to the needs of modern society. Some physical education programs fail to provide programs that are interesting and relevant to the majority of students. Many students have poor experiences in physical education classes.

This chapter will introduce my position within the study. Connections between the research and critical theory and constructivism will be drawn. The qualitative nature of the study is addressed; this includes sections on the tools to be used to collect data and the strategies to be used for data analysis. The context of the study is examined; included are a look a physical education program and the school in which the study will focus. Finally, the chapter focuses on the ethical guidelines to be followed for this study.

Methodology

The Researcher's Position

As a physical education teacher for the past five years, I have noticed many students who were not enjoying their experiences. It took reading an article (Humbert, 2006) to further my

thoughts. In the article Humbert described a conversation she had with a physical education teacher:

He told me that the biggest challenge he faced in his teaching was to offer a physical education program that met the needs of the vast majority of his students, who were not at all like him! ... He commented that most of his students were not the gifted athletes that he and many other physical education teachers were. The majority of his students did not view movement as an integral part of their lives and they certainly did not share his love of physical activity. (p. 3)

I participated in and enjoyed athletics at a high level. My experiences as an athlete in football and wrestling, both in high school and as a post-secondary athlete, were exceptional and have shaped who I am. I greatly enjoy physical activity of all types and walk to school every day. However, as the teacher in Humbert's article realized, I too realized that most of my students are not like me. I have struggled to find ways to facilitate enjoyment for those who do not enjoy physical education, and believe strongly that one such way to help motivate students is through affording them the ability to make decisions regarding activity selection.

As highlighted by a wealth of research (Corbin, 2002; Ha et al., 2003; Hill & Cleven, 2005b), there is a strong emphasis placed on team sports in high school physical education. These sports tend to favor some students at the expense of others. Physical education programs seem designed for athletic men who play traditional team sports. This leaves the vast majority of students including non-athletic students, students who enjoy non-traditional activities, and many girls to take programs that cater to someone else. This is compounded by tradition in physical education. Humbert (2006) stated that it was her comfort within the setting that led her to a career in physical education; I would argue that this is true for me and for the majority of my

colleagues. I would also contend that individuals who are comfortable with the setting they had in their own school experiences are more likely to teach the way they were taught (Hopper, 1999, 2000). This has led to physical education remaining much the same as it was 50 years ago (Ha et al., 2003; Shimon, 2007). Humbert highlighted what she deemed to be essential to change current physical education pedagogy: listening to the students, looking at physical education through their eyes. Using a constructivist research methodology will allow me to listen to the participants.

Guba and Lincoln (1994) wrote that in studies following a constructivist methodology “the investigator and the object of the investigation are assumed to be interactively linked” (p. 111). The interviews were by nature dialectical. Participants were engaged in dialogue to determine their experiences and feelings around a number of topics related to the research themes. As the researcher, I play an active role in each interview and am vitally linked to the information presented by the participants; however, the semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed for the participants to share control of the study. The interviews were transactional in that the findings were discovered as the study proceeded (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The transactional process of the interviews also allowed for themes that were not originally intended to be discovered to emerge from the interviews, and thus they became findings. In this way the participants, although not involved in the creation of the interview guide, are able to greatly impact the breadth of the study.

In staying true to constructivism my voice is included in the discussion of collected data as a “passionate participant” (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 194). More importantly, the voices of the participants are the foundation for all findings. In the fourth chapter, I have brought together the voices of the participants as I attempted to interpret the results and explain the findings,

therefore my role was hermeneutic in nature (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; 2005). As with Lincoln and Guba's (1994; 2005) definition of constructivism the findings of this study will be subjective. This subjectivity was created by the knowledge that the findings of the study are restricted to the experiences and self-reporting of the participants. Related to subjectivity is relativism. The awareness of relativism is important for this study as it alerts us to the fact that the findings of the study are dependent on the individual participants and the environments in which they have interacted. Based on the subjective and relative nature of the findings of this study, it is also antifoundational, a term that Guba and Lincoln (2005) used to note the constructivist belief that no truth can be held as permanent or unvarying.

Guba and Lincoln (2005) noted a recent shift in the constructivist model towards action: previously it was held that researchers should only seek to interpret and understand. Guba and Lincoln (2005) wrote that:

the shift towards action came in response to widespread nonutilization of evaluation findings and the desire to create forms of evaluation that would attract champions who might follow through on recommendations with meaningful action plans. For others, embracing action came as both a political and an ethical commitment (p. 201).

If the findings of this study present a strong enough case to warrant action, I will make recommendations for future practice.

Guba and Lincoln (1982) wrote, "anyone who has done research involving humans is well aware that one cannot abandon one's own humanness in the interest of 'objective' inquiry; it is both impossible and ethically undesirable to do so" (p. 240). Based on my close connection to the subject, I remained aware of my personal standpoint and used my knowledge and positionality within the interactions of the interviews to be what Guba and Lincoln termed a

smart instrument. A smart instrument is an inquirer who is capable of “honing in on relevant facts and ideas by virtue of his or her sensitivity, responsiveness, and adaptability” (p. 240).

Methods

This study was qualitative in nature. To select the participants for the qualitative study a brief survey was administered. This purposeful sample was drawn through what Creswell (2005) termed *extreme case sampling*. Extreme case sampling, Creswell noted, is acceptable where there is a particularly troublesome or enlightening case. I believe that this study addressed both troubling and enlightening cases. The troubling issue addressed in this study related to students who have not enjoyed their previous physical education experiences. The choice program that was examined offered a unique and enlightening approach to address the challenges that students who have not enjoyed previous physical education experiences might have faced.

Berg (1995) used the term *field investigation* to refer to pre-studies that help identify the sought after sample. Field investigation was used for the purpose of this study to identify students from the purposefully sampled school who further met the criteria of students who did not enjoy their previous physical education experiences. The field investigation was conducted through the use of a brief survey that asked three simple questions:

1. Did you enjoy your previous physical education experiences (this question was answered using a Likert-scaled response from 1-5)?
2. If you are willing to participate in this study what is your full name so you can be contacted.
3. If you are willing to participate in this study, what is your sex?

Students sex was asked so that, if there were more than five students that were willing to participate and ranked their previous physical education experiences low on the Likert-scale, students from both genders could be examined through interview.

The survey used for the field investigation was not be used as a source of information for the study itself. The survey was used to elicit those students who met the criteria for the study. Surveys that did not meet the requirements for participation in the study were immediately destroyed. Completed surveys that matched the requirements for the study were kept until the participants were determined. Once interview participants had been identified, contacted, and all interviews conducted, all surveys were destroyed. As the surveys were not used as an information source for the study, students filling in the survey were not given consent forms prior to the survey. This study was strictly qualitative and was based solely on the information acquired through the interviews.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted on an individual basis at the students' school. The interviews were aimed at acquiring information on some common themes. The primary theme that was sought was the impact choice in the students' grade 10 physical education program has had on their current experience. Participants were asked if they believed that they were more likely to be active outside of class time, and later in life as a result of their opportunity for choice. Participants were also asked to explore their previous physical education experiences and describe why these experiences were not viewed as enjoyable. However, despite the goals of the interviews in reaching information on set themes, the interviews were semi-structured and allowed for flexibility for the students to tell their stories and of their experiences. Prior to the interviews participants were sent introduction letters and consent/assent

forms. As the participants were all under 18 years of age, the participants' parents were also sent a consent document.

The question for this study was best answered through a qualitative study, specifically interview. I reached this conclusion because I feel that, consistent with the work of Bogdan and Biklen (2008), the research approach must match the research question. Interview was selected as the method because of the ability to really '*get to know*' certain students' stories and experiences in-depth (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996). Humbert (2006) noted that "it is only when we truly listen that we can begin to meet the needs of our students" (p. 4). Interviews with students who have identified their previous physical education experiences as non-enjoyable seemed to be the most logical means to address the posed research question: does student choice have an impact on the experiences of grade 10 students who have not enjoyed their previous physical education experiences?

Context

School.

This study was based on an examination of grade 10 students of a newly constructed Saskatchewan high school. The school initially opened its doors to grade nine and 10 students, and added grade 11 in the school year in which the study was conducted. At the time of the study the school enrollment was approximately 520 students, with the majority of these students being in grades nine and 10. As the school continues to grow, it is projected to house 800-900 students. As a result of these partnerships Prairie View High School [pseudonym] benefited from exceptional facilities for physical education including two full size gyms, a large fitness facility, a walk/jog track, as well as a full complement of fields.

Physical education program.

The grade 10 students were the first group to be involved in a modular physical education experiment at the school; as such, the students likely had not previously been exposed to choice in physical education. The class the students were taking was a mandatory course for both boys and girls, as determined by the school division. Based on the mandatory nature of the class, there were bound to be students who were taking the class because they are required to do so, and not out of personal interest. Many of these students, who would rather not take the class, may have felt this way based on their previous experiences in physical education classes. There were two sections of grade 10 physical education that were offered in the same period, one class of boys and the other of girls. Each section had a teacher assigned to it. The students who had physical education in the first semester were involved in a process where they constructed a list of potential activities that they were interested in experiencing. The two teachers then took the list and created a matrix of activities that had spawned the most interest; activities in which there was a great deal of interest were offered more than once. Each module had six class periods (approximately six hours). During each module there were two offerings, with each teacher being responsible for an activity for the six days. The students were asked to register for the activities that they were most interested in for each module. In each module that the students selected they would be instructed on the skills and rules required to be active. The result was that students participated in a course and learned about activities that they had selected for themselves. For more information on the program organization refer to Appendices A and B. Note there were modules in the first semester where three activities were offered; this was because in the first semester the school had interns who also offered some activities. This allowed for more student choice, as well as smaller class size.

Tools

Data Collection Instruments

As previously stated, data was collected through the use of interviews. As interview will was the method utilized, I, the researcher, was the primary research tool for the study.

Consistent with the suggestions of Bogdan and Biklen (2007) the interviews were conducted using a semi-structured approach. This approach was used to allow for trust and rapport to develop between the interviewer and the interviewee. As recommended by Bogdan and Biklen, interviews started with small-talk and conversation based on the purpose of the study. Interview themes were established in advance (see Appendix C). The order in which the topics were explored and the wording of specific questions was subject to change depending on the flow of the interview, this was consistent with the advice of Gall et al. (1996). The goal of all interviews was to facilitate the telling of experiences and stories of the participants. This facilitation required trust and rapport; it also required probes. Bogdan and Biklen identified probing as a skill required to be an effective interviewer. Probes were used frequently in the interviews to follow up questions and to seek clarification.

With permission of the interviewees audio recordings were made of the interviews in their entirety. Audio recordings, noted Bogdan and Biklen (2007), are great for capturing a message and allowing the message to be played back countless times. Audio recordings do, however, miss visual gestures. Audio recordings were paired with written field notes to capture a more complete sense of what had transpired. These field notes were able to capture a different sense of participant behavior. Notes were made if a participant's body language or gestures changed during the interview or specific answers. Field notes were also made based on any

other items that seemed to be pertinent to the interview. Field notes paired with audio recordings allowed me to reflect in a more complete sense on each interview.

Data Analysis

Creswell (2005) explained that “organization of data is critical in qualitative research because of the large amount of information gathered during a study” (p. 232). After completing the interviews full transcripts were typed. Interview transcripts were often lengthy, therefore a system of organization was required (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2005). To organize the data, the transcripts were broken down into smaller units of information. The collected data was then sorted and grouped based on similarities through an inductive process; in essence I established a coding system as described by Bogdan and Biklen (2007). Consistent with the recommendations of Bogdan and Biklen (2007), the coded information was then assigned category names. The process of sorting similar data and assigning category names is “a crucial step in data analysis” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 173). I used *hand analysis* (Creswell, 2005) to examine the collected data. Creswell (2005) noted that hand analysis is often used in smaller qualitative studies, such as the current study. Hand analysis entailed the sorting of data without the use of computer technology. My hand analysis was conducted, consistent with the recommendation of Creswell (2005), using a colour coding system to help sort and organize data. Each of the participants was assigned a colour; their entire transcript was photocopied onto paper of that colour. I then went through each transcript and cut the transcript into what I deemed to be individual pieces of information. Once all transcripts were cut, I sorted the data into piles based on similarity. Once the information was sorted into stacks I assigned working titles to the groups

that were created. I then resorted the information using the newly created working headings. It was a messy and time-consuming process that required a great awareness.

To help me remain aware of my own thoughts and their potential impact on the analysis of the data, I kept a reflexive journal (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Following the recommendations of Lincoln and Guba (1985), the reflexive journal consisted of three portions. First I recorded the daily schedule of the study and any logistical notes of importance. Second, I wrote a personal diary pertaining to what is happening with the study and where my thoughts were. Lastly, the reflexive journal required a methodological log. This methodological log was where I recorded decisions that had been made and why these decisions were made. The reflexive journal was kept beginning with the participant selection pre-study questionnaire and I continued until the final draft of this thesis was complete.

As I conducted the interviews and handled all transcriptions by myself, I began data analysis prior to the formal hand analysis. In the interviews I was processing information and deciding which questions to ask next and what direction the participant wanted to take the interview. Through the transcription process I became more aware of the contents of the interviews and began to get a feel for the themes that would emerge.

Ethical Guidelines

This was a low risk study that did not involve a vulnerable population. Appropriate ethical guidelines were followed. For the survey, which was distributed to a larger group (approximate number = 90), students were made aware that the survey was optional and they were able to opt out at any point. The survey was used for participant identification only; once participants were identified the surveys were destroyed. Students were asked to put their name on the survey only

if they are willing to be contacted for a follow-up interview. Once participants had been interviewed, to guarantee the privacy of participants in this study, I used pseudonyms for the students and their school. Their school will be referred to as Prairie View High. Students who were interviewed were under the age of 18; therefore, students' assent and parent consent were required. Assent and parent consent forms were given to participants once they had been identified. Assent and parent consent forms were not given prior to the survey; this was based on the surveys purely demographic nature. It has been seen as appropriate to the Behavioral Research Ethics Board to have 16 year old students, based on their maturity levels, to complete the participant identification survey without a need for prior parent consent. Many grade 10 students in June are still 15 years old; 15-year-old students did not participate in this study. A transcript release form and the complete transcript were sent to the interview participants to review for accuracy and acceptability before they were used. Before gathering any student data I secured permission of the Behavioral Research Ethics Board, the participating school division, and the school's principal. Refer to appendices C-F to view all documents that were distributed to the participants and their parent/guardians.

Chapter Summary

This chapter examined the method, methodology, tools, and ethical guidelines used in the study. My position was detailed. Connections were made between the current study and the works of critical theorists and constructivism. The qualitative structure of the study was examined, as were the techniques that were utilized in the interviews and in the examination of the data derived from the study. The context for the study was also outlined including a

description of the school the participants attend, the course they were enrolled in and the requirements essential for participants to be involved in the study.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF COLLECTED DATA

Canadian society has a growing problem. Obesity rates have been steadily increasing based largely on a lack of physical activity. Physical education programs are one means to addressing the poor state of Canadian health. Research shows that positive physical education experiences may increase the likelihood of students becoming active as adults. With this in mind, it appears important that physical education programs become responsive to the needs of the students within the classes. One means to do this is through allowing students to play a role in the selection of activities in which they will participate. This study examined four students who have not enjoyed their previous physical education classes, and who have experienced choice as part of their Wellness 10 class.

In this chapter I introduce the data collected in the study. The timeline of the study beginning immediately upon receiving approval from the University of Saskatchewan Behavioral Research Ethics Board, and culminating with the final interview transcription are examined. The four participants are introduced. For much of this chapter I focus on themes that emerged from the interviews.

Study Timeline

Although dated June 8, 2009, I did not receive the certificate of approval from the Behavioral Research Ethics Board at the University of Saskatchewan until the morning of June 11, 2009. June 11 was the fourth last day of classes at Prairie View High School; the students then wrote exams in the week following. Prior to receiving final approval from the Behavioral

Research Ethics Board, I had tried to make sure that I was as prepared as possible to move directly into interviews. During the time waiting for ethics approval, I fine-tuned my interview guide. With the support of Dr. Louise Humbert, a member of my committee, I was able to transform the guide from a mediocre set of nine questions that in many cases may have failed to elicit enough information on the research question and secondary questions, into a much more thorough guide that in a variety of ways addressed each question (refer to appendix C). The questions on the guide were then grouped into focuses to allow me to move easily through the interview. I spent sufficient time working on the interview guide that I was able to confidently internalize the questions; this allowed me to easily move from question to question or to be able to jump around depending on where the participant's answers would take the interview.

Interview questions began by attempting to ascertain background information on participants and their previous experiences in physical education. The second large focus was based on the participants' experiences with choice in Wellness 10; these questions focused largely on two of the sub questions. Specifically, the questions on choice were asked to determine intrinsic motivation and student engagement. The final theme developed in the interview guide was based on student perceptions of physical activity and their current and potential future activity levels. The questions for this focus were aimed at the secondary questions pertaining to participants' perceptions of activity outside school hours and their perceptions about being active later in life.

Also prior to receiving approval from the Behavioral Research Ethics Board, I was able to secure approval from the participating school division, the school's principal, and the school's physical education department. Approval was granted by the school division's Coordinator of Research and Measurement, with additional constraints attached to the study. All interviews

with students had to take place within a division operated building. The study was not to take place during the summer months of July and August. The division required that students have parent consent prior to being interviewed. The constraints imposed by the school division created a very tight timeline for the data collection portion of the study. With the consent of the school and school division, the participant identification survey was administered to grade 10 students who were enrolled in Wellness 10 in the second semester. Frequent communication took place with the physical education teachers who had been teaching Wellness 10 sections in the 2008-2009 school year. The support of the school's physical education department allowed me to move swiftly once research ethics approval was final.

The process of receiving approval from the Behavioral Research Ethics Board was slowed when the initial package I had submitted was returned with a number of changes required. Most of these changes were minor. Some additional writing was required for clarification. Additionally, small changes were made to the forms for participants and their parents. The one significant change that was requested by the Behavioral Research Ethics Board was that all students give assent, as well as parent consent, prior to being administered the minimal-risk, demographic, participant identification survey. I saw this request as being a significant detriment to the study, as it would be extremely difficult to have forms returned by enough students and in a timely fashion given the additional School Board constraints on the research timeline. Compromise was reached with the Behavioral Research Ethics Board that the participant identification survey would only be administered to students who had already reached 16 years of age. Students who self-identified themselves as potential participants through the survey would then need to have assent and consent forms completed prior to their interview.

The Behavioral Research Ethics Board accepted the changes and sent the letter of approval for the study on June 11.

I spent the morning of June 11 at Prairie View High School. This time was spent having conversations with students, who had earlier self-identified themselves via the participant self-identification survey, as suitable and interested candidates for the study. These conversations included an introduction to the study, an explanation of participant assent and parent consent forms, and prompts as to what they may be asked in the interviews so that participants could reflect prior to their interview time. Finally, this conversation served as a time to schedule interview times with the participants.

The number of students from the second semester classes who qualified, given the amended age requirement, and were interested in participating in the study was only four. Of these four potential participants, only one was male. At this time, the physical education department also played an important role in identifying potential participants from their first semester classes. At my request, the department was able to help find a suitable male candidate from a qualifying first semester class. Additionally, one female candidate was identified from a first semester class; this brought the initial group of potential participants to six, with four female and two male participants.

A pilot interview was scheduled for June 12 in the first period of the day with a female student who was in second semester Wellness 10. Five other interviews were scheduled for June 15 and 16. Students were provided the opportunity to select the interview time that worked best for them. All interviews were arranged to take place in a conference room located in the school's library. The girl who was scheduled for the pilot study spoke to me on the morning of June 12. She, along with her parents, had decided not to continue in the study. At this time, I decided that

I needed to push into the study without a pilot interview. This decision was made based on a number of factors, the most important being the ability, given the School Board imposed timeline, to ensure follow-up interviews to potentially readdress any portions of interviews where required. Despite my lack of experience in conducting formal interviews, I felt confident in my ability to establish trust with the participants and to create an environment conducive to having a quality conversation. Another major factor in this decision was the tight timeline inherent in having a small number of school days remaining in which to conduct interviews. The tight timeline to conduct the study will be further reflected on in chapter five.

The first interview was conducted in the second period on June 12, with a girl who was scheduled to be interviewed on June 15, but had her forms signed and was willing to be interviewed early. I fully transcribed the interview over the weekend. It was during this long and arduous transcription that I realized the importance of the researcher doing his or her own transcription of data. I found listening closely to the audio recording that I was able to pick up on comments that I had missed during the interview. After completing the transcript, I felt that I knew what areas were developed fully in the interview and what areas required more attention in a follow-up interview. During this transcription I decided that I would personally transcribe all interviews. The full transcript and transcript release form were returned to the participant on June 15 and a follow-up interview was arranged for the following day.

A female candidate, who had initially expressed interest in the study and was scheduled to be interviewed in the first period on June 15, did not have her forms completed and opted out of the study. I conducted the second interview on June 15 in period 2. The transcript was returned to the participant on the morning of June 16. The third and fourth participants were interviewed on June 16 in period 1 and after school. The follow-up interview with the first

participant was held on June 16 in period 2. After a very long day of typing, all three of these transcripts were returned to students on June 17. Through close listening to all of the interviews, I noticed the emergence of similar comments and themes that helped me gain a greater understanding of the data, and gave me a head-start in the data coding process.

Participant Introduction

In this section participants will be introduced in the order in which they were interviewed. Their names have been replaced with pseudonyms, to protect their identity.

Anna

Anna, a student who took Wellness 10 in the second semester, identified herself for the study through the participant identification survey. In all conversations with Anna she appeared very interested in the study and the intended outcome of improving physical education experiences for others. Anna identified herself as a high honour roll student who prided herself on maintaining very high grades. She was very involved in the social life of Prairie View High, as she was extremely involved in numerous school clubs. Anna was also involved this year, for the first time in her life, in playing soccer for the school's team. Anna was very open to all questions and provided thoughtful, articulate responses. The first interview with Anna was an hour long. At the conclusion of the interview, arrangements were made for a follow-up interview. Anna brought her copy of the first interview transcript with her to the second interview, and had made multiple notes in the columns of things that she wanted to expand on in the second interview. The second interview was also highly successful, and ran 21 minutes.

As a child Anna was involved in martial arts for three years from age seven to nine. Growing up she avoided team sports due to a fear of being cut from the team. Anna also noted that she was often not made aware of school teams. After Anna's first experience with soccer this year, she signed up for the indoor community soccer season. Her coach informed her that her skills were well behind the other players and that she would not receive playing time and this lead Anna to promptly quit the team. Her self-admitted lack of athleticism has not kept her from trying sports.

Anna moved to her current city less than two years ago. Her elementary school experiences took place in other Canadian cities. She spent most of her childhood in a large eastern-Canadian city and her grade eight year in a large western-Canadian city. Upon her arrival in her current city she enrolled at a different high school for the beginning of her grade nine year. She transferred to Prairie View High School for the completion of grade nine. Attending many schools provided Anna an opportunity to experience many different physical education programs and their various approaches. She noted that some of her physical education experiences prior to Wellness 10 were "way more positive" (Anna, p. 3) than others. Although she was otherwise a highly engaged student, Anna hated many of her past physical education experiences. Anna noted that she "didn't have enough self confidence" to really get involved in physical education classes. One of her major concerns with past physical education classes was when teachers allowed students to pick their own partners. She often found herself alone when the other students paired up. Anna also disliked team activities in which the skilled players only passed to each other. This often left Anna excluded from games. "I wasn't good so people wouldn't pass the ball to me and or the competitive people would just play on their own and they didn't want others to come into the game" (Anna, p. 4). She acknowledged that one other reason

she disliked her elementary physical education classes was because she got low marks. She was genuinely confused as to what the marking structure was and why her marks were so low.

Another major reason Anna has not enjoyed her past physical education classes was the focus on physical fitness and especially running. Anna noted that:

I have never liked it [running] because I was always the last finishing, and I would just do it [finishing last] on purpose and I would stop in the middle and be like, I'm not doing this anymore. I would pretend that I had asthma and I would actually tell my dad, get me to the doctor, and I would fake it with the doctor and everything. I would do everything just to get out of it. (Anna, p. 7)

Anna was also critical of her elementary physical education teachers. She stated, "I found elementary teachers very vague, like they wouldn't really help you" (p. 7). Additionally, Anna was upset that many physical education teachers appeared to favour certain kids in the class. Anna noted that, "my biggest pet peeve is teachers choosing students, I cannot stand that," and that her elementary physical education teachers "would usually just go for students that are good" (p. 7).

Despite the many negative experiences that Anna shared she also told a few things that she did enjoy from past physical education classes. She strongly noted how the experiences that she did not mind were ones where the teacher was approachable and created a fun environment in the class. Two experiences where she noted teachers that she enjoyed were her grade eight year and the second half of her grade nine year. She also mentioned that in both of these more favorable experiences she had friends in her classes and that the socializing made class more fun. Anna made me aware that she also earned high marks in grade eight and the second half of grade

nine physical education. Taking all of her physical education experiences into account, Anna said of her Wellness 10 class “I have to admit that this is the best year ever” (p. 3).

Dave

Dave took Wellness 10 in the second semester. He was the only boy to identify himself for the study through the participant selection survey from the two second-semester classes. Dave described himself as “predictably unpredictable” (p. 1), noting his many random mood swings and tendency to try almost anything if dared. Dave was a musician who played base and drums and was in the process of trying to assemble a band after his last band had dissolved. He spent his time after school napping, hanging out with friends, and “cause[ing] some trouble” (p. 2). The interview with Dave went really well. He was willing to answer all questions. He was interesting to talk to and had many quirky and funny stories to share. At the end of the interview Dave mentioned that he thought it was cool that he got to get to miss class to talk to me.

Dave was born and raised in the city in which Prairie View High School is located. Dave attended a local elementary school until the end of grade six, when he followed a number of his friends to a neighboring school for grades seven and eight. Growing up, Dave was not involved in youth sport. He disliked his elementary physical education experiences in both buildings. He stated that classes were “very basic, very structured” (p. 3). He noted that he always had his regular classroom teacher for his physical education classes and that often these teachers were less than inspiring in the gym: “even the teacher wasn’t enthused very much. It was like you do it, get it done, and you move on” (p. 3). Dave blamed his poor performance in grades six through nine physical education on his hair that was “halfway down my back and totally gross” (p. 5). This hair would get in his eyes and made most sports almost impossible to play. Dave

found his segregated grade nine class to be less enjoyable than his coed experiences. He noted that his preference for coed classes was based on the fact that “I don’t get along with a lot of guys” (p. 6) and also on boys’ tendency to be highly competitive. Dave said that in highly competitive situations in gym class, he would “shut down” (p. 7) and become much less involved. Dave appreciated trying new things and was often bored doing the same activities over and over again in class.

It got kind of repetitive because, every year if we were to do basketball we would practice the passes and how to shoot different ways, and it was the same stuff over and over and over again, and if we were really lucky we would one time learn something new. (p. 4)

Dave was especially upset that he had to do dance, an activity that he never enjoyed, over and over again in class.

The lone elementary physical education experience that Dave did enjoy was his grade eight physical education class. His reason for enjoying physical education that year was participation in regularly scheduled dodgeball games. He shared:

I really enjoyed my last year at [name of elementary school], because we had the small gym, that was right next to the gym, and it was pretty much just the size of the stage, it was maybe a quarter of the size of our small gym here. And our teacher, he could whip dodgeballs really fast and we would go in there and play what he would call killer dodgeball, ‘cuz’ the gym was so small. It was our usual Friday activity, right before school ends. (p. 3)

Dave completed the story by explaining that most of the boys loved this game and that most of the girls spent the last hour of the school week hiding at the back of the gym. Dave also enjoyed his grade nine physical education experience. He explained that he enjoyed the class because:

It was different from elementary school. You go through the same old situations over and over and over again, and then something finally changes and it's; oh it's good not knowing what to do and being a little bit confused after doing the same thing. (p. 5).

When asked if Wellness 10 had been more enjoyable than his other physical education experiences, Dave replied "Yah probably" (p. 7).

Tina

Tina was enrolled in Wellness 10 in the first semester. She was invited to participate in the study after being identified as a potential participant by her Wellness 10 teacher. I spoke to Tina and had her complete the participant identification survey. Tina identified herself as a student who had not enjoyed previous physical education, and was immediately interested in the study. Tina returned her forms the next morning and an interview time was arranged for the subsequent day. Before the interview, I met Tina in the gym as arranged; we had a pleasant conversation as we moved to the library conference room. Her previous excitement about the study led me to believe that she would have a lot to say; however, when the interview began Tina became rather quiet and reserved. There were multiple times in the interview where there was quiet; including her lack of a response to the first question "tell me a bit about yourself?" I was still able to acquire a good understanding of Tina's past and current experiences, yet often through short replies. In total, the interview ran 40 minutes. Despite Tina's initial hesitancy to tell me about herself, over the course of the interview she did share some of her background.

The interview helped Tina realize that she was far more active than she thought. Despite not being active in any school or community sports, Tina maintained an active lifestyle. Tina walked to and from school every day; a walk that she estimated at ten minutes in length per trip. Tina also made a choice to be active when she enrolled in a curricular dance class that the school offers; Tina noted that she enjoyed being active. Despite her interest in being active, she stated that she was “an avid video game player” (p. 7); commonly, Tina went home after school to play hours of video games. Tina reported that her favorite game system was Nintendo Wii, where she often played sports themed games. These games do require some physical activity although she often plays other video game systems that require little or no movement. When asked if she liked school, Tina replied “it kind of depends” (p. 13). She went on to elaborate “if I like the teachers or not, if I like the classes” (p. 13). Tina gave her previous physical education experiences a similarly indifferent review.

Tina grew up in the same city in which she now attends high school. She gave her elementary school physical education experiences a mixed review. Tina noted that they seemed to participate in the same sports and activities in class year after year. Some of these activities that they continually came back to were basketball, dodgeball, gymnastics, and volleyball: these same sports were also taught/played in her grade nine physical education class. She noted that her interest in activities, even the ones she initially enjoyed, waned each year that they were re-taught. Of these activities, Tina never enjoyed gymnastics and volleyball; she found that she was less involved in class and less active when they were doing activities that she did not enjoy. Tina identified that the coed nature of the elementary classes was okay, sometimes, yet often alienated the girls from the games as “guys don’t pass it to the girls” (p. 4).

Her fondest memories of elementary school physical education are times when the class was active in dance-based activities. She also noted enjoying playing basketball and dodgeball. Tina mentioned that she liked having grade nine physical education as a girls only class: “the girls don’t hog the ball” (p. 4). She thought that as a result of the segregated nature of the grade nine class that she was a more active participant in physical education than she had been in elementary school. She did note that her activity level in class still depended on the activity in which she was involved. Tina made numerous mention of the importance of having friends in her physical education class and the ability to socialize and have fun with them during class time. Tina somewhat enjoyed her Wellness 10 experience stating it was “a little bit better” (p. 6) than her previous experiences in physical education.

Eric

Like Tina, Eric took Wellness 10 in the first semester and was nominated by his Wellness 10 teacher. I spoke to Eric and had him complete the participant identification survey. Eric identified himself as a student who had not enjoyed previous physical education, and an interview time was arranged. The original time for the interview was set for June 15 after school. Eric failed to show up for the interview, and upon checking with the school’s secretary in charge of attendance, his mom had called in his illness; this was the first time in the two years that Eric has attended the school that the secretary could remember him being away from school. Eric returned to school the next day and the interview was conducted on June 16 after school. Eric had an outgoing personality and was very open to the conversation.

Eric moved to his current city from a large eastern Canadian city at the start of his grade seven year. Eric was very involved in the school. He was a member of the school’s student

government and was an actor in the school's play. Eric began playing offensive line for the school football team in grade nine. Football is a sport that he greatly enjoyed and hoped to continue to play; however, his parents would like to see his marks improve before they would be willing to let him play the following season. Eric noted that his marks are in the 70-80% range, yet also noted that he struggled with his English classes. Since his grade nine football season, Eric has been committed to lifting weights in the school's weight room. Prior to playing high school football, Eric had few endeavors in relation to playing sports. He played soccer as a five year old, and played on a few elementary school sports teams prior to moving. In grades seven and eight, Eric was not involved in any sports.

As the interview began Eric did not seem to meet the criteria for the study. He made statements such as "I enjoy phys ed, it is kind of fun and I like to get moving." (p. 1). Eric did not always have a positive perception of physical education "[name of his previous city] phys ed was horrible" (p. 4). These poor experiences in the schools he attended in his previous city were based on low levels of physical activity, frequently playing low organization games like dodgeball and tag, and having teachers that were forgettable and lacked knowledge. His positive physical education experiences appear to have begun in grade eight. Eric loved his grade eight teacher, who was "this really cool guy who believed that getting active was really good" (p. 4). This teacher sought as much time as possible in the school's gym and planned multiple field trips that included intense physical activity, such as bike trips, scavenger hunts, and camps. Eric marveled that his grade eight teacher would "try to get us like two hours of gym time every day, and if that didn't work he would freak out." (p. 4). While speaking of this teacher and his grade eight experience, Eric had a huge beaming smile.

Eric's apparent new-found appreciation for physical education continued into grade nine. He appreciated the segregated class and believed that the class was "a bit more fast-paced" (p. 6) and that he "participated more full[y]" (p. 6), although he also attributed these changes to the small number of boys in his class that year. He found grade nine physical education to be far more challenging than his early physical education experiences, especially based on the increased emphasis on fitness. Yet, Eric seemed to relish the new challenges. He enjoyed the chance to try new sports and activities; he noted that in addition to the usual staples such as basketball "we did a lot of unique stuff" (p. 4). Speaking of his Wellness 10 experience, Eric said, "I enjoyed it, it was fun" (p. 9).

Protection of Non-participants' Privacy

The members of the physical education department at Prairie View High School were important to the study. They provided support, gave up class time, and helped identify potential participants from their first semester classes. The teachers, however, were not participants of the study. Commonly, during the interviews the participants made mention of their teachers and the impact their teachers had on their experiences in physical education. The physical education department at Prairie View is very small. To protect the identity of these non-participants they will be referred to only by letter (ex. Ms. A). The assigned letter does not correspond to their name. Additionally, I may have reassigned their genders and titles.

Mechanisms for Participant Choice

The modular physical education program was described in the third chapter. At this point I feel it is important to revisit the control that students had and the restraints that they faced in

their Wellness 10 class. Students who took Wellness 10 in the first semester were involved in a process of brainstorming and creating the list of activities from which they would ultimately choose. Eric and Tina were involved in this process. Eric described the process as both exciting and chaotic. The matrix of activities that was created for the semester one classes was carried over to and adapted for the semester two classes. The choices that participants spent the vast majority of their time discussing in their interviews were their choices of individual modules.

Students were placed in charge of selecting what activity they would take part in for each six-day block of class time. In the first semester Tina and Eric had three activities to choose from for most six-day blocks. Anna and Dave always had two activities to select from. The additional section in the first semester was possible based on interns teaching one of the activity offerings. Other than cross-country skiing and social dance, which were mandatory for all students, Wellness 10 students at Prairie View High School directly selected each activity that they were involved in. The reasons that the four participants selected activities were varied. These many reasons, in no particular order, included past experience, personal interest, perceived competence, being with friends, fun, activity avoidance, and cost avoidance. All four participants clearly expressed feeling as though they were in control of their own activity choices.

The participants realized immediately, upon learning of the module program, that they would be decision-makers in the class. Dave's initial reaction upon discovering his empowerment was considerably different than the reactions of the other three participants. Dave seemed to be initially upset with the idea:

I think my first thought when we were told that we had to choose modules was ‘oh I actually have to think in this class. I actually have to think about what I want.’ I thought I was just going to get told what to do and then do it. (p. 7)

The other three participants recalled being immediately excited. Anna’s first reaction to the choice model was incredibly positive “[I] loved it...and I found that as soon as I saw the chart I’m like this one, this one. Right off the bat I knew which one I was going to choose” (p. 12). Tina’s body language noticeably changed when she first started discussing the modular program with me. She let out a rare smile and stated that her initial reaction was positive. “I was happy because I wanted to try new stuff” (Tina, p. 6). Eric was animated with me in his response “At first I thought it would be the same thing and then he whips out this chart full of choices. And I was like, wow!” (p. 7).

Themes

At the outset of this study I set out to answer the question: does student choice have an impact on the experiences of grade 10 students who have not enjoyed their previous physical education experiences? Four secondary questions were established. In what ways does student choice help lead to student engagement in physical education? In what ways is student choice in physical education intrinsically motivating? In what ways have opportunities for choice in physical education class changed students’ perceptions about being active outside school hours? In what ways has choice in physical education class changed students’ perceptions about being active later in life?

An interview guide was created with questions aimed at addressing the research question and the four secondary questions. Based on the conversational and semi-structured interview

format, the interview guide questions were not necessarily asked in order or in the exact way in which they were written. The interviews were fully transcribed and the data was broken into smaller units and coded. As questions were asked with a purpose, I was not surprised that many of the themes that emerged during the coding process were ones in which questions were directly asked. However, one theme was strongly present that I had not originally foreseen. The remainder of this chapter will focus on the themes that emerged and participant responses around each theme. Additionally, I will address the tendency with which students responded in a positive or negative manner to the themes. The themes that emerged from the data, and that will be presented in this chapter are: intrinsic motivation, self-determination, climate, engagement, and perceptions. All themes reinforce one overwhelming theme: all four participants reported that they enjoyed their Wellness 10 experience more than any previous physical education experience.

Intrinsic Motivation

For this study intrinsic motivation has been defined as motivation for the sake of interest. Therefore, to be intrinsically motivated means that students are not interested in external rewards or other external factors not directly related to the activity or learning. Closely related to intrinsic motivation is self-determination. Autonomy, competence, and relatedness are the three innate needs identified by Deci and Ryan (1992) as integral for moving students towards intrinsic motivation. These three needs will be addressed after an examination of participant responses that acted as indicators of their intrinsic motivation. Students' levels of interest, enjoyment, effort, and persistence have consistently been used as indicators of intrinsic motivation in previous studies (Ferrer-Caja & Weiss, 2000).

Participants were not asked directly if they felt intrinsically motivated in their Wellness 10 class. Rather, participants' motivation was addressed through a series of questions. These questions included: asking what modules the participants selected and why, participants' perceived participation levels in class, and if they felt they were more motivated in the activities they selected.

Extrinsic Motivation.

The participants clearly were motivated as evidenced by their self-reported high levels of participation, that will be examined later. Telling of the participants' intrinsic motivation was that three of the four participants made no mention of any extrinsic reward when they discussed their enjoyment of Wellness 10 or spoke of their participation levels. Anna was the only participant to mention extrinsic motivators. Anna spoke of both marks and her interest in pleasing her teacher as motivators. "I think my main thing is just marks. Even in gym, and gym isn't really about marks, but if I get good marks then I am up for it" (p. 20). "I find that I am pushing myself harder... Like I actually want to, you know, please Ms. A." (p. 9). Early in his interview Eric noted the importance of marks to his parents, yet he did not tie his enjoyment of, or his participation in, Wellness 10 to marks.

Interest.

Participants' interest in the class and in the modules they selected was apparent. All four participants identified that they selected activities, among other reasons, based on interest in the activity itself. The other reasons participants choose activities were past experience, perceived competence, being with friends, fun, activity avoidance, and cost avoidance; of these reasons

only cost avoidance is driven extrinsically. Dave stated the idea of interest-driven choice very clearly “I tried to, kind of, pick ones I was interested in—like Ultimate Frisbee” (p. 7). Dave elaborated on his interest for Ultimate Frisbee, when he mentioned that he had previously played on a team with his youth group. This interest was based in part on his perceived competence in the sport “as weird as it sounds I’ve always kind of been good at it” (p. 8). On her selection of Yoga as a module, Anna stated “I wanted to see, because I have read magazines that say it helps and everything, and I wanted to find my peace and calm and stuff you know ‘cuz’ I am a very stressed out person” (p. 10). Tina stated that her selection of tennis as a module was “because I wanted to try it. Because I always play it on the Wii” (p. 6). Eric spoke of the ability to weigh options and chose the one that he was most interested:

Like let’s say I had to choose between the dancing thing and the human performance thing, I think I would go with the human performance training ‘cuz’ I am not really that much of a fan of dance. So it just depends on what your choices are, what is more fun to you. (p. 7)

Not all participants used the word interest directly in the interview, yet interest in the activities was certainly implied by all four participants as they spoke about choosing activities that they had previously enjoyed or that they were excited to try.

The structure of the class dictated that the students would select all modules except for cross-country skiing and social dance, which were mandatory. Two of the four participants made note of the mandatory sessions despite not being asked about them. Both Anna and Eric spoke of their initial negative reaction to being forced into activities that they did not select. Anna’s reason for wanting to avoid cross-country skiing was based on a horrible previous experience, and Dave wished to avoid both cross-country skiing and dance because he thought

they would not be fun. Both participants acknowledged that the modules turned out better than they originally thought they would, but their initial response to these activities was clear: they were not interested. I will further examine the difference in interest levels between modules selected by students and those that were mandatory selections in chapter five.

Effort and Persistence.

The participants' intrinsic motivation was also evidenced by their perceived increased participation in activities in which they selected. Three of the four participants identified that they felt they had participated more fully in Wellness 10 than in their past physical education experiences. Full participation, noted Anna, included increased effort, "I thought I did really good...I was actually going for it" (p. 5). For Anna full participation meant putting a great effort into class activities and pushing her limits. Anna noted that "It is my choice, and I feel responsible. If I take this module then I have to put my 101% into it" (p. 20). Speaking of her activity level, Tina stated that she was "more active... Well, I got to do things that I like to do, try new things" (p. 8). When asked whether he thought he had been more active in class, Dave said:

Yah definitely.... The fact that we got to choose was like, you kind of had that mentality that I'm kind of glad I'm not doing the other one because the other one kind of sucks; so you are kind of more active and trying a bit more. (p. 9)

Only Eric, who had previously identified himself as an active member of past physical education classes, did not feel that his participation level had increased with choice. "No (even without choice) I think I would still try and try to have fun" (p. 10).

Anna noted multiple times in her interviews the feeling of responsibility based on her having made the decision to be in the module. This feeling of responsibility or commitment to the activity was also present in the interviews with Tina and Dave. Tina noted that because she had made the selections she felt a responsibility to follow through. Dave made a similar statement in an interesting way;

I don't know, just 'cuz' we are teenagers and our minds are telling us to rebel, you know do what you want, teachers and authority are wrong. It is kind of like you are not being told what to do and you shouldn't totally go against it. You have a choice so [you don't feel the urge to rebel]. (p. 9)

Dave's point is interesting as he did not feel the need to rebel against his own decisions; therefore was able to remain committed to the activities. Anna made a similar comment "I don't like getting forced into doing things that I don't like. So if we are getting to choose then you feel responsible. Like 'I choose this I'm supposed to be having fun'" (p. 6). Only Eric felt no increased sense of responsibility or commitment to the activities that he had selected.

Dave was the only participant to note a lack of persistence with a selected activity. Dave selected flag football to avoid an activity that included a financial commitment. Dave found that he was not very good at flag football and as a result found that as the module wore on he would "just kind of hang back and not really do it, kind of make it look like I was doing something, but I wasn't" (p. 8). Eric told the only other story of a lack of persistence, but it had to do with cross-country skiing, a mandatory activity.

Enjoyment.

As mentioned at the conclusion of each of the participant introductions, each of the participants identified their Wellness 10 experience as their most enjoyable physical education experience. During Eric's interview he repeatedly used the word fun. Eric attributed the fun experience in Wellness 10 to two things:

First of all we got to choose. Second, the activities here are a bit more creative, like we would never have gotten to do combatives, martial arts, or just go to the weight room.

Adventure games I enjoyed that, and stuff like that. Adventure games was the best, like capture the flag. (p. 9)

Eric's enjoyment was even more apparent from the tone of his voice. Tina noted her enjoyment of the class by stating that if I had observed her in her Wellness 10 class that I would have often caught her "participating, smiling, and laughing" (p. 11). Tina made her enjoyment of the modular structure very apparent "I enjoyed the chance to choose" (p. 6). Anna stated her enjoyment of her modules with repeated statements along the lines of "it was so much fun" (p. 25). Enjoyment of the class was less apparent with Dave. He spoke of the class in a very positive way yet seldom used the word fun. When speaking of his tennis module Dave said that it was "kind of fun" (p. 12).

Further the students showed their enjoyment of the class when all four participants agreed that if Wellness 10 were not a required class that they would recommend it to a friend. When asked if they would recommend it to a friend if it were not offered with a modular structure, both male participants still agreed while the two female participants did not. Eric informed me that he would still strongly recommend the class. Dave noted that he would still recommend it but probably not give it as strong an endorsement. Anna acknowledged that she would not unless

they were guaranteed to have her favorite teacher. Tina stated that she would only recommend the class to her friends who had enjoyed previous physical education experiences. This shows that the students did enjoy the modular structure of the class.

Physical education at the grade 11 level was optional. At the time of the interview the participants had all registered for courses for the next school year. Two of the participants, Anna and Eric, showed their enjoyment of physical education by enrolling in elective Special Physical Education classes. Both Dave and Tina noted that they seriously considered taking Special Physical Education. Dave opted not to enroll in elective physical education because he had other courses that he required or ultimately that he was more interested in taking. Tina opted not to take Special Physical Education based on the cost of the class. The fact that all four participants at least considered taking a physical education class at the next level indicates that they must have, at least partially, enjoyed their Wellness 10 class, as students who did not enjoy the class would be highly unlikely to consider taking a similar course.

Increased Motivation.

The participants' comments show that the students were interested in their modules, were active participants in class, and were having fun. The participants were also clearly more motivated in the class than they had been in their previous physical education experiences. When Eric was asked if he felt more motivated this year than in past physical education classes he said "Yeah, 'cuz' I would be having more fun" (p. 10). Dave, when speaking of how it felt to actually be motivated in physical education, noted that the motivation permeated all things to do with the class including warm up activities:

Kind of good. It was... It felt kind of good to be trying I guess. I got a little bit more fit. You know I started out a lot fatter than I was at the beginning (end) of the semester, like not even being able to do 2 push-ups. Now if Mr. S. Tells us to do 20 push ups, I actually can. So it's cool. (p. 9)

Anna also noted that she was more motivated this year in physical education. I did not ask Tina directly about her motivation level, however, her comments about fun, interest, and participation hinted that she might similarly have been more motivated than in the past.

Summary.

The participants told of increased motivation. An apparent lack of extrinsic motivators in three of the four participants showed that students were not motivated through extrinsic means. Intrinsic indicators of interest, effort, persistence, and enjoyment were present in most participants' stories of their Wellness 10 experience. All participants, including Anna who was also motivated through extrinsic means, showed signs of being intrinsically motivated in the class.

Self-Determination

Self-determination is closely linked to intrinsic motivation. Deci and Ryan (2002) theorized that individuals who have their needs met are more likely to realize intrinsic motivation. Self-determination theory holds there are three innate psychological needs that are essential for optimal functioning: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2002). Autonomy refers to the degree to which individuals feel as though they have played a role in determining the course of action. Competence is the feeling of ability to achieve an assigned

task. Relatedness is the innate need to feel a sense of belonging. The themes that emerged follow these psychological needs.

Autonomy.

With the exception of the two mandatory modules, cross-country skiing and social dance, all four participants felt as though they had a great control over their activities in the class. All four participants shared the decisions they made in selecting the modules and were able to articulate why they made these choices. The reasons students opted to select modules can be grouped into selections based on past experience, perceived competence, being with friends, fun, activity avoidance, and cost avoidance. The participants hoped to have fun in Wellness 10 and as such, they selected activities that they believed they would enjoy. This is very similar to the previous discussion on enjoyment. Student selections based on perceived competence and being with friends will be discussed in subsequent sections.

Participants' previous experiences with a sport or activity, or one that they deemed to be similar, impacted on their modular selections. All four participants selected at least one module based on previous experiences. As noted earlier, Dave selected ultimate Frisbee based on an interest that he acquired through previous experiences with his youth group. Eric chose the human performance module based on his positive experience with lifting weights in grade nine physical education. Tina selected the fitness survey module because it featured rhythmic activities similar to dance. Anna had been in Karate as a kid and found herself drawn to the martial arts module. Additionally, Anna selected tennis as a module based on what she thought would be a likeness to a sport that she enjoyed. "I've liked badminton for a long time and I

thought it was going to sort of be like that” (p. 11). As a result of negative experiences, participants also opted to avoid activities.

All four participants acknowledged that at least once they selected an activity primarily to avoid the other activity that was offered at the same time. Eric summarized this well when he stated “I was excited that we got to choose things and that if we didn’t like it then we didn’t have to do it. Like for example, tennis; I don’t like tennis, so I made sure to stay away from it” (p. 7). Tina ended up in the walk-run module based on her desire to avoid golf, a sport, which she had never played; yet had little interest in. “At the time tennis wasn’t available, it was full. And I didn’t want to do golf, so I did the walk run” (p. 7). Anna had very little knowledge of golf also and similarly to Tina opted to avoid golf based on her lack of interest and knowledge. “I’ve never actually tried golf, but I’ve never actually liked it either. I don’t know any techniques or anything” (p. 12). Dave chose to avoid activities based on extra cost.

The selection of some modules meant that students would also be required to pay a small fee. Activities that had associated costs were always offered at the same time as activities that required no additional cost. Activities that were offered with additional cost were activities in which students travelled to venues, such as golf, or activities where specialized instruction was needed, such as martial arts. Of the participants, only Dave mentioned avoiding activities because of associated costs. Dave, however, did note that avoiding activities with associated cost was his primary selection criteria. The other three participants were not concerned with additional cost and all selected at least one activity that required a fee.

Through examination of the participants’ reflections on the selection process, it is clear that students were decision makers. Additionally, from the thought that they put into the

decision making process, it is clear that students were aware of their power to determine their own course structure. All four participants experienced a high level of autonomy.

Perceived Competence.

One of the most common reasons for modular selection was taking an activity in which the participant felt they were competent or had a better chance to achieve competence. When the participants spoke about being involved in or being good at a sport or activity that was offered as a module, they generally selected that activity as a module. Eric, a member of the school's football team, signed up for flag football. Tina who was also enrolled in a dance class took the fitness survey module that included dance-like aerobics classes. Dave and Anna both admitted that they were not good athletes, yet both were able to find activities in which they felt competent. Dave felt as though he was good at Ultimate Frisbee and Anna felt competent with badminton and martial arts. Only Eric mentioned not selecting an activity that he felt he was good at when he selected human performance training instead of bowling. "I didn't want to go bowling 'cuz' I do that a lot" (p. 7). Related to the conversation on activity avoidance, the participants could also avoid activities in which they felt incompetent. None of the participants mentioned avoiding an activity because they were not good at it; they generally mentioned that they did not like the activity. This dislike may or may not be based on feelings of incompetence; if it were, the participants did not tell me.

Relatedness.

All four participants noted the importance of being involved in activities where they had friends and peer-support. While being with friends was important for the boys, it did not drive

their choices. “It didn’t really matter, we all just really choose what we wanted and then later on we just saw our schedules and were like—hey you’re with me on that and that” (Eric, p. 8).

Dave noted that he and his friends “just kind of picked whatever and if we ended up together okay and if not, it’s not that bad” (p. 8). For the two girls it was a different story. They both made sure that they were in the same modules as their friends. In making her selections Tina noted that she and a group of friends sat down together and made their choices largely as a group. Anna made her choices not with a larger group of friends but with one very close friend. Anna and her friend were in all modules together; this process was a negotiation between Anna and her friend. “I have to admit that I changed some of the modules that I wanted to choose because my friend chose other ones... and then she chose to take some of the ones that I was going in” (pp. 9-10).

Anna noted numerous times during her interviews that for her to enjoy physical education she needed friends in her class. She also noted that having a friend in the same module could make potentially poor experiences fun, as was the case with her mandatory cross-country skiing module. “I believe that if my friend wasn’t there that I would hate cross country skiing” (p. 14). Eric noted that the only issue he had with the modular structure of the class was that he and his friends were often in different modules. “But I also didn’t like it ‘cuz’, that meant that you wouldn’t always be with your buddies in the class all the time” (p. 7).

It is interesting that the girls both used friends as a primary means of module selection while the boys hoped to be in modules with friends but did not make their selections for that reason. Anna may have shed light on why the girls felt it was important to have friends; she noted multiple times during her interviews how important it was for enjoyment of physical education to be included in the activities. Students were able to select modules with their

friends; this also would have allowed for boys and girls who were friends to take modules together. Allowing students to select their modules allowed for students to be in modules where they felt related.

Summary.

The four participants showed evidence of meeting the three innate needs identified by Self-determination theory. All four participants told of their experiences as autonomous decision-makers. The participants selected activities in which they perceived that they had the ability to be successful. All four participants identified the importance of having friends in their modules; the girls selected activities with their friends to ensure that they would feel a sense of relatedness in each module. The participants' meeting of these three needs is further evidence of their ability to be motivated intrinsically.

Climate

The learning climate was not a topic that I had sought out to ask about, yet in all four cases the participants steered the interview towards a conversation about their teachers and the environment they created in the class. Near the conclusion of each interview, I asked the participants if they had the opportunity to speak to a group of physical education teachers what wisdom would they like to pass on to that group. Three of the four participants included characteristics that they appreciated in physical education teachers in their response. Tina did not respond to the question. Anna, especially, wanted to talk about the role her teachers played in her new-found enjoyment of physical education; it became the strongest single theme from her interviews.

Teachers.

During the interviews the participants identified characteristics that they associated with physical education teachers with whom they enjoyed learning. The participants also identified a trait that they did not appreciate. Two participants, Anna and Dave, identified their serious dislike for physical education teachers who were “hard core”. Anna defined this term as “they just want the students to do it and not to try their best just to get to that point” (p. 24). Anna noted that “hard core” teachers left her feeling as though she was not supported in the class. The traits that the participants identified as positive were in stark contrast to the “hard core” definition. The students hoped for teachers who were understanding and allowed for some leeway, showed compassion, and formed connections with the students. Most notably the participants spoke of a desire to have physical education teachers who created a fun and caring environment.

Dave followed his comment about his dislike for “hard core” physical education teachers by stating his desire for compassionate and understanding teachers:

If you are having an all soccer tournament or something and somebody is like I didn't sleep that much last night or something happened at home or whatever, I don't really want to play just whatever. Don't really wave them off and not really care, just kind of give them a break if they really need it every now and then. (p. 13)

Dave was not the only participant to make such a statement. Similarly, Tina stated that she appreciated physical education teachers who were “not strict” (p. 13).

Anna felt strongly that her physical education teachers had made a difference for her enjoyment level because they were able to form strong connections with the students. Tina noted that she did not feel it was that important that teachers got to know who she was and the

two boys made no mention of connections to teachers during their interviews. Anna raved about both teachers that she was fortunate enough to have had modules from and their respective abilities to connect with students. She noted that Ms. A. was caring and interested in the students:

I feel like she wants to make a difference for us. Like she actually wants to relate to us and help us in any way, and she is not always about gym, you know she is more about trying to help out with everything else. (p. 14)

Additionally, Anna said that “she is really nice, and she will help you so she will help you feel connected, so if you need help you feel like you can go to her” (p. 18). Anna spoke of her other teacher’s outgoing personality and ability to talk with all students and in a manner in which they enjoy and to which they respond well. “(Teachers) have to talk to individuals one-on-one. And that is what Mr. B. does, I haven’t not seen him talk to one person...he is just like one of the guys” (p. 19). She also said of Mr. B:

But just a fun teacher like him talking to me and just including me in the conversation and you know even making fun of me and standing by my side when someone else is fooling around, it just helps me. (p. 15)

She also noted the interactions between the two teachers and compared her relationships with the two teachers to her previous physical education experiences:

I really enjoy Mr. B. Because I am really an introvert and the fact that he jokes around with me and talks to me I love that, it just helps the atmosphere a little. And Ms. A. She is on track and she makes fun of him. And they just make the atmosphere good so we can all connect with them. And over there (in her previous city) the teachers just really

did not connect with me. I just wouldn't even know them. Right now I talk to Ms. A. and Mr. B. all of the time. (p. 8)

Anna believed that the teachers' ability to connect with the students was the foundation of the fun and caring environment that had been created in Prairie View High School physical education classes.

It was clear from the interviews that the participants enjoyed their physical education teachers. All four participants made positive comments about their teachers, and two participants made positive comments about both teachers in the period in which they had Wellness 10: this is interesting as the students were able to potentially connect with two physical education teachers instead of only one in most traditional physical education classes. Comments such as "a good teacher like Mr. B, I mean Mr. B is cool" (Dave, p. 9) appeared to rise from the fun teachers had with the students. Eric noted that it was important for teachers to "have fun when you are doing activities," which he noted his Wellness 10 teachers did, "that way the kids will have fun too" (p. 13).

Summary.

All four participants made mention of their Wellness 10 teachers. All participant comments were positive. While teachers appeared to be an important part of physical education enjoyment for the other three participants, Anna made it clear that she thought it was the most important factor for her. Anna spent much time describing the environment that the teachers had established and detailed her teachers' personality traits. Anna concluded her second interview with a strong statement "it is all about the teacher" (p. 27).

Engagement

Student engagement was defined for this study as students being highly interested and involved in their learning; essentially, students engaging in their schooling for intrinsic reasons. As indicated in the participant introductions, all four participants were at one time disengaged from their physical education classes. During the interviews the participants all made statements that clearly showed at their engagement in their Wellness 10 class.

Previous Disengagement.

All participants identified themselves prior to the study as individuals who had not enjoyed their previous physical education experiences. Additionally, none of the participants identified themselves as athletes and none had been very active in sport as children. Clearly showing Anna's previous disengagement was her story about faking asthma attacks in physical education class. Dave told of his boredom with activities that were repeated year after year. Tina shared a similar view of boredom with certain oft-repeated activities, and also shared her disappointment that boys seldom passed to girls in elementary physical education. Eric's statement "[name of city] phys ed was horrible" (Eric, p. 4) showed his disengagement in his elementary experiences before he moved to his current city.

There appeared to be periods of time for each participant when physical education became enjoyable. For Eric this moment was clearly during his grade eight year, where his teacher inspired him. Eric's enjoyment of physical education seemed to have continued unbroken up to the interview. Anna had an enjoyable experience in grade eight. However she became disengaged again in the first half of grade nine. Anna again enjoyed a more positive experience once she arrived at Prairie View High School for the second semester of grade nine.

Dave noted that he enjoyed grade eight physical education, and was intrigued by the newness of grade nine. Tina seemed indifferent to her previous experiences.

Signs of Engagement.

In staying true to the definition used, student engagement will be primarily examined by looking at students' statements of interest and involvement in the class. Both of these topics have been previously addressed in the themes of intrinsic motivation and self-determination. All four participants noted selecting activities based on interest. All four participants spoke of high levels of participation in their modules, and three of the four noted that they participated more fully than they had in any previous experiences. All four participants were interested and involved in their Wellness 10 class. They appeared to have been engaged.

Summary.

Participants had all identified previous disengagement in their physical education classes. The indicators of engagement, interest and involvement, were clearly present in all four of the participants interview responses when speaking of their Wellness 10 experiences.

Perceptions

A number of the questions asked in the interviews were aimed at obtaining information on the students' perceptions of physical activity and whether these perceptions had changed as a result of their experiences in Wellness 10. Their responses will be examined in three sections: perceptions of physical activity, perceived opportunities for lifetime activity, and modular follow-up.

Perceptions of Physical Activity.

By the end of their Wellness 10 class all four participants said that they valued physical activity. Tina noted that her Wellness 10 class had “not really” (p. 11) had an impact on her attitude towards physical activity as it was something she already valued. The other three participants noted that they believed that they had learned to appreciate physical activity through their class. Eric thought that his perception of physical activity had changed “a bit” (p. 13). He noted that he was active before the class but now tries to get his friends and cousins to be more active too. Dave’s response was similar; he noted that his perceptions had probably changed “a little bit” (p. 13). He pointed to his plan to follow up the human performance module in the summer as an example of this change. Anna thought her Wellness 10 class had had a significant positive impact on her perception of being physically active. “I’ve changed from a time where I didn’t like physical activity. It is different now, like right now I am really enjoying it” (p. 1). Anna’s statement was backed by her increased physical activity outside of class time.

Modular Follow-up.

The participants were asked if they had, or planned to, follow-up any of the modules they had taken on their own time. Of the four participants, two had followed up modules after their completion. Eric had organized weekend games of touch football after the flag football module and capture the flag after taking the adventure games module. Eric also had become more committed to weight training, something he had started to do in grade nine and did almost every day after school. At the time of the interview Anna was training to run a two-kilometer race in a large local road race. She trained for the race after taking the walk/run lifetime fitness module. Although he had not started yet, Dave noted that he had saved the program that they had used

during their human performance module with the intention of using it to help him get started with lifting on his own during the summer. His plan was to purchase a pass to a civic facility, and work out “every now and then” (p. 13). Tina did not have any immediate plans to follow up any of her modules.

Perceived Opportunities for Lifetime Activity.

The participants also shared with me some activities that they may pursue later in life. Anna and Eric both enrolled in elective physical education and both hope to continue to stay involved with Prairie View High sports teams; Eric in football and Anna in soccer and perhaps badminton next year. Tina enrolled in Dance class for the next school year. In addition to plans to stay active through school programs, the participants also acknowledged some modular choices that they may pursue later in life. Tina noted her tennis and the walk/run lifelong fitness modules as ones she would be interested in trying later in life. Dave noted that he might look to become involved in Ultimate Frisbee again. He also stated:

we had a guy come in a couple of times and teach us a bunch of Karate and self-defense. And it kind of looked cool and it was kind of fun flipping each other around and getting flipped around. That is one I will probably do again some time. (p. 12)

Anna also mentioned an interest in becoming involved in martial arts again. The participants all have plans to stay active later in life, whether the participants will actually follow through on these thoughts remains to be seen.

Summary.

The interviews shed light on the participants' desire to remain active. Choosing their modules they were able to experience activities in which they were interested. Each participant identified activities that they had been active in after the completion of a module or that they perceived that they may pursue during their adult years.

Chapter Summary

Chapter four has introduced the data collected for the study. The chapter began with a look at the timeline of the study beginning with the downtime while I awaited final ethical approval. Each of the four participants was introduced by using pseudonyms. Each of the participant introductions included information on the participants' past physical education experiences, their involvement in the school, their level of physical activity, and information pertaining to the interview itself. A brief section was included to explain the measures taken to protect the privacy of non-participants. The modular program that was used for the Wellness 10 classes was quickly re-examined to help frame the data. Five themes were presented that emerged from the data coding process. The presentation of data related to participants' intrinsic motivation was presented first, followed by the data on self-determination, climate, engagement, and perceptions. All four participants noted indicators of intrinsic motivation in their Wellness 10 class. The participants clearly told of their autonomy in the class and how their decision making allowed for them to meet their needs for competence and relatedness. The participants noted the climate of their class as a positive impact on their enjoyment; specifically they enjoyed their interactions with their teachers. All four participants' interviews demonstrated their

engagement in the class. Some of the participants had already followed up modules on their own time while others planned to pursue their favorite modules later in life.

The fifth and final chapter of this thesis will attempt to answer the research question. This will be done by bringing together the data and the literature to provide the best possible answer. Other insights will be made, specifically where the data was congruent and dissonant from previous research. I will raise questions that have arisen from the research and will discuss how the study potentially could have been conducted differently. I will also outline my journey through the study as a novice researcher and will note the opportunities for growth that I encountered.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF DATA COLLECTED

Canadian society has a growing problem. Obesity levels have climbed at dramatic rates. Physical education programs are one means to aid obesity prevention. Effective physical education programs may help students learn to enjoy physical activity and promote students to lead physically active lifestyles. Many physical education programs struggle to engage students. This study has set out to examine the impact that allowing disengaged students to be decision makers in the physical education setting has on these students' experiences and their perceptions of physical activity.

This, the final chapter, will be the discussion of the data collected. The conceptual framework for the study is briefly reviewed. Participants responses that are both consistent with and dissent from the literature reviewed will be discussed. The research questions will be answered using the data from this study and with support from relevant literature. Unanswered questions and questions that have emerged during the course of the study will be presented. The research process and potential recommendations for modifications to the study will be addressed. Finally, I will place the current study into context.

Conceptual Framework

This study is set in the context of high school physical education within the province of Saskatchewan. In Saskatchewan grade 10 physical education is called Wellness 10. The Wellness 10 curriculum combines physical education with health education. A class of this nature appears vitally important when faced with data indicating the low levels of physical

activity (Rattigan & Biren, 2007) and growing rates of obesity in Canada (Sheilds & Tremblay, 2008).

More important than just having a Wellness 10 class is making sure that the class provides as positive an experience as possible for all students. The primary goal of Saskatchewan physical education is the promotion of lifelong activity (Saskatchewan Education, 1994). There is strong evidence from a wealth of previous studies that enjoyable physical education experiences contribute to students being active later in life (Alderman et al., 2006; Gibbons & Humbert, 2008; Lee, 2004; MacPhail, Gorely, Kirk, & Kinchin, 2008). However, many students are disengaged from physical education classes. Numerous challenges in relation to traditional physical education models have the potential to create negative experiences for students. These challenges include: repetition of the same sports and activities from grade level to grade level (Beyer, 2008; Ha et al., 2003; Humbert, 2006), an overemphasis on physical fitness (Corbin, 2002; Kilpatrick et al., 2002; Xiang et al., 2004), alienating practices (Corbin, 2002; Lee et al., 2007), and a need for learner-centered instructional approaches (Gibbons & Humbert, 2008; Johnson, 2003). Many of these challenges appear to be easily defeated through the use of a choice program detailed by Condon and Collier (2002).

Condon and Collier's (2002) program for student choice allows for students to choose their own activities and potentially overcome some of the challenges facing physical education programs through their own selections. Student choice has been detailed to be vitally important to education; students who are granted decision making power have been shown to be more intrinsically motivated (Deci & Ryan, 1992; Harper, 2007; Kohn, 1993a, 1993b; Lent, 2006; Schlecty, 2002). Intrinsic motivation had been linked to many positive schooling outcomes including student engagement (Bigelow & Vokoun, 2005; Certo et al., 2008; Kohn, 1993b).

Choice has also been shown to increase motivation within physical education settings (Alderman et al., 2006; Condon & Collier, 2002; Ferrer-Caja & Weiss, 2000; Ha et al., 2003; Kilpatrick et al., 2002; Sun et al., 2008). Additionally, choice has also been linked to reengaging students who have disengaged from classes (Easton, 2008; OECD, 2000). All of this previous literature points to choice as an appropriate vehicle to better intrinsically motivate disengaged students so that they will become engaged in Wellness 10 and enjoy their experiences; thus leading to increased chances that the students will be active latter in life.

Participant responses from the interviews are examined using Deci and Ryan's (2002) Self-Determination Theory. The theory will be used as a theoretical framework to help determine the meeting of the participant's innate needs. The theory will also be used to examine participant motivational types.

Consistent Responses

The findings of this study proved to be consistent with the literature reviewed. Areas with a high degree of consistency with the literature are why the students were disengaged in the first place, engaging the disengaged, and choice. All four participants' disengagement in physical education began sometime during elementary school. They were able to reengage in Wellness 10 based on the choice program utilized, but also through the climate created by the teachers. Literature that indicated choice as a motivator was also confirmed.

Problems with Physical Education

Many of the problems with physical education programs that were noted in the literature were also seen as concerns of the participants. A number of articles pointed out the serious issue that from grade level to grade level the same sports and activities are often repeated (Beyer, 2008; Ha et al., 2003; Humbert, 2006). Dave and Tina noted the repetition of activities and that the activities that were repeated were often ones that they did not enjoy in the first place. Ha et al. (2003) noted that as activities are repeated students are less interested in them, and this is even more true for team sports. Tina and Dave made comments that supported the findings of Ha et al. Dave noted that he was bored with the activities and Tina noted that her interest in these repeated activities decreased every year. Azzarito et al. (2006) explained that girls in coeducational settings often play a subordinate role to the boys. Both female participants noted feeling alienated because of the boys' tendency not to pass to girls during game situations. Additionally, Anna noted her disappointment when her elementary physical education teachers picked favorites in the class, noting that the teachers seemed to pay more attention to those who were good at physical education; these were often boys. Anna's response agreed with Gibbons and Humbert's (2008) finding that girls perceived that in coeducational settings the teachers are more interested in their male peers.

Eric's biggest issue with his early physical education experiences was that he found himself being not very active in class. Dave made a similar statement when he spoke of his basic and structured elementary experiences. Low levels of physical activity, unfortunately, are common in many physical education classes. Lee et al. (2007) noted the common place practices of students standing in lines, watching from sidelines, and selecting teams via team captains as reasons why much potential activity time is squandered. Selecting teams can also significantly

contribute to the issue of alienation (Lee, et al., 2007); Anna noted that she was often left out when teams and partners were selected and hated the feeling when it occurred. Much research in physical education has focused on goal orientation (Ferrer-Caja & Weiss, 2000; Kilpatrick et al., 2002; Shen et al., 2008; Xiang et al., 2004). These studies noted that most students are motivated by task-oriented goals; yet competition and ego-oriented goals prevail in many physical education classes (Johnson, 2003). Dave noted his unhappiness with competition when he stated that in competitive settings he would “shut down” (p. 7). Anna noted her aversion to competition and her love for cooperative task-oriented settings.

The emphasis on fitness was also addressed as a potential issue in physical education. Corbin (2002) noted that fitness goals often seem so far out of reach that students fail to put effort into striving for them and those who do often take significant blows to their self-confidence. This disinterest and lack of self-confidence from fitness activities can ultimately lead to a disinterest in the subject as a whole. Anna told of her horrible experiences with fitness runs in class. Her self-confidence was so shaken by her inability to keep up with the rest of the class that she faked asthma attacks to try to save face. Speaking to Anna there was no question that her experiences with running in class were traumatic events. The participants' stories showed great alignment with the literature on problems with physical education; they also were consistent with the literature on engaging disengaged students.

Engaging the Disengaged

The literature reviewed clearly noted the important role that teachers play in reengagement. All four participants had good things to say about their teachers. Among other

things the participants noted the fun that they had with their teachers, the connections that were formed, and the support that their teachers provided them. These teaching traits were identified as positive attributes for helping engage disengaged students (Easton, 2008; OECD, 2000). Audas and Willms (2001) noted the importance of interactions with teachers outside of class time; this was also indicated as a strength of the teachers, especially Mr. B. It was clear that Anna had a great affinity for Ms. A. based on her ability and interest to get to know students and help them with any issues they may have. This ability to care about students' many diverse needs was indicated as important for disengaged students' reengagement (Easton, 2008; OECD, 2000). Easton (2008) identified that teachers with a clear passion for their subject area can help with reengagement. I believe teacher passion, though it was not really addressed by the participants, was present in the Wellness classes at Prairie View High School. The teachers embarked on an innovative initiative, which I do not believe would have been attempted by a group of individuals unless there was a great passion, a belief I base on the amount of additional work that starting a new program would have taken. Additionally, just as the students got to choose their modules the teachers also chose which ones they wanted to teach, which would have allowed for the teachers to be teaching sports and activities for which they have a great deal of knowledge and passion.

Student knowledge and perceived competence was important in the study. Participants noted selecting modules to avoid activities that they did not care for, but also that they selected activities in which they felt they had some degree of competence. Audas and Willms (2001) noted that students are more likely to disengage if they lack the skills required to be successful. Through choice students could select activities where they felt they had the skills required. Having the skills required and being able to avoid activities allowed the participants to not to fear

failure, which has also been noted as important for disengaged students (OECD, 2000).

Literature addressed the need for disengaged students to find a connection with the content they were learning, of note was the importance of individualization for disengaged students (Blankenstein, 2007; Easton, 2008; OECD, 2000). One way to address individual interests is through choice, in fact Easton (2008) described a model very similar to the modular setup used at Prairie View High School. The participant responses to the importance of choice as a motivator were also consistent with the literature.

Choice

This study clearly shows the potential that student choice has to engage disengaged students in physical education. As noted in the previous section, disengaged students, including the four participants of this study, responded well when they were able to individualize programs based on their own personal interests. Choice can also help increase motivation. Students are more intrinsically motivated when they are granted decision-making power (Deci & Ryan, 1992; Harper, 2007; Kohn, 1993a, 1993b; Lent, 2006; Schlecty, 2002). The participants in this study all appeared to be operating based on intrinsic motivation. Even Anna, who also noted the importance of extrinsic motivators, told stories that clearly showed indicators of intrinsic motivation. Not only were the students intrinsically motivated, but three of the four participants directly noted being more motivated than in any previous physical education experience. The results of the present study are consistent with previous studies that examined intrinsic motivation when choice was afforded to students in physical education settings (Alderman et al., 2006; Condon & Collier, 2002; Ferrer-Caja & Weiss, 2000; Ha et al., 2003; Kilpatrick et al.,

2002; Sun et al., 2008). Ha et al. (2003) noted overwhelming student interest in wanting to select their own activities; three of the participants of this study were ecstatic when they learned of their opportunity to choose their own activities. The only participant who was not originally excited by the idea quickly warmed to the modular approach. Consistent with the literature, the participants greatly enjoyed choice and appeared more intrinsically motivated as a result.

Dissonant Responses

While the study closely matched much of the current literature the participant responses did diverge on certain topics. Participants' responses on bombardment games differed from the literature. Absent from the literature was conversation around elementary physical education teachers.

Bombardment Games

Lee et al. (2007) noted the ills of elimination and bombardment games such as dodgeball. The study noted the potential to alienate students through these games. Dodgeball was presented as an activity that needed to be removed from curricular practices. Two participants in the current study loved the game. The first story that Dave told of ever enjoying a physical education class was in grade eight when his class had a regular Friday afternoon dodgeball game. He noted loving the game and always really getting into it. Tina also noted that some of her fondest memories of elementary physical education were playing class games of dodgeball. Neither of these students felt alienated or worried by the experience. Dave even seemed more

amused than worried when he stated that his grade eight teacher “could whip dodgeballs really fast” (p. 3). Dave did note that there were students, many of them girls, who spent more time hiding than playing the dodgeball games.

Elementary Physical Education Specialists

Absent from the conversation about problems with physical education programs was a conversation about teachers. Only Anna had any recollections of having a physical education specialist for her elementary classes. Dave, Eric, and Tina all remembered having their classroom teachers run their physical education class. All participants except Tina noted that most of their elementary physical education teachers were not strong physical education teachers. Even Anna who had experienced physical education specialists as teachers made negative comments. Many comments were made by participants about teachers and how they had contributed to their negative physical education experiences. Participants commented that their classroom teachers often lacked interest and knowledge in the subject. Anna noted that with specialists coming to take her class a few times a week she never got to know the teachers and found that the teachers were not very helpful. Three of the four participants identified the negative effects that teachers can have on elementary physical education experiences; yet it was seemingly absent from the literature I had previously reviewed.

There is a wealth of literature that examines elementary physical education instruction. The literature clearly indicates that the vast majority of physical education instruction in elementary schools in Canada and the United States is delivered by regular classroom teachers (Active Healthy Kids Canada, 2009; McKenzie, Sallis, Kolody, & Faucette, 1997; Sherman,

2008). Many elementary classroom teachers lack appropriate training. Many teacher training programs require only one class or seminar be taken in the area of physical education, some programs require no physical education training whatsoever (McKenzie et al., 1997; Sherman, 2008). This lack of training makes delivering a quality physical education program an “often overwhelming task” (Sherman, 2008, p. 33). Teaching elementary physical education requires the ability to provide a safe environment, a variety of developmentally appropriate activities, effective instruction, an awareness of gender issues, and promotion of non-competitive classes (DeCorby, Halas, Dixon, Wintrup, & Janzen, 2005). Sherman (2008) wrote, “it is widely acknowledged that it is ideal to have credentialed physical education specialists teaching physical education—in elementary schools as elsewhere (p. 33). McKenzie et al. (1997) and Sherman (1997) both noted that with support and training classroom teachers could also become highly effective physical educators. DeCorby et al. (2005) noted that having a physical education specialist will not guarantee the delivery of a strong physical education program; however, it has been noted that, generally, elementary students have significantly more enjoyable physical education experiences when they have specialist teachers (DeCorby et al., 2005; McKenzie, et al., 1997). DeCorby et al. (2005) reported that their study “provides insight into how a specialist teacher can qualitatively provide an effective program that engages all students” (p. 218). There was strong support for hiring physical education specialists (DeCorby, et al., 2005; McKenzie, et al., 1997; Sherman, 2008). DeCorby et al. (2005) wrote “in a best case scenario all of the problematic areas could be addressed by schools hiring a physical education specialist” (p. 218). Perhaps the elementary physical education experiences of the four participants of the present study could have been more positive had they experienced specialist teachers.

Research Question(s) Answered

The study was successful in providing information to answer each of the research questions. In this section the research questions will be answered in the order they were asked. The answers to these questions will be a combination of the current study and the works of literature cited in the literature review. The bulk of the answer to the first question resides in the responses to the second and third questions.

Does student choice have an impact on the experiences of grade 10 students who have not enjoyed their previous physical education experiences?

Student choice had a profoundly positive impact on four grade 10 wellness students who had not enjoyed their previous physical education experiences. Choice helped the participants realize their needs for autonomy, competency, and relatedness. The participants noted high levels of interest, involvement, and fun, which differed from many of their recollections on their previous experiences. The participants were intrinsically motivated, engaged in their learning, and had developed positive perceptions of physical activity.

In what ways does student choice help lead to student engagement in physical education?

The study supported the literature that students are more engaged when they are able to control their own learning (Bigelow & Vokoun, 2005; Certo et al., 2008). Choice fostered intrinsic motivation in the participants. This intrinsic motivation was apparent through the indicators of interest, involvement, and fun. Intrinsic motivation and student engagement are vitally linked. Engagement was defined for this study as: students being highly interested and

involved in their learning; essentially students engaging in their schooling for intrinsic reasons. Intrinsic motivation will be examined in more detail in the next question.

Choice also helped lead to student engagement by removing many of the barriers that the participants had experienced in past physical education experiences. The modular approach clearly addressed many of the problems with physical education as raised by the literature. At the conclusion of chapter three, a model was devised to examine how choice may help overcome inhibitors to lifelong physical activity. Five inhibitors in the physical education setting were raised: traditional sport offerings; the focus on physical fitness; students' lack of control; alienation; and teacher-centered approaches were all seen by previous studies as inhibitors that stood in the way of students enjoying their physical education experiences. The link between positive physical education experiences and lifelong physical activity (Alderman et al., 2006; Gibbons & Humbert, 2008; Lee, 2004; MacPhail et al., 2008), challenges educators to provide students with the most enjoyable experiences possible. As suggested in figure 3 (see p. 49): impact of choice on lifelong physical activity, choice can potentially help foster lifelong physical activity by making physical education more enjoyable by bridging many of the inhibitor presented. Students who had not enjoyed previous experiences with traditional sport offerings were able to select activities in which they perceived they had greater skill or more interest. Choices based on interest and perceived competence were made by the participants of this study; the participants also noted specifically avoiding activities they did not wish to take part in. Lack of student control within their physical education class was another inhibitor that choice overcame. Participants of the study clearly recognized themselves as the primary decision makers and that they were placed in control of their learning. Although the instructional approaches in each of the modules did not seem to differ from previous physical education

instruction the students did not seem to feel the class was teacher-centered. In fact, the participants noted the student-centered teaching approach of their instructors; however, this was likely the teachers' style regardless of whether they gave choice or not.

Within figure 3, I theorized that although not directly so, choice may also help overcome the inhibitors of the physical fitness approach and the problem of alienation. I believe that choice directly addressed the issue of alienation for the participants of this study. Participants commonly used selecting with their friends as a criterion for making modular choices. In this way students were able to ensure that they had friends in each module. Also, if there was an activity that they thought they would lack skill or may become alienated, they could avoid the activity and select one in which they felt more confident. Surprisingly, the physical fitness focus barrier also seemed to be bridged despite the students still taking part in daily fitness activities and periodic fitness tests. Anna and Dave noted feeling significantly more fit at the conclusion of the class as a result of putting in a much better effort into fitness activities. Anna even noted enjoying running, something that she had always despised. Although choice did not impact the approach to physical fitness in the class, the students appeared to embrace the fitness component of the class based on an overall greater enjoyment of the class as a whole. All four participants of the study were engaged in their learning and were intrinsically motivated to do so.

In what ways is student choice in physical education intrinsically motivating?

The participants were intrinsically motivated as a result of being granted decision making power in the class. Meeting the students' innate needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness fostered this intrinsic motivation. Additionally, the intrinsic motivation of participants was clear based on the prevalence of indicators of intrinsic motivation in their

stories. These indicators include interest, enjoyment, effort, and persistence; the indicators have been frequently used in previous studies (Ferrer-Caja & Weiss, 2000). All students were at least in part motivated intrinsically; however, one participant did also note her extrinsic motivation. Therefore, it will be important to revisit the continuum of motivation as outlined by Deci and Ryan (2002).

Choice is intrinsically motivating in part because it meets students' innate need to be autonomous. Autonomy is the degree to which individuals feel as though they have played a role in determining the course of action (Deci & Ryan, 2002). The participants of the study felt empowered to make decisions that would impact their learning. These decisions were made based on a number of different criteria. Three things are clear: 1) the students felt they were the primary decision makers in the class; 2) they enjoyed the opportunity to control their learning, and 3) autonomy helped increase their intrinsic motivation levels.

Choice also helped students meet their need to feel competent in their learning. To meet this need one does not actually need to be competent, just to feel as though they are; for this reason it is often referred to as perceived competence (Ferrer-Caja & Weiss, 2000; Hashim, Grove, & Whipp, 2008; Lee, 2004; Shen et al., 2008). Through the selection process the participants weighed which modules to take; often a significant part of this decision was selecting activities in which they felt they could be successful and avoiding ones in which they felt they could not be. Making decisions based on perceived competence allowed students to be active in activities in which they felt confident and capable; thus meeting the innate need to feel competent.

The final innate need identified by self-determination theory is the need to feel related. The two female participants both selected activities with their close friends. This process

ensured that they would always be with friends. I would argue that it is also easier to feel related to a group of individuals who have selected the same activity based on a mutual interest. I would also contend that it is easier to feel related if you feel competent in the activity in which one is active.

Although often used by studies as indicators of intrinsic motivation I believe that interest and enjoyment are precursors to intrinsic motivation. All four participants selected activities based on their interest in those activities and the potential to have fun while involved in that particular module. Interest is deeply tied to intrinsic motivation (Pittman & Boggiano, 1992; Schlecty, 2002). Hashim et al. (2008) noted that excitement over the activity was the biggest predictor of fun and enjoyment in physical education class. The students' selection of activities for fun and interest allowed them to be intrinsically motivated; their fun and interest in the activities also acted as an indicator of their intrinsic motivation.

Other indicators of intrinsic motivation that were apparent in the participants were effort and persistence. All four participants noted high levels of participation in their Wellness 10 class. It is also important to note that the three of the four participants noted being more involved than they had been in previous physical education classes. Dave told the only story of lack of persistence within a student-selected module; otherwise the students committed to their choices and maintained a high level of involvement in their modules.

The power of choice was readily noticeable during the interviews when participants spoke of the modules that were mandatory. The students were clearly less interested by the activities, in fact two participants dreaded the fact that they had to take these activities. Eric told a story of lack of persistence when he was forced to cross-country ski. In all other modules Eric noted high levels of participation, involvement, and interest. It was clear that once students were

empowered to make choices they were less motivated to take activities that they were not able to choose themselves.

Of the participants, Anna was the only one to note extrinsic motives when speaking of Wellness 10 experiences. Anna also spoke of intrinsic motivators. It is interesting to note that the two types of motivation do not need to function separately from one another.

Intrinsic motivation has been indicated as the preferred motivation style for optimal learning (Ferrer-Caja & Weiss, 2000; Kilpatrick, et al. 2002). Deci and Ryan (2002) created a continuum that ranges from amotivation through four types of extrinsic motivation and ends with the optimal motivation type, intrinsic motivation. The four types of extrinsic motivation are: 1) external regulation; 2) interjected regulation; 3) identified regulation, and 4) integrated regulation. External regulation is motivation based solely on extrinsic factors. Interjected regulation occurs when an external factor has been internalized. Identified regulation is recognizing external motives and consciously valuing them for internal reasons. Integrated regulation is the most autonomous of extrinsic behavior where much of the behavior is internalized. At the top of the continuum is pure intrinsic motivation. As three of the participants made no mention of external factors during the interviews, I would classify their motivation type as intrinsic. Anna's behavior was based on a mixture of intrinsic and extrinsic factors. The extrinsic factors for which she was striving: high marks and pleasing her teachers, were very much part of her, yet she was very aware of them. Much of Anna's identity appeared to be based on her academic ability. She frequently spoke of her high marks and her advanced classes. There is no doubt in my mind that Anna had internalized her need to achieve in school well before her grade 10 year. Additionally, Anna seemed to have internalized the extrinsic motivator of teacher approval. She spoke at length about wanting to please the teachers that she

enjoyed. However, Anna's comments clearly noted the prevalence of intrinsic motivation indicators and the fulfillment of her needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. For these reasons, I believe that Anna's motivation type would have been identified regulation. When Anna spoke of her other classes she was strongly extrinsically motivated.

This study was consistent with the literature; students are more intrinsically motivated when they are granted decision-making power (Bigelow & Vokoun, 2005; Kohn, 1993b; Lent, 2006). This is also consistent with studies of choice in physical education that noted increased intrinsic motivation when students were able to select activities (Alderman et al., 2006; Condon & Collier, 2002; Ferrer-Caja & Weiss, 2000; Ha et al., 2003; Kilpatrick et al., 2002; Sun et al., 2008).

In what ways have opportunities for choice in physical education class changed students' perceptions about being active outside school hours?

Changes to perceptions of physical activity outside of school hours were less apparent than changes in intrinsic motivation and engagement. Chung and Philips (2002) noted that students who disliked physical education were less likely to be active outside of school time. This finding was not consistent with the participants of this study. Two of the four participants were involved on school sports teams and another in an elective curricular dance class. Tina walked to school every day. Eric noted trying to be active with his friends outside of class time. Only Dave presented himself as living a predominantly sedentary life. At the conclusion of the class, all four participants noted that they valued physical activity. Tina stated that the class did not impact her perception of physical activity. The two boys conceded that their perceptions had

changed somewhat. Anna noted significant change; she now valued physical activity far more than she had before.

The changes in perception are consistent with previous research that students who enjoy physical education are more likely to be active outside of school time (Alderman et al., 2006; MacPhail et al., 2008). All four participants noted that their Wellness 10 class was their best experience so far in physical education, and told numerous stories of enjoyment within the class. Therefore, their increased enjoyment of physical education should create more interest in being active during their free time. The modular structure of the class also facilitated active lifestyles. Enjoyment, interest, and skill have been identified as the foundation for activity or sport involvement (Alderman et al., 2006; Corbin, 2002; MacPhail et al., 2008). The modular approach to Wellness 10 provided these important foundations for the participants. Each of the modules was six-days-long; this allowed time for the students to develop the skills and knowledge required to be active in each activity. The participants selected activities in which they were interested and believed they would have fun. In a normal physical education environment where the teacher selects the activities it is common for students to be involved in activities that they do not enjoy and for which they have little interest. The modular structure of the class effectively increased the number of opportunities for students to be active in activities in which they were interested by allowing them to always have more than one option. With two options always being offered students doubled the chance that they would be involved in activities of interest and in new activities that they had not tried before. This increased the number of activities that student developed the skills and knowledge to follow up with outside of class time—effectively increasing the students’ capacity to be active. Anna and Eric had already followed-up activities on their own time, and Dave had plans to start weight training during his

summer vacation. There appeared to be a change in student perceptions of physical activity and actual activity levels as a result of choice. Importantly, there was also the building of capacity for the students to be active later in life.

In what ways has choice in physical education class changed student perceptions about being active later in life?

Previous studies noted that positive physical education experiences increase the likelihood of students continuing to be active for life (Alderman et al., 2006; Gibbons & Humbert, 2008; Lee, 2004; MacPhail et al., 2008). The participants all identified themselves as not having enjoyed their previous physical education experiences; however, all participants enjoyed their Wellness 10 experience. Hopefully, this positive experience will act to promote lifelong activity for the participants. As sixteen-year olds, the participants had not really put serious thought into activity later in life, so their perceptions about lifelong learning were not so much changed as created. Each of the four participants mentioned at least one sport or activity that they took as a module that they would be interested in pursuing later in life.

Because of the increased number of activities that needed to be offered, to allow for two potential activity choices in each modular block, there were many more offerings than in a typical physical education class. There were also a number of sports and activities that were novel for the students. Many of these activities that they had not tried before were activities that could be continued for a lifetime. The lack of activities offered in many physical education classes that can be continued for the remainder of students' lifetimes has been discussed in previous works (Beyer, 2008; Corbin, 2002; Johnson, 2003; Mohr et al., 2006). The modular approach has allowed students to engage in a variety of activities of interest to them, including

many activities that are typically not offered at the grade 10 level and activities that can be continued for life. The modular approach has helped students build a capacity to be active by allowing students to develop skills and knowledge in activities of their interest. Participant comments about activities that they would like to pursue later in life indicate that choice has played a role in the formation of positive perceptions of living a physically active life.

Unanswered and Emergent Questions

The participant identification surveys required students to rate their previous physical education experiences using a Likert-scaled response. Potential participants were selected for the study only if they rated their experiences at either a one or two out of five. After interviews were conducted the participant identification surveys were destroyed. No information was taken from the survey other than that used to identify participants, as such I am not sure the numerical rating (either one or two) that each participant gave their previous physical education experiences. Based on the interviews with the participants, I have concluded that none of the participants were fully disengaged from physical education at the outset of their grade 10 Wellness class. If I needed to rate the four participants' previous experiences I would rank each student at a two out of five. I would rate the participants at a two, as each had many negative stories to share; yet also had some positive things to say. I did not have the chance to speak to a student who I would say was totally turned off of physical education. This left me wondering if the results of the study would be the same for students who completely hated physical education and placed no value on physical activity? This question would require a different study, including a different participant recruitment practice. Many students who are fully disengaged from a class at a high school level frequently skip the class, or fail to attend at all. Poor

attendance would make it difficult to attract the students to take part in the study. The current study seems to address the question of impact of choice on students who are partially disengaged in physical education but fails to address students who are fully disengaged.

Pondering the lack of participants who were fully disengaged led me to wonder if the four participants in this study were willing to participate because they had enjoyed their Wellness 10 experiences and were, therefore, more willing to share their stories and experiences with me. Although effort was made to ensure that the students' current experiences would not impact their participation or non-participation in the study (the participant identification survey asked nothing of their current Wellness 10 experiences) all four participants had positive experiences in Wellness 10. This could be because student choice was a powerful motivator, or could be because students who did not enjoy previous physical education experiences and did not enjoy their Wellness 10 opted not to take part in the study. This begs the question, how could I assess the overall enjoyment of all students to see the impact of choice? This would be for another study and may well involve a quantitative methodology that could better assess a much larger number of students.

This study indicates the importance of choice for disengaged grade 10 physical education students. Condon and Collier (2002) successfully used modular physical education to address student participation rates in middle years physical education. What is the right time to begin to offer student choice in physical education? Should student choice be granted through an intellectual weaning process as promoted by Abbott and Ryan (2001)? If so at what point should the weaning begin and what levels of choice should be granted to younger students?

With multiple studies showing the importance of choice in physical education (Alderman et al., 2006; Condon & Collier, 2002; Ferrer-Caja & Weiss, 2000; Ha et al., 2003; Kilpatrick et al., 2002; Sun et al., 2008) how important is choice to other subject areas? Additionally, if students were receiving significant choice in some of their classes but not in others, what impact might this have on their enjoyment and engagement in the courses in which they are not decision makers?

All four participants stated a preference for either a coed or a segregated class prior to their Wellness 10 class. Dave enjoyed his coed classes more than his segregated grade nine class while the other three participants identified their segregated grade nine experiences as more enjoyable than their coed experiences. There is literature debating the benefits of both coed (Hill & Cleven, 2005a) and segregated (Humbert, 2006) physical education classes. All four participants were asked about their coed experiences in Wellness 10. None of the participants had either positive or negative things to say. Why did the participants, who had already in the interviews expressed their opinion on class composition, not feel strongly about a need for either coed or segregated modules? A potential answer is that many of the activities involved in the modular program were not seen as gendered. Another insight from this study would be that the two female participants did not enjoy their previous coed experiences because they often felt that the boys would not include them in games; the girls potentially addressed this as they selected activities that often did not require team play. I would be interested in further examining class composition and choice. In particular, in schools large enough to offer multiple boys and girls classes at the same time would it be more beneficial to offer modules for girls only and boys only, or would it make more sense to maximize choice by offering many modules to both sexes?

All four participants noted activities that they took as modules that they may be interested in pursuing later in life. This portion of the study focused on participant perceptions of future activity. What is the actual likelihood that the participants will follow up on these thoughts as adults? It would be interesting to investigate this question through a follow up study some years later.

Of the participants only Anna had experienced a physical education specialist during her elementary years. Dave, Eric, and Tina generally seemed less than impressed with most of their classroom teachers' ability and interest in teaching physical education. With the poor experiences that these three participants had it makes me wonder if they would have had better experiences in elementary physical education if they had had specialists teaching their classes? Anna's experiences with physical education specialists were not positive either, as she often spoke of her teachers as individuals that she did not wish to get to know. This study indicates that choice allows for high school students to better enjoy their physical education class. Is it possible to improve student experiences in physical education prior to high school by having trained physical educators teaching classes?

Research Process

This was my first attempt at conducting research. It was definitely an experience that was challenging and promoted a great deal of personal growth. This process certainly allowed me to develop a firmer understanding of the intricacies of research and what goes into creating the many studies that I have read. Along the way I was faced by a number of challenges and made a number of resulting changes. I also was able to reflect on the study as it unfolded and

realized that there were many changes that could have been made to make the study better. Throughout the process I learned a great deal about research and myself.

Challenges

Along the way many difficulties were encountered. The times spent waiting for authorization from the Behavioral Research Ethics Board created a significant lull in the process. Furthermore, the significant change required by the Board that disallowed students under the age of 16 from participating in the study created initial concern. The decision made was a difficult one. There were essentially three choices that could have been made. First, the study could have continued as planned but with all students in Wellness 10 receiving assent and parent consent forms prior to the participant identification survey. This process would have been logistically problematic and potentially could have reduced the number of students who could have been participants as many students may not have completed their forms on time. Secondly, the study could have been pushed back until the conclusion of the first semester in the subsequent school year. This would have allowed far more time to distribute and retrieve student forms, but would also eliminate all students who were to take Wellness 10 in the second semester. Moving the study back until the conclusion of the next school year would allow all Wellness 10 students to be potential participants, but would move the time frame of the study back an entire year. The third possible solution was the one I selected: to move forward with administering the participant identification survey to students of 16 years of age or older. This decision effectively removed roughly half of the students from potential participation as students typically enter school based on January birthdays. This means that typically students begin to turn 16 in January of their

grade 10 year and as late as December of grade 11. This decision did limit the number of potential participants; yet I believe that any of the three decisions would have limited the participant pool. The decision to move forward without participants younger than 16 allowed the study to continue with limited interruption and within the intended timeframe. With all this in mind I feel as though the decision made, as trying as it was, was appropriate.

With the decision to move forward with the study at the end of the school year came a rushed timeline. I acknowledged that it would be difficult to get transcripts and transcript release forms back from participants during their summer vacation. As such, I spent hours between the Friday of the first interview and the Tuesday of the last interviews at my computer typing transcripts. I was able to get all transcripts to the participants on or before the day of their first exam. Two of the transcripts and transcript release forms were promptly returned, the other two, despite my rush to have them ready needed to be resent to the participants in the summer because they had lost the first copy. I am happy with the decision to put in the few tough days that I did typing transcripts for three reasons. I was able to learn far more about the interviews than I would have if I had someone else transcribe them for me. I was able to return them to students in a timely fashion that they appreciated and also let them know that I was committed to the study. Most importantly, despite the setback in terms of time while I awaited approval from the Behavioral Research Ethics Board, I had put myself into a position where I could move into the data coding stage of the study midway through the month of June; essentially I was back within the timeframe that I had originally hoped to be on.

It was recommended by members of my committee at the proposal defense that a pilot study be conducted so that I would be able to pretest the interview guide, fine-tune interview skills, and learn to work with students from a similar socio-economic group to the participants to

be used in the study. It was difficult to find a school that would have students that would be able to participate in the pilot study. The difficulty was finding a school that had students from a similar socio-economic background and had some form of choice program for physical education students. I was able to find schools that had similar socio-economic backgrounds, but had no choice. I was also able to find schools that had choice programs but none had students with a similar socio-economic background. I determined that the best way to move forward with the pilot study was to use one of the identified participants from Prairie View High School and to interview this participant shortly before the others. This interview would not have been transcribed but rather used to learn from. The interview was arranged for the Friday, with the other interviews scheduled for the following Monday and Tuesday. On Friday morning the female student who was supposed to be involved in the pilot study informed me that she and her parents had decided to opt out of the study. At this point, I was forced to make another decision. I chose to forgo the pilot study and interview a participant who had her forms in and was eager to be interviewed. I used the data derived from this first interview but also used it as a learning experience. I learned from the first interview, with Anna, that if I were asking students to tell me what modules they had selected and why they made these choices that I needed to have the modular selection sheets at the interview for them to refer to. I also learned that I needed to provide a beverage for the participants as an interview involves a lot of talking and Anna began to get a dry throat midway through the interview. I made these changes for the remainder of the interviews and provided students with the modular selection sheets (see appendices A and B), and provided participants with bottled water. I set up a second interview with Anna so that she could also be able to refer to the modular selection sheet. In place of a pilot study, I feel that I was able to learn and adapt based on the first interview.

A significant challenge that I faced was coding the data. It was not until I had cut the transcripts into smaller pieces that I discovered just how much data I was working with. Reading and sorting through the pile of paper proved long and difficult. When I finished sorting for the first time, I did not feel good about the piles I had created. There seemed to be so many statements made that fit into multiple groups. I assigned working titles to the themes that emerged and then resorted once I had a better idea of what I had discovered the first time through. Noting the enormity of the stacks of data for each theme that I had created, I reorganized each theme to create smaller data groups that fit into each theme. Finally, confident that the data was sorted into the appropriate themes I was able to move forward and begin writing chapter four. During the writing I still shuffled data around largely based on the close interconnectivity of many themes.

A problem with the set up of the study was trying to determine participants future behavior based on their stated perceptions. This is problematic because it was impossible to tell at the time of the interviews whether the participants would actually follow through on their plans. As such the most difficult secondary question to address was the question asking “in what ways has choice in physical education class changed students’ perceptions about being active later in life?” I acknowledge that perceptions should not be read too deeply into, therefore, I did not assume that participant comments meant they would be active later in life. The findings for this question are speculative and made writing the section difficult.

Changes

Reflecting on the process of this study there are a few changes that I believe would have allowed for stronger results. One of the most important questions in the interviews was “tell me about some of the modules you selected and why you made those choices?” This question could have lent itself well to a written survey in which participants could have had a sheet similar to the modular selection sheet (see appendices A and B) with space for a few sentences beside each module for a brief written explanation. At least, if I was to replicate this study I would give each participant a copy of the modular selection sheet prior to the interview and ask them to recall what modules they participated in and why they made those selections.

The study was one which required participants to be near the end of the semester so that they would be able to reflect on the full modular experience; however, the tight timeframe in which I was operating did force me to make decisions quickly and allowed little time for reflection. If possible, I would have liked to conduct the interviews a few weeks earlier in the school year to allow for a more relaxed pace of research instead of the frantic pace that I worked at near the end of the school year.

This study may have been more informative if it had taken place over a period of time and had included a combination of research methods. Specifically, I would have liked to conduct interviews with participants as they finished their grade nine physical education class; perhaps even follow students for a few years and interview them in grade seven or eight, as well. These early interviews would have as their sole purpose understanding student perceptions of physical education before they were exposed to choice. This would allow for more information on past experiences and for the information on past experiences to be more accurate, as the

participants would not need to reflect as far back. Additionally, this is a study that may have benefited from observation of the participants in their Wellness 10 class. In particular these observations would help shed light on participation levels and student fun and enjoyment. Specifically, had I visited the gym to make formal observations I would have been looking for participation levels and evidence of the participants having fun in their modules. It would also be interesting to do a follow-up study some years later, to see how active the participants are in their adult life, and in what activities. It would be interesting to have them reflect back years later on their Wellness 10 experience and see what their thoughts were, and how, if at all, the class had impacted upon them. It would also have been interesting to do a similar study with a group of Wellness 10 students who were not involved in a choice program. This would have allowed to me to compare the findings of the study against a control group. Use of a control group may have helped shed more light on the impact of choice.

Personal Growth

Conducting the study and writing this thesis provided an opportunity for a great deal of personal growth. As a novice researcher I had many firsts. I had never written a research question before, and quickly discovered how precise and well thought out the question needs to be. Also I learned how the question then guides the rest of the study including the method. As a teacher, I frequently talk with students, yet conducting an interview with students I did not have a prior relationship with was different. In speaking to my own students I feel as though trust and respect have already been established. In addition to the lack of formed trust, there were many predetermined points to talk about, and an audio recorder in the room; these factors created

conditions much different than my daily chats with students. I learned the importance of the first couple of minutes of the interview. This time was spent allowing time to get to know each other first and to allow a mutual trust to begin to develop. The interviews required an interesting challenge in that I needed to be involved in dialogue with the participants and closely listen to what and how they were saying things, yet also had to be aware of how to seamlessly tie in questions from the interview guide.

The coding and themeing process required inductive thinking that I do not often do. The process of sorting into similar piles was tedious and time consuming and at times rather frustrating. It was a challenge that looking back on I enjoyed. To take information from four lengthy transcripts and arrange it into coherent categories of data that could be readily used to form themes was a challenging endeavor that forced me into higher levels of thought.

Most notably, through this study I grew as an inquirer. I found myself almost constantly thinking about the study and the thesis. The reading that I have done has already impacted greatly on how I teach. The reading that I have done has also inspired me to ponder other questions both related and unrelated to the current study. I feel as though I have grown as a learner and I will continue to ask, and hopefully answer, meaningful questions.

Transferability of the Study

In staying true to the constructivist belief in knowledge as anti-foundational, it will be up to the reader of the study to determine if they feel as though the results of the study would in fact translate to their specific situation. It is known that attitudes towards choice are impacted by socioeconomic context (Lareau, 2002). This study took place within a certain context, and was

both relative and subjective based on the experiences of the four participants. I do not contend that the results of this study will transfer to other situations, or that they will persist within the situation that was presently examined. However, in the time and place of the study the results for the four participants were very positive.

The Study in Context

This study reinforces the positive effects that student choice can have on students' intrinsic motivation and engagement in physical education. The study suggests the potentially important role choice may play in increasing lifelong activity through providing more positive physical education experiences. The study shows that choice plays a vital role in reengaging students who have disengaged from a particular subject area. This study affirms previous studies on student motivation and engagement in any subject area: choice works. With mounting evidence that choice can help intrinsically motivate students and help students engage in their learning it seems important that choice be widely integrated into educational practices.

Fullan (2001) noted that part of leadership is the ability to mobilize others to “confront problems that have never yet been successfully addressed” (p. 3). Engaging disengaged students in physical education is one such problem that has not been addressed. Addressing this issue will require support from the teaching staff. It was clear from my brief informal observations and conversations with the physical education teachers of Prairie View High School that modular physical education required them to work differently. Modular physical education clearly took time to establish, a great deal of time to track students as they moved between teachers with each module, and increased teacher collaboration. It was clear that the teachers at Prairie View High

School had taken on the challenge of initiating a new program based on mutual interest and as such they were motivated and willing to accept their different work environment. Fullan (2001) noted the need for relationships as one of his five dimensions of leadership. When asking staff to embark on a new program that will require them to work differently, and potentially consume more of their time, it will aid the change process if they commence the initiative with a positive relationship with their administrators. Teachers can also support each other. I have had the opportunity to be a part of a network of physical education teachers that over the past three years have shared ideas, discussed best practice, and supported each other in our efforts to be innovative and responsive. Professional organizations such as this group will help build additional capacity for change and improvement. It needs to be noted that change and implementation are difficult (Fullan, 1991; 2001).

The difficulty involved in implementing the change to modular physical education will be worth the challenge, as there appears to be additional payoffs. Teacher isolation in traditional education settings has been noted as preventing professional learning (Mitchell & Sackney, 2000) and overall school improvement (Elmore, 2000). Modular physical education requires a different structure in the gym, one in which the physical education staff must work closely together; therefore, maximizing contact. Increased staff contact can lead to increased interpersonal capacity and promotion of professional discourse (Mitchell & Sackney, 2000). There is a more important reason to change to modular physical education. When he examined student perceptions of educational change Fullan (1991) wrote that in most cases “the changes in fact do not make a difference to them” (p. 182). The present study has shown that modular physical education will in fact make a difference for students who are disengaged from physical education.

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Appendix A:

Prairie View High School Wellness 10 (Modular PE) Semester 1

Date	Module 1 (Big Gym)	Module 2 (Small Gym)	Module 3 (Other)
5 days Aug 27,28,29 Sept 2-5	Intro & module Selection LOGS	Intro & module selection LOGS	
Sept 8-16	Slo-pitch/Baseball	Flag Football	Ultimate Frisbee
Sept 17-25	Tennis	Golf	Walk/Run/Lifelong Activity
Sept 26-30 Oct 1-6	Tennis	Adventure Games/ Initiative Tasks	Rugby/Aussie Rules Football (no-tackling)
Oct 7-9	Fitness Challenge PA Action Plan	Fitness Challenge PA Action Plan	
Oct 14-22		Fitness Survey (w/Dance)	Human Performance/ Resistance Training
Oct 27-Nov 4	Badminton	Combatives Martial Arts	Ice Games
Nov 5-Nov 13	Team Sports	LOG Games	Yoga/Pilates/ Core Strength
Nov 14-21	Lacrosse	Fitness Survey 2 (no Dance)	Weight Training
Nov 24-Dec 1	Social Dance		
Dec 2-Dec 9	Human Performance Resistance Training	Bowling/Creative Games	Winter Games/ XC Skiing
Dec 10-12	Fitness Challenge Nutrition Action Plan	Fitness Challenge Nutrition Action Plan	
Dec 15 – 19 Dec 19 Games	Bowling/Creative Games	Combatives Martial Arts	Winter Games/XC Skiing
Jan 5-9	Handball/ Team Games		Winter Games/ XC Skiing

Jan 12-15	CPR Theory	
Jan 16 PD 1 Final Jan 19 PD 2 Final	CPR Practical	
	Thursdays are Fitness Theory	

Notes:

All units are 6 days except the first one, the fitness appraisals, and CPR (3 plus final exam).

Appendix B:

Prairie View High School Wellness 10 (Modular PE) Semester 2

Date	Module 1 (Big Gym)	Module 2 (Small Gym)
Jan 27-30 (4 days)	Intro & module Selection/LOGS	Intro & module selection /LOGS
Feb 2-10	Winter Games/XC Skiing	Archery
Feb. 11-13	Fitness Challenges	Fitness Challenges
February Break Feb 14- 22		
Feb 23-27 (4 days)	Bowling/Create a Game \$8.00	Winter Games/XC Skiing
March 2-13 (7 days)	Ice Games/Broomball	Badminton
March 4-16	Fitness Survey	Human Performance
March 17-27	Combatives/Martial Arts \$8.00	Team Handball
March 30-April 8 (7 days)	LOG Games	Team Sports
Easter Break (April 10-19)		
April 20-28	Yoga/Pilates/Core Strength	Lacrosse
April 29-May 8	Flag Football	Adventure Games/Initiative Tasks
May 11-12	Fitness Challenges	Fitness Challenges
May 13-22 (4 days)	Soccer/Aquatics	Walk/Run/Lifelong Fitness
May 25-June 2	Tennis	Golf \$10.00
June 3-June 10 (5 days)	Slow Pitch	Ultimate Frisbee

June 12,15,16	CPR Theory
Final Exams Pd 1 June 17 Pd 2 June 18 Pd 3 June 19 Pd 4 June 22 Pd 5 June 23	CPR Practical ***Thursdays are Fitness Theory***

Appendix C: Interview Guiding Questions

Introduction:

Thank you for accepting the invitation to participate in this study

A few things about what will happen:

- The audio recorder can be shut off at any time
- Only a transcriber and a research assistant will listen to the tape
- You will be given a pseudonym
- Do you have any questions/concerns before we start? Feel free to ask any questions as we go along if something is unclear.

Preamble: The aim of this study is to determine the impact of being allowed choice within your physical education class. I am hoping that this interview will allow you to share your experiences in your current class as well as with previous experiences in physical education.

What is the difference between physical activity and physical education?

Questions (by focus): order may vary depending on flow of interview

Opening Questions:

- In an average week, how active are you?
- What elementary school did you attend? What was PE like at _____?
- What was grade 9 PE like?
- What if anything did you enjoy about previous physical education classes? Why? What does fun in PE look like?
- Please tell me a few things about your previous physical education experiences that you did not enjoy
- How was grade 10 PE different?
- Do you feel as though your current experience was more enjoyable than past physical education classes? Why? Why not?

Choice

- What activities did you select to take in your Wellness 10 class? Why did you choose these activities? Are you happy with your choices? Why? Why not?
- Do you feel you were a more active participant in class?
- Explain how you felt when you learned you would have control over your own activity selection
- In what ways is choice important for physical education?
- Did you find yourself more motivated to be active in activities that you selected?
- Is there anything further that you would like to tell me about this topic?
- If this class were not mandatory would you recommend this class to a sibling or a friend?
- Why do you think your PE teachers changed the set up for PE around?

Active Living

- Did you follow up any activities after the module was over?
- Do you believe you will continue to be active now that you do not have any more mandatory physical education classes? Did your current class play any role in this decision?
- Has your Wellness 10 class in anyway impacted your perception of physical activity?

Prompts (and other)

- If you were having fun in PE what would it look like?
- Did you notice a difference between coed and segregated classes?
- Does the gender of the teacher matter?

Closing

- If you could tell PE teachers anything, what would you want them to know?

Summary – Provide on the spot feedback (if possible) – ask: if there is anything they want to add?

Appendix D: Participant Identification Survey

This survey is intended to identify participants for a masters thesis study titled: Choice Matters: Motivating Students for Lifelong Physical Activity. The goal of the study is to learn about the experiences of students in a physical education setting where they are afforded the opportunity to select activities; in particular to examine the experiences of students who have not enjoyed their previous physical education experiences. Participation in the study is voluntary. This survey will be used only for participant identification. After participants are identified and contacted, the surveys will be destroyed. Filling in this survey will take only a few minutes. Participants in the study will be involved in one-on-one interviews with the student researcher, Mickey Jutras. The interviews will take roughly 30-45 minutes and will be conducted at a time that is agreed upon by participant and researcher. If you are selected to participate in the study you will be contacted by the student researcher through your Wellness teacher. If you have any questions about the study you may contact the student researcher at any time at 382-5096.

- (1) On a scale of 1 to 5 how much have you enjoyed your previous physical education experiences (with 1 being did not enjoy at all and 5 being greatly enjoyed).

1 2 3 4 5

**Please complete questions 2 and 3 only if you rated your previous experiences either
1 or 2 on question #1**

- (2) If you are willing to participate in this study what is your full name so you can be contacted. _____
- (3) If you are willing to participate in this study, what is your sex? M F

**Appendix E:
Invitation to Participate/Assent Letter**

Choice Matters: Motivating Students for Lifelong Physical Activity

You are invited to participate in a study that is being carried out by researchers from the University of Saskatchewan. Your participation in this study is in no way connected with your regular school work and participation in this study is completely optional and voluntary.

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of students who have not enjoyed their previous physical education classes, and to see what impacts choice has had on their current physical education enjoyment as well as perceptions of potential lifelong activity. I hope that the findings from this study will help to improve physical education experiences for all students.

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to take part in one-on-one audio recorded interviews. Participants may request that the audio recording device be turned off at any point in the interviews. The interview will take place at your school. The interviews will be one half to a full hour in length and will be conducted at a time that is agreed upon by participant and researcher. Participation in the study is completely voluntary and you can withdraw for any reason, at any time, without penalty of any sort. If you do decide to withdraw from the study any information that you have provided will be destroyed. There will be no negative repercussions if you choose not to participate. During the study sensitive issues may arise, such as body image and peer pressure, if students display distress they will be directed to the school's guidance counselor.

Any information you give to our research team will be kept private and will not be shared with other students or teachers. After the interview, you will be given the opportunity to review the transcript of your interview, and to add, alter, or delete information from the transcripts as you see fit. As the study will be using a small sample size it may be difficult to ensure that student identities remain confidential. Students will be assigned pseudonyms in the report to help maintain confidentiality.

All of the information provided through the interview this was a simple mistake, focus groups will not be used will be confidential and stored by Dr. David Burgess in a locked office on the University Campus for a minimum of five years after the completion of the study.

If you or your parent or guardian has any questions or concerns about this study, please do not hesitate to contact Mickey Jutras (382-5096) or Dr. David Burgess (966-7612) at any time.

After you have read this letter, please read over the attached consent form included in this package. If you and your guardians decide that you would like to be a participant in this study, then you must complete the participant consent form and your parent(s)/guardian(s) must also complete their consent form. Signing the consent forms will signify your understanding of your

rights as a participant and will give your consent to participate in this study. Lastly, as a participant in this study, you will be informed of any new information that may affect your decision to participate.

The University of Saskatchewan Behavioral Research Ethics Board approved this research project on June 8, 2009.

I have read and understand the purpose of this study and my part in this project. I am aware that anything I tell to the research team will be kept private. I am aware that I can quit the study at any time.

If I have any questions or concerns I can contact Mickey Jutras (382-5096) or his research supervisor Dr. David Burgess, College of Education (966-7612)

Signature _____ **Date** _____

Research Signature _____ **Date** _____

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**Appendix F:
Parental Consent Letter**

Choice Matters: Motivating Students for Lifelong Physical Activity

Your son or daughter has been invited to participate in a study that is being carried out by researchers from the University of Saskatchewan. His/her participation in this study is in no way connected with his/her regular school work and participation in this study is completely optional and voluntary.

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of students who have not enjoyed their previous physical education classes, and to see what impacts choice has had on their current physical education enjoyment as well as perceptions of potential lifelong activity. I hope that the findings from this study will help to improve physical education experiences for all students.

If your son/daughter chooses to participate in this study, they will be asked to take part in one-on-one audio recorded interviews. Participants may request that the audio recording device be turned off at any point in the interview. The interviews will take place at your child's school. The interviews will be one half to a full hour in length and will be conducted at a time that is agreed upon by participant and researcher. Participation in the study is completely voluntary and your son/daughter can withdraw for any reason, at any time, without penalty of any sort. If your son/daughter does decide to withdraw from the study any information that they have provided will be destroyed. There will be no negative repercussions if you choose not to participate. During the study sensitive issues may arise, such as body image and peer pressure, if students display distress they will be directed to the school's guidance counselor.

Any information given to our research team will be kept private and will not be shared with other students or teachers. After the interview, your son/daughter will be given the opportunity to review the transcript of his/her interview, and to add, alter, or delete information from the transcripts as they see fit. As the study will be using a small sample size it may be difficult to ensure that student identities remain confidential. Students will be assigned pseudonyms in the report to help maintain confidentiality.

All of the information provided through the interview will be confidential and stored by Dr. David Burgess in a locked office on the University Campus for a minimum of five years after the completion of the study.

If you or your son/daughter has any questions or concerns about this study, please do not hesitate to contact Mickey Jutras (382-5096) or Dr. David Burgess (966-7612) at any time.

Signing this consent form signifies your consent to allow your son/daughter to participate in this study.

The University of Saskatchewan Behavioral Research Ethics Board approved this research project on June 8, 2009.

I have read and understand the purpose of this study and my part in this project. I am aware that anything my son/daughter tells to the research team will be kept private. I am aware that my son/daughter can quit the study at any time. If I have any questions or concerns about my son/daughter's participation in this study, I can contact Mickey Jutras (382-5096) or his research supervisor Dr. David Burgess, College of Education (966-7612).

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ **Date** _____

Research Signature _____ **Date** _____

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**Appendix G:
Transcript Release Form**

Choice Matters: Motivating Students for Lifelong Physical Activity

I, _____, have reviewed the complete transcript of my personal interview and have been encouraged to add, alter, and delete information from the transcript as appropriate. I also recognize that I am free at any time to remove my consent for participation in this study. By signing below, I acknowledge that the transcript accurately reflects what I said in my personal interview with Mickey Jutras, and that I am willing to continue my participation in the study. I hereby authorize the release of this transcript (to Dr. David Burgess) to be used in the manner described in the assent form. I have received a copy of this Transcript Release Form for my own records.

Participant

Date

Parent

Date

Researcher

Date