

**A CASE STUDY OF A SUCCESSFUL AND ENGAGING HIGHSCHOOL PHYSICAL
EDUCATION PROGRAM**

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Abstract

Adolescents' satisfaction, motivation, and engagement in physical education is an ongoing challenge for educators. As girls age, their participation in physical activity and engagement in physical education declines. Therefore, the benefits of participating in physical activity may not be attained. This study examined the influence of an exemplary physical education program on female student satisfaction and engagement. The term exemplary, for the purpose of this study, refers to a program that meets the following criteria: a) promotes physical literacy and meets the criteria of a Quality Daily Physical Education (QDPE) program; b) follows and implements the outcomes of the Saskatchewan Physical Education Curriculum; c) maintains a high enrollment of young women in elective physical education; d) has been recognized through Physical and Health Education Canada (PHE Canada) as an award winning QDPE program; and e) has an award winning teacher running the program. A case study methodology was used and rich qualitative data were obtained through a transactional method of inquiry, between the researcher and participants, and focused on the increased engagement and satisfaction of adolescent females in the physical education program. A socio-ecological model was used to provide the framework to guide the collection of data from multiple sources including: observations, document analysis, personal records, classroom documents, and interviews. During a three-month period, 66 female participants and one female teacher, in a Saskatchewan urban high school. The participants in this study reflected on and shared their experiences within the program. Results revealed that young women feel safe, accepted, and comfortable in the program and place a great deal of significance on the social environment for establishing a respectful learning space. They enjoy the activities implemented in the program and have the motivation and desire to learn new skills. Young women feel ownership of their learning and value the knowledge and skills they learn in the physical education program. Through an analysis of the data collected three themes emerged as being relevant to the engagement of the young women in the program: Sense of Belonging, Confidence and Ability, and Lessons Learned. The insight gained on the practices and factors exhibited in this exemplary program as a result of this study may be used to inform future practice and facilitate the engagement of young women in physical education. The recommendations offered regarding the design and implementation of an exemplary program are based on these themes and factors.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

“PE is Powerful Education” ~ Anonymous

The first bell rings and already the girls are in the gymnasium changed out and moving. Lauren is throwing a ball at a target on the wall and Sharlene has put on her heart rate monitor and is running laps around the gym. Stacey, Tina, and Sarah are working with ladders to improve their agility and Carla is working on her balance using a stability ball. There is a sense of excitement in the air as all the girls begin their first fifteen minutes of free choice movement in class. Everyone is active, appear to be enjoying themselves, and concentrating on the task at hand. The whistle blows. The girls run to put their equipment away and then race to the centre circle. Their cheeks are flushed, they are breathing hard, and their eyes are shining in anticipation for the next activity. For a female physical education teacher this is “utopia” but for most it is also a dream.

Over the last several years of my teaching career I have observed two troubling trends in physical education classes. First, female students enter high school with a pre-determined like or dislike for physical education and second, when the majority of female students reach grade eleven and twelve they do not choose to enroll in elective physical education. My previous school’s physical education department tried a variety of strategies and methods to engage both male and female students in physical education. Even though the department incorporated choice, individualized programming, and strived to create positive classroom culture, many female students disengaged in physical education.

The disengagement of young women in physical education is problematic as numerous studies highlight the benefits quality physical education programs have on students’ physical activity, both in and out of physical education class time (Dale, Corbin & Dale, 2000; McKenzie, 2001; Mitchell, 2012). Furthermore, physical activity promotes healthy growth and development both physically and psychologically (Sallis & Patrick, 1994). Along with the benefits, engagement in physical activity within a school setting has also been shown to positively impact the academic life of a child (Cameron, 2011; Sibley & Etnier, 2003). In addition, Hillman, Castelli, and Buck (2005) found that the association between school-based physical activity, including physical education, may have an impact on academic performance. The literature also suggests that the impact of physical activity on academic performance occurs through a variety of direct and indirect physiological, cognitive, emotional, and learning mechanisms (Hillman et

al., 2005; Rosenbaum, Carlson, & Gilmore, 2001). Activity patterns established during adolescence tend to carry over or continue into adulthood. Therefore, the adolescent period is a critical time to establish an active healthy lifestyle (Hallal, Victoria, Azevedo, & Wells, 2006; Herman, Craig, Gauvin, & Katzmarzyk, 2009).

As physical education plays a critical role in educating the “whole” student, it is important for students to enroll and participate in physical education programs throughout their high school years. Physical education helps develop all aspects of a child. Moreover, physical education helps students make informed choices and understand the importance of leading a healthy active lifestyle (National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE), 2007). For these reasons, enrolling and engaging in physical education programming can play a key role in attaining the associated benefits within the school setting (Dale et al., 2000).

Throughout my teaching career I have been involved in physical education curriculum renewals and their implementation, as well as tremendous changes in assessment practices. Unfortunately, these changes had little influence on young women’s engagement levels or choice to enroll in physical education programs. I find myself wondering, is there a better way? Is there a program that is meeting the needs of young women? Does such a program exist? Physical Education can play a pivotal role in educating young women on the benefits associated with being physically active and provides students an opportunity to engage in physical activity. Gaining insight into how and why some physical education programs have been successful in meeting the needs of young women may increase our understanding of the factors that influence their satisfaction and sustained engagement in physical education.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore the factors, in an exemplary physical education program, associated with female students’ satisfaction and choice to engage in physical education and physical activity.

Biographical Sketch

Shauna the Child

Being raised by a hardworking, single mother and knowing that I was surrounded by love are the two things I remember most about my childhood. The memories I have of the hours my

mother spent braiding my hair for dance, helping me practice my routines for competitions, and driving my siblings and I to activities, while working full time, is a reflection of the wonderful role model she was and still is today.

“You are going to be skilled,” my mother used to say, retelling the story that at ten months when I took my first steps I “ran” not “walked” and in the same breath saying, “you haven’t stopped moving since.” My mother encouraged me to involve myself in activities at a very young age. So that is how I grew up and at the age of four I started to dance. Through dance I developed poise, balance, body control, and movement skills which carried over into the activities I later joined in school. For years my mother sacrificed the “finer” things in life to make sure that my siblings and I could join activities and be active. She did this because she knew the importance of activity and the benefits it could provide her children.

As I grew so did my confidence. I loved being active and enjoyed being able to participate in a variety of activities because of the movement skills I had learned. I continued to dance but was introduced to a vast number of sports at school and picked the skills up quickly because of my previous experience with movement. Through sport I developed responsibility, time management skills, and work ethic. I also met many new friends and established new social circles with a variety of people. Not only did this improve my self-esteem, as I was included by others, it also helped me learn the basic skills of team work and collaboration.

According to Ratey (2008) we often lose sight of the fact that the mind, brain, and body all influence one another. “In addition to feeling good when you exercise, you feel good about yourself” (p. 118). This statement was true for me as well. Throughout adolescence I maintained the passion I had for sports and athletics, built a healthy self-esteem, and continued to try new activities in my school without hesitation. These experiences have shaped the person I am today and for that I thank my mother. If not for her passion and knowledge about the benefits of physical activity I may not have been afforded the same opportunities. I will be forever grateful for her support of my involvement in physical activity and her encouragement for the continuation of my physical education programming as both have been instrumental in the development of my own values and beliefs that foster physical activity and education.

Shauna the Educator

The teacher mentors I had throughout high school who showed their passion for physical education inspired me to continue my educational journey into the College of Kinesiology. Once

there, I enrolled in the KIN/Ed combined program to become a Physical Education teacher. In my fourth year of study I had the opportunity to intern with a cooperating teacher who complimented my own values and beliefs. She also provided me with the opportunity to learn many new characteristics about being a good teacher. She believed in motivating and encouraging all students in physical education to meet their personal goals, improve their skills, and participate to the best of their ability in all activities. She was kind and had expertise in building rapport with her students. I came away from my internship with an overflowing tool box of strategies and methods for developing relationships and teaching, assessing students, and creating positive educational experiences.

After my internship I started my first physical education teaching position with The Saskatoon Public School Division. Joining an established physical education office was both exciting and daunting as a first year teacher. I found myself in a new situation with rules, regulations, and procedures that were already determined by the department, many of which did not match my own personal teaching philosophy. However, as a new teacher, I followed the lead of the senior staff and played by their rules until I felt comfortable sharing my own ideas and values. I took on many new roles in my first few years as a teacher. I became a mentor, a colleague, and a friend. However, I was mainly known to my students as “Coach Pierce.”

Coaching students brought me a lot of satisfaction in my initial years of teaching. Through this role I learned to develop positive relationships with students quickly. I also enjoyed teaching and loved having the opportunity to promote physical activity and develop physically educated students. However, during these early years I saw many young women disengage from physical activity and physical education classes. Though I tried many strategies to increase student engagement within my own physical education classes I could not reach everyone. It was then that I started to look beyond what I was doing in my classes to see what other influences were impacting young women’s decision to disengage. I tried to put myself in my student’s shoes to understand what they were experiencing. I soon discovered other factors that might inhibit student engagement in physical education class. For example, when entering the gymnasium, students were all greeted by a label on my office door which read, “Coach Pierce.” However, this was not my main role, or the label I wanted to have when teaching my students. Looking back on this now I realize these two small words, “Coach Pierce,” already

defined the student's relationship with me. Athletes felt included in my classes while others may not. I knew I wanted to change this environment but I also knew I needed support to change it.

Around the same time I started noticing factors that could influence student engagement, the school I was teaching at began participating in a Stirling McDowell funded health promoting school project called "Healthy Souls." Teachers, students, and administration were involved in the initiation of the program. The primary goal of the project was to improve the health and wellness of the student body. I joined the Healthy Souls group and became the teacher leader of the activity committee. The students on the committee were all very active and engaged young women who decided that they wanted to improve the activity levels of their female counterparts. The committee members devised a plan and received permission from administration to allocate Friday lunch hours in the gymnasium for female students and community members only. The committee also contacted several certified fitness instructors to teach a variety of activities and made posters to advertise the activity being provided.

The first Friday activity planned was an aerobic fitness class and the gymnasium quickly filled up with young women of all grades and activity levels. I was utterly surprised. I can remember talking with my colleagues about how humble I felt that day. I felt that way because many of the young women participating in the activities were the same young women I could not engage in my own physical education classes. It was then that I knew things really needed to change and I needed to learn how to change them. To this day, ten years later, I am still looking for answers.

Shauna the Mother

September 16th, 2007 and November 22nd, 2010 are two days that have forever changed the person I was and the person I am today. On both days new bouncing baby boys looked up into my eyes, as they lay in my arms, and made me the happiest woman in the world. I remember the sigh of relief I felt when I held them, perhaps because the hard part was over or because I knew that a new life for me as a mother, teacher, and mentor was just beginning. My boys were happy and healthy and I knew that I would raise them with the same morals and values by which both my husband and I were raised. Involvement in activity and education would be central to their upbringing.

Little did I know then how much they would shape who I am today as a wife, mother, and educator. As soon as I had my own family my teaching perspective changed. I began to see

every student as my own and wanted for every student what I wanted for my own sons. And so it began, the pledge to myself to provide the best education I possibly could for each of my students. However, this was not an easy task because what one child needs is not what all children need. I began to view physical education in a new light as well. I started to take the time to notice the differences between male and female physical education classes. I also observed the method of teaching being used, the activities being taught, and the activity levels of the students. In doing so, I became both afraid and relieved.

Afraid because I knew that if my sons were to grow up and not necessarily be physically fit or skilled they would not flourish in the classes I was seeing. Secondly, relieved because I did not have to deal with the two extremes of: a) having a daughter who although physically skilled was inactive in physical education class because she did not want to be seen as boyish or, b) having a daughter who if unskilled may disengage in physical education and eventually become inactive.

It was then that I knew that the relief I had felt when holding my sons was because I knew they would not have to encounter many of the challenges that young women face in physical education programs. Some of the challenges are based on the fact that physical education classes often follow a traditional sport-based, multi-activity form with predominately masculine values (e.g., strong, physical, and competitive). In addition, physical education classes often overemphasize competition and provide little opportunity to practice and improve skills. Due to the decreased practice time, feelings of failure and incompetence with skills, leading to poor self-image, physical education can play a role in decreasing female engagement.

Fortunately, because of my involvement in positive physical education and sporting experiences I overcame many of these challenges. This involvement also increased my interest in learning how to create the same experiences for the young women I teach. I hope to provide positive physical education experiences that will satisfy and engage them in activity for life.

Framing the Research

The purpose of this research study was to identify factors present in an exemplary high school physical education program that engage young women. The exemplary program for this study was defined as a program that: promotes physical literacy, meets the criteria of a quality daily physical education program, follows and implements the outcomes of the Saskatchewan

Physical Education Curriculum, and maintains a high enrollment of female students in elective physical education. Through the identification of these factors an understanding was gained on how the factors influence and promote satisfaction and engagement of young women in physical education. The proposed study used a social constructivist approach to gather data and observe participants and their interactions with others involved in the program. Using this approach also helped identify factors associated with the exemplary program that increase student engagement. Recognizing the factors also created an understanding and shared meaning of the effect the exemplary program has on the choice young women make to engage in physical education.

Theoretical Framework

Central to this study was an emphasis on the importance of female students' engagement and satisfaction in physical education programs throughout their high school years. As students spend the majority of their day in school, physical education programs have the potential to increase the activity levels among adolescents, therefore increasing the opportunity for the participants to achieve the associated benefits of physical activity (Cale, 2002; Gibbons & Gaul, 2004; Trudeau & Shephard, 2005). Despite this knowledge, research has found a large percentage of girls are not engaging in physical education and are choosing to leave when it is no longer required. (Gibbons & Gaul, 2004; Gibbons, Wharf Higgins, Gaul, & Van Gyn, 1999; Mitchell, 2012; Sulz, Humbert, Gyurcsik, Chad, & Gibbons, 2010). In order to understand an individual's decision to choose a behavior, such as engaging in a physical education class, it is necessary to understand the correlates (factors) associated with the behavior (Nahas, Goldfine, & Collins, 2003).

A socio-ecological model is a theory-based framework for understanding the complex and shared effects of individual and environmental factors that determine behaviours. Ecological Models have been used to provide a framework to understand the factors and behaviours that promote or act as barriers to physical activity participation. Factors that are perceived as promoting a behaviour are termed facilitators. Factors that are perceived as discouraging a behaviour are characterized as barriers (Nahas et al., 2003). Ecological approaches have at their core the notion that behaviour, in this case the satisfaction and engagement of young women in physical education, is influenced by multiple factors (e.g., barriers and facilitators) and may

include perceived personal (e.g., confidence levels) and social environmental (e.g., friends do not like physical education) factors (McLeroy, Bibeau, Steckler, & Glanz, 1988).

Socio-ecological models propose that influences on behavior stem from the interaction between the individual and elements of one's social and physical environments. The model also suggests that if individual and social environmental factors could be addressed there is an increased likelihood that a health promoting behavior would be adopted (McLeroy et al., 1988; Sallis & Owen, 2002). McLeroy and colleagues socio-ecological model (1988) has been used in previous research as a conceptual framework that serves to direct attention to both personal and environmental factors and uncover different levels of social environmental factors (Gyurcsik, Spink, Bray, Chad, & Kwan, 2006; McLeroy et al., 1988; Mitchell, 2012; Sulz, 2008). The socio-ecological model (McLeroy et al., 1988) was used in this study, to frame the semi-structured interview guide in order to gain insight and identify specific personal and social environmental factors (facilitators and barriers) that influence young women's participation in physical education programs. These guides were used to capture the participants' views and experiences on multiple levels to determine the intrapersonal, interpersonal, environmental, and policy influences that impact student behaviour. The data collected from these interviews helped identify factors that increased young women's participation within the program and provided insight on how they promote health behaviours and positively influenced the choices young women made to engage in physical education classes. Four topics were explored using the following questions: a) what characterizes meaningful student engagement and satisfaction?; b) what factors impact student engagement and satisfaction in physical education?; c) what factors impact the teacher and exemplar program?; and d) how can the factors that impact the program, its processes, and implementation influence young women's satisfaction and engagement in physical education?

Research Questions

Given the importance of increasing young women's participation and satisfaction in physical education during adolescence, the following questions guided this study:

- a. What are the experiences of young women in an exemplary physical education program?

- b. How do the five levels of influence (interpersonal, intrapersonal, institutional, community, and policy) present in an exemplary program promote or limit the satisfaction and engagement in young women?
- c. What factors are present in the exemplary program that promote or limit the satisfaction and engagement in young women?
- d. Does the exemplary program increase young women's engagement and satisfaction in physical education?
- e. Do the factors that are present in the exemplary physical education program influence young women's choice to engage in physical activity outside of physical education?
- f. Do the factors that are present in the exemplary physical education program influence young women's choice to enroll in elective physical education?

Significance of the Study

The main significance of this study lies in the fact that little research has observed “required” exemplary programs at the secondary level and their connection to the engagement of female adolescents. Although the identification of factors to promote physical activity and engagement among young women in physical education programs are plentiful, most have been carried out on a large scale using quantitative methodology (Mitchell, Inchley, Flemming, & Currie, 2015). In addition, few studies have used a case study approach to identify the factors associated with an exemplary physical education program and how they influence the behaviour of young women for engaging or not engaging.

The exploration of an exemplary physical education program helps provide a better understanding of its factors, processes, and the impact the program has on promoting positive health behaviours among young women. Findings provide insight on engagement factors for teachers to consider when discussing and developing physical education classes that meet the needs of all students. The data gathered in this research provides insight into how physical education programs can help increase young women's satisfaction and engagement in physical education programs.

As the enrollment of female adolescents in elective physical education declines, so will the opportunities for young women to develop the attitudes, skills, and knowledge needed to lead active healthy lifestyles within a school setting (Cale, 2002; Gibbons & Gaul, 2004). The

number of young women in Saskatchewan choosing to enroll in elective physical education remains low, and is approximately half the number of their male counterparts (R. Warnock, personal communication, June 13th, 2016). An exploration of an exemplary program and the engagement of young women in high school physical education can help provide insight on the factors that influence young women's choice to participate and sustain their participation in physical education.

In summary, this research was needed to better understand the factors that engage adolescent females in physical education to sustain young women's engagement and in turn may play a role in helping young women maintain the associated benefits of physical education and physical activity. Thus, physical education teachers, curriculum writers, university methods professors, teachers in training, and female adolescents could benefit from this research. In addition, research of this kind may reaffirm and further demonstrate the importance of satisfaction, innovative programming, and curriculum development.

Definitions

Often the terms **physical activity**, **physical education**, and **physical literacy** are used interchangeably, however their meanings in this study are very different. Casperson, Powell, and Christenson (1985) define physical activity as bodily movements using skeletal muscles which result in energy expenditure. Physical and Health Education Canada (PHE) also states that "physical activity is a movement of the body that expends energy; such as participation in sports, dance and exercise" (2005, p.3). Physical education on the other hand, is defined as a school subject that provides an opportunity for students to: a) develop positive attitudes toward active living, b) gain self-confidence as skillful movers, and c) promote personal, social, cultural, and environmental growth and appreciation. These opportunities are provided in physical education classes to promote "educating the whole person" and to support students in developing a solid foundation for a balanced life (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2009).

These terms are linked due to the fact that physical education provides an opportunity for students to successfully participate in a wide variety of physical activities. Providing these opportunities for students may also lead to healthy living and active lifestyles. Along with these terms the promotion of physical literacy is also a goal stated in Saskatchewan's Physical Education curriculum. "Physical literacy is the motivation, confidence, physical competence,

knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life” (The International Physical Literacy Association, 2014, p.1). The promotion and development of physical literacy in students is one of the main components of an effective physical education program (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2009). Fostering the development of physical literacy is also one of the criteria for awarding programs quality daily physical education (QDPE) status. For these reasons, it is important to understand why some physical education programs may have increased enrollment and satisfaction among young women.

Engagement and satisfaction are also terms that need to be operationally defined. Student engagement refers to the degree of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion that students show when they are learning or being taught, which extends to the level of motivation they have to learn and progress in their education (Abott, 2014). Furthermore, Willms, Friesen, and Milton, (2009), define engagement as “the extent to which students identify with and value schooling outcomes, have a sense of belonging at school, participate in academic and non-academic activities, strive to meet the formal requirements of schooling and make a serious personal investment in learning” (p. 7).

Although these definitions vary, similarities can also be found. Hume (2011) states that there are three dimensions to engagement; school, heart, and mind. Both of the above definitions can fit into these dimensions. In school, behavioural processes and academic engagement such as attending school, following instructions, and submitting work are all characteristics of student engagement. A student’s sense of belonging and connectedness that they feel to a school fits into the “heart” dimension. Observing a student’s selection of tasks based on their competencies, the actions they take, the effort and concentration they put into their work, and their general emotions such as, enthusiasm, curiosity, and interest can be defined under academic or intellectual engagement (Skinner & Bellmont, 1993). Regardless of definition, as educators we know that engagement has been linked to student success. Hume (2011) also states that engagement is always about “relationships” whether with a person, situation, or activity. For these reasons the need to engage young women in physical education is essential to achieving the goals of physical education as well as maintaining a healthy body and to better physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual health. Alternatively, satisfaction is often seen as a measurement of engagement. For this study satisfaction was identified and measured based on

the data gathered on the exemplar program's ability to fulfill young women's needs, expectations, and enjoyment.

A quality daily physical education program is a well-planned developmentally appropriate program that is available to all children and youth. The program should also promote physical literacy to enhance the outcomes of the Saskatchewan curriculum. In this study, an exemplar program was observed and information was gathered on its factors and how they impact female student engagement and satisfaction in physical education. The exemplar program used in this study was chosen based on the following four criteria: i) its ability to promote physical literacy and meet the criteria of a QDPE program; ii) its ability to follow and implement the outcomes of the Saskatchewan Physical Education Curriculum; iii) its ability to maintain a high enrollment of young women in elective physical education, and finally, iv) it was recognized through PHE Canada as an award winning QDPE program run by an award winning teacher.

Assumptions

In this study, I assumed that QDPE awards, National Teaching Awards, continued enrollment in physical education classes, and meeting all provincial curricular outcomes were credible ways to determine an exemplary program. Therefore, gathering existing information on these criteria helped to identify the program and the participants chosen to be studied. I also assumed that participation and satisfaction for young women in physical education were potential promoters of engagement in physical education. Finally, I assumed that because this study was examining a very specific and unique topic I would need to gather rich and descriptive data using a variety of collection methods. To identify as many of the factors associated with the exemplar program I structured my research questions based on McLeroy and colleagues socio-ecological model (McLeroy et al., 1988) Through the identification of the factors and their level of influence, an increased understanding of their impact on the processes and implementation of the exemplar program was determined. This determination also provided insight on how to promote engagement and satisfaction in young women in physical education. This research used a case study method to provide a rich and in-depth understanding of the factors associated with the exemplar program and its influence on female adolescence engagement in physical education.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

“Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving.”

~ Albert Einstein

This chapter provides a review of literature significant to the engagement of young women in physical education. It commences with a brief introduction to student engagement, highlighting the importance of addressing the wider issues surrounding engagement and the promotion of active learning in the classroom. Benefits of physical education are then explored with particular focus on how students can improve their overall health and well-being. Through the lens of the experiences of young women, reasons for dissatisfaction in physical education and physical activity are introduced and common aspects that underpin their dissatisfaction are examined. Subsequently, how to engage young women in physical education is presented, emphasizing the importance of including features that increase female involvement in the development of course content. Finally, an investigation on facilitating change in young women’s perception of physical activity and physical education is discussed. The chapter concludes with a concise summary of the literature and the necessity and significance of the current research project.

Student Engagement

Student engagement is the degree of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion that students show when they are learning or being taught (Abott, 2014). Student engagement occurs when students are motivated and invested in their learning (Barkley, 2009). Research on student engagement in the classroom has focused on behaviors such as time-on-task or attending to the teacher, social engagement, and sense of belonging of the student in the context of the classroom and the activities (Spivak & Cianci, 1987; Willms et al., 2009; Hume, 2011). It has also been recognized that engagement is an important learning outcome on its own and is associated with performance and students’ long-term learning achievement.

To understand the impact of engagement on student behavior it is necessary to distinguish engagement in three dimensions; social, academic, and intellectual (Willms et al., 2009 & Hume, 2011). The phrase "academic engagement" is often used to refer to student behaviors related directly to the learning process, for example, time on task, participation in learning activities, and effort and initiative taken in the classroom. "*Social engagement*" consists of both prosocial (following rules and positive interactions) and antisocial behavior (withdrawing

from interactions and engaging in disruptive acts) and describes the nature of students' interactions with the teacher or with fellow students (Spivak & Cianci, 1987). The final dimension referred to as “intellectual engagement” aims to increase the students' ability to understand and solve complex problems, construct new knowledge, and use higher order thinking skills (Willms et al, 2009).

Engaging students in physical education classes at all three levels can be difficult. However, engaging students is needed if physical education teachers want to increase the chance for their students to attain the perceived benefits associated with physical activity and physical education programs. The ability of the teacher to engage youth in meaningful ways plays a significant role which student success in school, as “youth who are cognitively engaged...who are willing to invest time and efforts...achieve better outcomes” (Archambault, Chouinard, & Janosz, 2012, p.319). Teachers' attitudes and beliefs combined with meaningful classroom activities directly impacts students' success by promoting a positive self-concept. When students perceive that their teachers believe in them, and enjoy what they are doing in school, both engagement and motivation are influenced (Andrews & Lupert, 2014).

Johnson (2012) believes engaged students are active participants in their classes. Therefore, to increase student engagement one must increase student participation. Many researchers have identified providing a girls-only environment, student choice, and girl-friendly activities (e.g., dance, Zumba, etc.) as facilitators to increase female participation in physical education classes. In addition, Ferrer-Caja and Weiss (2000) found that students who perceived that learning and participation were promoted in their physical education classes were more likely to engage in the activities, exert effort, and focus on learning the task or activity. However, the ultimate form of engagement is to put the learner in charge of their own learning (Johnson, 2012). Consequently, physical education teachers need to provide students the opportunity to make choices to develop a feeling of empowerment. Empowering young women can occur by creating chances for young women to contribute and have an influence on decisions about physical activity and their participation (Humbert, 1995; Pardo, Bengoecha, Lanaspá, Busk, Casterid, Clemente, & Gonzalez, 2013).

Through the promotion of active learning in the classroom greater engagement for young women in physical education programs can be supported (Pardo et al., 2013). Unfortunately, being able to address the wider influences on physical activity behavior is virtually impossible

for physical education teachers with the curriculum they are required to follow (Cale & Harris, 2005, p. 172). As teachers are ultimately responsible for designing and implementing physical education classes; the curriculum taught can vary considerably depending on available resources and the school environment (e.g., some schools have access to parks, other facilities, and equipment, while other schools may not). Although some of these influences can be addressed with creative planning, students are often held responsible for their activity behaviour and “schools fail to acknowledge other factors in the social environment which influence physical activity” (Cale & Harris, p. 173). Overall, teachers tend to have little control over a) the choices students make outside of the classroom to engage in physical activity; b) the physical surroundings provided for students to engage in physical activity; and c) the potential of the school to promote physical activity. Identifying a variety of factors that impact females’ choice to participate and engage in an exemplary program may lead to the inclusion of these factors within physical education programs to increase and sustain the engagement of young women in physical education and physical activity throughout adolescence and into adulthood.

Benefits of Physical Education

The overall aim of Saskatchewan’s physical education curriculum is to support students in becoming physically educated individuals who have the knowledge and skills to engage in a variety of movement activities, and who have the confidence and disposition to lead active healthy lifestyles (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010). As physical education is the main source of physical activity for students during the school day, engagement in physical education classes is an important contributor to the promotion of active healthy lifestyles. A strong correlation has also been reported between engagement in physical education and activity levels of students out of school (Dale et al., 2000; McKenzie, 2001). For example, McKenzie (2001) reported students’ physical activity levels outside of school are higher on days they participate in physical education class. Furthermore, Dale et al. (2000) observed that students are more active outside of class on the days they have physical education class than on the days they do not. Therefore, physical education may have the potential to positively affect the physical activity levels of adolescents beyond school (Wallhead & Buckworth, 2004). In turn, physical education may enhance the opportunity for adolescents to receive the associated benefits of being physically active while in school. Some benefits adolescents may receive

include the improvement of their overall health, including social, physical, and psychological dimensions, and the ability to meet recommended physical activity standards (The World Health Organization, 2009).

Current guidelines recommend that Canadian children age 5-17 years participate in 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity each day for associated health benefits such as, decreases in blood pressure, cholesterol levels, depression, obesity, and injuries (Janssen & LeBlanc, 2010; Tremblay, Kho, Tricco, & Duggan, 2010). According to the World Health Organization (2015) regular physical activity of moderate intensity has significant benefits for health at all ages. These benefits include but are not limited to: improved muscular and cardiorespiratory fitness; improved bone and functional health; and a reduction in the risk of hypertension, coronary heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and breast and colon cancer. However, these are not the only benefits a schools' physical education program can provide.

By supporting quality daily physical education and providing opportunities for students to participate in physical activity during the school day, an improvement in academic performance and classroom behaviour may also take place. Castelli, Glowacki, Barcelona, Calvert, and Hwang (2015) found that regular participation in physical activity can enhance attention and memory. They also found that "physical activity can have both immediate and long term benefits on academic performance" (p. 2). In a similar study, participation in twenty minutes of moderate to vigorous activity increased the overall academic achievement in a group of grade eight students over a four month period on their pre and post-tests by 104% (Cameron 2011). In addition, children were found better able to concentrate on classroom tasks immediately after engaging in aerobic physical activity (Fedewa & Ahn, 2011). Another study conducted by Tomporowski (2003) showed that immediately following one session of physical activity, children increased their attention and memory and reduced inappropriate behavior, such as being unfocused and causing others to become distracted. Furthermore, many researchers have found that higher brain activity can be related to increased participation in physical activity (Castelli et al., 2015; Hillman, Pontifex, Raine, Castelli, Hall, & Kramer, 2009). Therefore, increasing student participation in physical activity is important as an increase in brain activity has been shown to have significant effects on learning, memory, and skill motor coordination (Ridding et al, 2014). By providing an opportunity for students to participate in physical activity throughout the day many academic benefits may be achieved. These benefits include: enhanced

attention, concentration and memory, improved brain function, improved transfer of information from short to long-term memory, and improved academic performance. Therefore, physical education can play a pivotal role in achieving academic benefits by providing opportunities for students to participate in daily physical activity experiences.

Physical education may not only provide students' academic benefits but may also provide opportunities for students to develop the skills to achieve total wellness. Remaining active throughout adolescence can also promote psychological health and well-being (Sallis & Patrick, 1994). Creating an environment where students feel safe and secure while participating in physical activities and practicing skills can increase feelings of competence and improve students' self-esteem. Providing opportunities for students to learn skills that help them analyze their own strengths and weaknesses may also support the development of a child's self-image. In addition, student involvement in sport and physical activity directly affects the development of a child's self-concept and perception of self-esteem and competence (Bunker, 1998). Schmalz, Deanne, Birch, and Davison (2007) also reported that physical activity leads to higher self-esteem, especially among young adolescent girls. Remaining physically active throughout the adolescent years can also positively affect young women's self-esteem, body image, and physical strength (Jaffee & Ricker, 1993). Furthermore, self-esteem is also important for psychological well-being, positive body image, increased self-efficacy, and leadership skills. Having increased self-esteem can also help to protect against depression, anxiety, loneliness, aggression problems, and high risk behaviours like smoking and substance abuse (Strauss, 2000; Trzesniewski, Donnellan, Moffit, Robins, Poulton, & Caspi, 2006).

However, despite common knowledge of the benefits physical education and physical activity have on youth, inactivity is on the rise. As educators, we know that students need to sit less and move more to receive the above noted benefits of physical activity. Unfortunately, according to ParticipACTION the two lowest grades in the 2015 report card are a D- for both "Sedentary Behaviours" and "Overall Physical Activity." Furthermore, data from the Canadian Health Measures Survey (CHMS) reported only 5% of 12-17 year olds meet the Canadian Health activity guidelines of receiving 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per day (CHMS, 2013). Research also suggests that youth become increasingly less active as age and grade in school increase (Sallis & Owen, 1999; Sallis, Prochaska, & Taylor, 2000; U.S.

Department of Health and Human Services 2010; Woodfield, Duncan, Al-Nakeeb, Nevill, & Jenkins, 2002).

Since adolescents spend the majority of their day in school, physical education has the potential to play a pivotal role in addressing the decline in physical activity among adolescents (Cale, 2002; Gibbons & Gaul, 2004). It is also well documented that the physical activity patterns established in adolescence continues throughout adulthood; therefore, engagement in physical activity throughout adolescence is an important component in maintaining a healthy lifestyle (Hallal et al., 2006). To receive the associated physical and psychological benefits of remaining physically active, it is important for young women to feel engaged and satisfied in their physical education programs. Being engaged and satisfied may also help establish a sustainable pattern for physical activity for young women as they age. Therefore, physical education teachers and physical education programs may play a role in positively influencing a young women's decision to remain active. Physical education teachers and programs may also provide ongoing incentive for young women to participate and personally succeed in a variety of physical activities.

Female Dissatisfaction in Physical Education

Along with the knowledge that participation in physical activity declines as children progress across the primary-secondary school transition (Whitehead & Biddle, 2008), it is known that the decline is more pronounced for girls than boys well into adolescence (Bauman, Bull, Chey, Craig, Ainsworth, Sallis, Bowles, Hagstromer, Sjostrom, & Pratt., 2009; Parish & Treasure, 2003). In addition, it has been found that girls are significantly less active than boys at all ages (Boyce, 2004, Trost, Rosencrantz, & Dzewaltowski, 2008). According to the World Health Organization (2015) there is a clear trend of decreasing levels of activity as girls get older, and a widening disparity between girls' and boys' physical activity behaviours. It is also known that the highest rates of inactivity amongst all student groups is found in adolescent females (Fraser-Thomas & Beaudoin, 2004). If a program can increase the activity and participation rates of young women, it is important to identify and understand the factors that promote their choice to engage in physical education.

Several researchers have documented the growing dissatisfaction of female students' physical education experiences throughout childhood and adolescence (Gibbons et al., 1999;

Humbert, 1995; Sulz et al., 2010). Some of the common aspects that underpin the dissatisfaction among young women include: public display of skills, lack of skill and time to practice, self-consciousness, and course content and structure of the class (Gibbons et al., 1999; Gibbons & Humbert, 2008; Olafson, 2002). The implementation of a traditional sport model curriculum and the lack of input students have in choosing class activities has also contributed to the mounting dissatisfaction and disengagement of young women in physical education classes (Gibbons & Humbert, 2008; Olafson, 2002; Yungblut, Schinke & McGannon, 2012). Furthermore, it is not surprising that female students do not choose to enroll in physical education when it is no longer mandatory (Gibbons & Humbert, 2008; Kolbe, Kann, & Brenner, 2001).

In Saskatchewan, a large number of female students opt out of physical education as soon as it is no longer required. According to the Ministry of Saskatchewan only 36% of young women chose to take an elective physical education class in the 2015-2016 school year (R. Warnock, personal communication, June 13th, 2016). In a similar manner, Gibbons et al. (1999) reported that tenth grade female students in British Columbia, described their physical education experiences as boring and repetitive, and they planned to leave physical education as soon as they could. However, evidence indicates that dissatisfaction with physical education amongst female students starts well before their high-school years (Biscomb, Matheson, Beckerman, Tungatt, & Jarrett, 2000; Gibbons et al., 1999; Olafson, 2002). This dissatisfaction is also frequently linked to the nature of previous experiences in their elementary physical education classes (Fenton, Frisby & Luke, 1999; Gibbons & Humbert, 2008, Olafson, 2002). Researchers have also found that lifestyle physical activity habits need to be established early in life (Sallis & McKenzie, 1991) and that early, positive, physical activity experiences may increase the likelihood of maintaining a physically active lifestyle (Weiss, 2000).

Finding value in physical education programs can impact young women's future participation in physical education experiences (Alderman, Beighle, & Pangrazi, 2006; Gibbons & Humbert, 2008). Therefore, physical education classes may play a key role in providing opportunities for students to participate in positive physical activity experiences. It is also known that students who view physical activity in a positive light are more likely to become lifelong movers (Alderman, et al., 2006). Providing positive physical education experiences, increasing competence in skillful movements, and building confidence among female students may also prolong their engagement in physical education. By understanding the factors associated with

the chosen exemplary program, insight was provided on what influences impact female students' engagement. The findings found in this study may also be used to provide insight on how to encourage future discussion and development of physical education courses that meet the needs of all students.

Engagement in Physical Education

Engagement in physical education is also important as engagement is a contributing factor to students either immersing themselves in, or withdrawing, from a class (Hume, 2011). Often the term engagement is used in terms of to “engage” in something and thereby is seen as the motivation to participate or be involved. However, the term engagement and involvement are not the same. “Engagement”, in comparison to involvement, comes from en, meaning “make,” and gage, meaning “pledge” – to make a pledge and implies that the person engaged is an essential part of the process (Harper, 2002). The word involvement is defined as “to enfold or envelope” and implies “doing to” rather than “doing with” (Ferlazzo, 2011, p. 11). Few studies have focused on the engagement of high school females in an exemplary physical education program. Some physical education programs are now trying to tailor their course content to increase activity levels and satisfaction amongst female participants (Pfaeffli, 2009; Sulz et al., 2010). Researchers have established several features that should be incorporated to increase the involvement of female students in physical education (Gibbons, 2009). Features that increase involvement include: choice of activities; a focus on individual lifetime activities; the opportunity to develop relevant physical skills and personal fitness; positive learning environment that includes being with friends and protection from harassment; an emphasis on enjoyment of physical activity; and active involvement of students in course development (Gibbons et al., 1999, Humbert, 1995).

Moreover, when all or even some of these features are implemented in physical education classes more meaningful learning for the participant take place. In addition, programs that tend to focus on lifetime physical activity and use student input in course design have higher female enrollment and student ownership of their learning (Gibbons, 2009). As one of the elements included in defining engagement is students owning their own learning the programs described may lead to increased levels of engagement of young women in physical education. By

promoting the concept of ownership in education, schools can engage students in their studies and inspire them to become citizens who seek to improve the world around them (Scott, 2009).

Incorporating ownership in physical education classes can occur through goal setting, service learning, and leadership opportunities. Including these outcomes in the planning, development, and implementation of a program may increase engagement and ownership of learning for the participants. Two programs, the Lifestyle Education for Activity Program (LEAP) and the Trial of Activity for Adolescent Girls (TAAG) program were developed to increase female participation in physical activity. Both programs implemented a variety of skill building, goal setting, and leadership opportunities for middle years students in physical education. After the programs' implementation, an increased understanding by the participants on the purpose of physical education in health and fitness and personal goals were found (Pfaeffli, 2009). These programs provided meaningful opportunities and "girl friendly" activities (e.g., non-competitive, recreational games, cooperative activities) for middle years students to participate in. Therefore it is evident that physical education programs can be designed to meet the needs of young women and can actively engage middle year female students in their learning (Pfaeffli, 2009). However, little research has explored the factors of an exemplary physical education program and their influence on secondary female students' choice to engage in physical education.

In addition, educators must take into account the vast number of physical education experiences to which each of their students has been exposed. These experiences both positive and/or negative will have shaped students' perceptions of physical education classes as well as their behaviour (like or dislike) toward physical activity. It is also important to recognize that human behaviours are difficult to change, especially in an environment that does not always support change (Brown, Salmon, & Telford, 2011). For young women who have had negative experiences in physical education, a change in mindset can be extremely difficult to facilitate and in many cases the curriculum physical educators teach from is often limited in its capacity to address wider environmental influences on physical activity behaviours (Cale & Harris, 2005). It is important to identify the factors within exemplary programs that facilitate health promoting behaviours in young women to sustain engagement and promote their implementation in future programs.

Facilitating Change: Female Perceptions of Physical Education

A mentor, a counsellor, a friend, and a role model - all of these descriptions define a teachers' role in different situations at any given point in time. Another role teachers have is to support and guide students through change. Often young women have experienced negative events in physical education programs which shape their attitudes toward physical education well before enrolling in high school (Gibbons & Humbert, 2008). As a teacher, it is often difficult to overcome both the assumptions students have about physical education programs (e.g., you have to be athletic to do well) and the behaviours students have adopted in relation to physical education such as being disillusioned, withdrawn, and disengaged (Cale & Harris, 2005; Gibbons & Humbert, 2008). According to Fullan (1991) change is a process that involves simultaneous and multidimensional aspects. He suggests that there are four broad phases in the change process: initiation, implementation, continuation, and outcome. Fullan believes that these four phases are influenced by both local and external factors such as, the community, the school district, principals, teachers, government, agencies, and policies (1991). He also proposes that to create successful change a connection with oneself and the wider environment is critical. Similarly the socio-ecological model has been used in previous research as a conceptual framework that serves to direct attention to both personal and environmental factors and uncover different levels of social environmental factors (Gyurcsik, et al., 2006; McLeroy et al., 1988; Mitchell, 2012; Sulz, 2008). The socio-ecological model also recognizes the relationship that exists between the individual, their environment, and change. Therefore to help support and facilitate change in female students' behaviour toward physical education one must address both individual and social environmental factors.

Young women are ultimately responsible to themselves for initiating and maintaining the lifestyle changes necessary to improve health behaviours. However, individual behavior, in this case engagement in physical education, is determined to a large extent by social environment (e.g., peers, family, teacher, etc.) and barriers to health behaviors are often shared among the community as a whole (e.g., facility usage, cost and availability, etc.). As these barriers are removed or decreased, changing young women's behaviour to increase their engagement and satisfaction in physical education, becomes more achievable and sustainable. The most effective approach leading to healthy behaviors is a combination of the efforts at all levels: intrapersonal, interpersonal, environmental (institutional and community), and public policy (McLeroy et al.;

Cale & Harris, 2005; Gorley, 2005; & Sallis, Cervero, Ascher, Henderson, 2006). Therefore, it is not only schools that may play a key role in engaging young women in physical education but also parents, friends, physical educators, the community, and policy regulators. Identifying factors that influence female engagement and satisfaction may provide insight into how to promote change in young women's behavior toward physical education.

Summary

According to Ntounamis (2005), when students in physical education classes enjoy themselves they tend to be intrinsically motivated, leading them to participate actively in physical education and increasing the likelihood that they will engage in physical activity during their leisure time. As such, when students feel satisfaction and enjoy what they are doing, they tend to participate in other similar activities, feeling even more motivated to do them. Therefore, the quality and implementation of a school's physical education program may be influential in the process of engaging and satisfying students in physical education. Numerous studies have gathered information on the factors that increase female students' participation in physical activity. Many researchers have also identified factors that promote engagement among young women in physical education and programming (Gibbons et al., 1999; Gibbons & Gaul, 2004; and Gibbons & Humbert, 2008). However, there is still a decline in the engagement and enrollment of female students in physical education. Although the identification of factors to promote physical activity and engagement among young women in physical education programs are plentiful, few studies have identified the levels of influence associated with an exemplary physical education program that has engaged young women, aged 13-18. Moreover, a survey of the literature revealed, few studies have applied a socio-ecological model to identify the levels of influence to determine the factors present within a "required" secondary school, physical education program.

The aim of this study was to identify and understand the factors associated with the program and their impact on the satisfaction and engagement of young women in physical education. I also investigated how the factors impact the behaviours of young women within an exemplary physical education program and their choice to enroll in future programming and physical activity. The findings of this study may be used to determine how to increase young

women's engagement in physical education and may also be used to construct a preliminary model for educators to support change toward health promoting behaviours within their students.

Chapter 3: Methodology

“When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe.”

~John Muir

Overview and Purpose

The basis for this qualitative study was to observe and explore an exemplary high school physical education program and the factors that impact the satisfaction and engagement of its female participants. Exploring the factors and influences of the program and their connection to the teacher and students’ perspectives provided insight on how to increase young women’s motivation to participate and sustain their enrollment in physical education. Through data collection, within a single case, answers to the research questions resulted in a greater understanding of this program, the experiences of the participants, and the factors that increased their engagement in physical education and physical activity.

Research Method & Design

Qualitative research is interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world (Merriam, 2009, p. 13). Qualitative research has been described as:

An effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there are. This understanding is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of that setting, what it means for participants to be in that setting, what their lives are like, what’s going on for them, what their meanings are, what the world looks like in that particular setting, and in the analysis to be able to communicate that faithfully to others who are interested in that setting. (Patton, 1985, p.1)

A case study method was used to develop a greater understanding of the engagement of females, at the high school level, in the chosen exemplary physical education program. According to Merriam (1998) educational case studies are conducted to identify and explain specific problems of practice; in this case female engagement in physical education, which can influence future practice, policy and research. Some strengths of case study include its “flexibility to be used to study almost any topic or type of phenomenon, with an entire range of data collection and analytic methods” (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007, p.447). Case study also has the

ability to provide detailed and information rich data that is obtained by watching people in their own territory and/or interacting with them in their own language, on their own terms (Kirk & Miller, 1986).

Case study is appropriate when the objective is to develop a better understanding of the dynamics of a program and to convey a holistic and rich account of an educational program (Kenny & Grotelueschen, 1980). Merriam believes, case studies help to understand the processes of events and programs to gain insight on an issue rather than focusing on outcomes or confirmation (1998). In case study design the research should also be conducted in a natural setting to the participants and focus on their perspectives and meaning of the issue (Creswell, 1998). Case study is an intensive, holistic description, and analysis of a specific unit or bounded system (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). The focus is on the case but as Merriam (1998) notes the most important aspect of a case is that it be “fenced” in. Therefore, if the phenomena that you are interested in is not fundamentally bounded, it is not a case. Given my desire to understand how and why the factors of an exemplary program influence the engagement and satisfaction of young woman in physical education, case study design was a logical approach to use in this research project.

This study meets the three characteristics of a case study as outlined by Merriam (1998), particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic. The study is particularistic because it focuses on a specific situation, the factors identified in an exemplary high school physical education program and their impact on the satisfaction and engagement of young women; it is descriptive as the end product contains a rich, thick, and complete description of the factors that affect the young women satisfaction and engagement and their experiences in the program; and the study is heuristic as it gives the reader insight, a new understanding, or new meaning to the factors of the program and how they impact young women’s satisfaction and engagement in physical education.

Case Description

An exemplary physical education program was selected as the case for this study. The program consisted of three sections; instructional, intramural, and extra-curricular. The exemplary physical education program was located in a small, urban city, in Saskatchewan, in a middle socio-economic area with a population of approximately 620 students, 30% of which were culturally diverse. Several factors were considered when deciding on the appropriate

criteria schools needed to meet to be deemed exemplary. An exhaustive search of exemplary physical education programs across Canada was conducted to identify “exemplary” criteria. It was determined that the program being selected had to meet the following criteria: a) promotes physical literacy and meets the criteria of a QDPE program; b) follows and implements the outcomes of the Saskatchewan Physical Education Curriculum; c) maintains a high enrollment of young women in elective physical education; d) has been recognized through PHE Canada as an award winning QDPE program; and e) has an award winning teacher running the program.

After the initial search and identification of the criteria, conversations were had with individuals who work in the physical education and kinesiology field. The president of the Saskatchewan Physical Education Association (SPEA); SPSD Physical Education consultant; and the Associate Dean of Kinesiology at the University of Saskatchewan, offered valuable information on physical education programs that met the identified criteria within the province. Based on those conversations and the selection criteria, one program was chosen as it was the best fit, based on the chosen criteria, for this case study. “Carter High School” was chosen as a pseudonym for the selected school and is used throughout the remainder of this document.

The physical education program at Carter High School has been recognized nationally by the Physical and Health Association of Canada and has received QDPE awards for delivering a quality physical education program since 2000. PHE Canada launched the term QDPE in 1988 “as a way to define a program that is well-planned, taught by qualified and enthusiastic professionals, and offers a variety of learning opportunities to all students on a daily basis throughout the entire school year” (PHE Canada, 2015).

According to PHE Canada, to be recognized as a QDPE school the following criteria must be met:

Daily curricular instruction for all students for a minimum of 30 minutes, well planned lessons incorporating a wide range of activities, a high level of participation by all students in each class, an emphasis on fun, enjoyment, success, fair play, self-fulfillment and personal health, appropriate activities for the age and stage of each student, activities which enhance cardiovascular systems, muscular strength, endurance and flexibility, a participation based intramural program, qualified, enthusiastic teachers and a creative and safe use of facilities and equipment. (2015)

Quality Daily Physical Education programs ensure that all students who are involved in the program have the opportunity to develop the knowledge, skills, and habits that they need to lead physically active lives now and into the future. A QDPE school is documented as one that

values the importance of physical education for all children. It is also a school that has engrained physical education and physical activity into the foundation and culture of the school environment (PHE Canada, 2015).

The female physical education teacher at Carter High School has also been awarded the PHE Canada National Award for Teaching Excellence in Physical Education, previously known as the Physical Education Teaching Excellence (PETE) award. This award can only be received once in a lifetime and honours selected Canadian physical education teachers who “provide outstanding teaching performance at the elementary, middle or secondary levels, who have an exceptional ability to motivate students to participate in a lifetime of physical activity, and who further Physical Education in Canada” (PHE Canada Awards, p. 1).

To receive this award the teacher must conduct a quality physical education program, as reflected in PHE Canada’s definition and their provincial curriculum. They must also serve as a positive role model epitomizing personal health and fitness, enjoyment of activity, fair play, and sensitivity to the needs of students. Additionally, the teacher has to have made a positive impact in the area of physical education and a substantial contribution to the field. Finally, the teacher needs to participate in professional development opportunities related to the teaching of physical education. “It is intended that the nominee not only attend professional development opportunities but also shares their expertise with colleagues locally, regionally, provincially or nationally” (PHE Canada Awards, p.1).

In addition to the criteria for selecting the physical education program, this study was also bound by the time on site and the participants. Young women who volunteered for the study came from: three segregated, female, grade 9 physical education classes; three non-segregated Wellness 10 classes; and three elective split grade 11/12 physical education classes, one of which was an “all-girls” class. I studied the case over a 10 week period, visiting the school for the entire day, two-three days per week.

Research Sample and Participants

Access to the Site

Upon being granted permission to proceed with this research by the University of Saskatchewan, Behavioural Research Ethics Board, “Johnson” School division was contacted for permission to conduct the study. A letter to the division was sent and consent was granted by the

Board of Education and the Director of Education to conduct this research in the school division of the selected school (see Appendix A). Permission was then granted by the school-based administration to access the school and conduct this study with the participating teacher and her students.

Participants

At the onset of participant selection, I wanted to identify and select participants that were likely to be information rich with respect to the purpose of this study (Gall et al., 2007, p. 178). Therefore, the most appropriate sampling style was non-probabilistic, the most common form of which is “purposeful sampling” (Merriam, 1988, p. 48). As Merriam (1998) suggests based on the assumption that one wants to discover, understand, and gain insight purposeful sampling should be used in case study research. Moreover, non-probabilistic sampling is used in most qualitative research because the data are used not to answer a question but rather to solve qualitative problems, such as discovering what occurs and the implications of what occurs (Merriam, 1998). Students that met specific conditions were needed for this study. As a result, criterion-based purposeful sampling was used. Criterion-based sampling involves the selection of cases that satisfy an important criterion (Gall et al., 2007). For this study participants had to be female, enrolled at Carter school, in grades 9-12, and involved in either required (e.g., grade 9 or 10) or elective classes (e.g., grade 11 or 12) of the participating teacher. By setting out these criteria I did not design the sampling to represent the student population; rather my intent was to achieve an in-depth understanding of the individuals involved (Gall et al., 2007).

When I arrived on site, all participants in the physical education program that met the criteria were invited to participate in the study through a letter of invitation which was handed out to 84 possible participants in their physical education class. The female students, their parents, and the selected teacher were asked to sign a consent form prior to the initiation of the study (see Appendix B and C). In response to this letter, 66 parents gave consent for their daughters to participate and all 66 females signed assent forms to take part in the study (see Appendix D). Participation in the study was voluntary with an option to withdraw at any time throughout the study. No extra credit or remuneration was awarded to any of the participants.

The Researcher

The importance of the researcher in qualitative case study research cannot be undervalued. According to Merriam (1988) the researcher is the primary instrument in both data collection and analysis. Therefore, the relationships and interactions the researcher establishes with the participants, and the plan the researcher adopts for the processing and interpretation of data, will influence the clarity and the quality of the data. Due to the type of data being collected, and my background as a physical education teacher, I used my professional experience and the expertise of my co-supervisor to create the research questions, plan the collection methods, and analyze the findings. As I am the primary researcher in this study, I contacted the participating school and all participants, facilitated the interviews, and collected, transcribed, and analyzed all data. In qualitative research it is important that researchers take particular measures to be aware of their own assumptions and biases and the influences of these throughout the research process (Schinke & da Costa, 2000). For this reason, I maintained a reflective journal to record informal discussions, meeting times, dates, thoughts, intuitions, feelings, and perceptions throughout the study. The use of the journal allowed me to recall and reflect upon the decisions I made and provided insight into the rationale behind them and any other changes I made throughout the process.

As a female physical educator, I have been involved in physical education classes for over thirty years as either an active participant, through education and training, or as a teacher/mentor. Through these roles both positive and negative experiences have shaped my own teaching philosophy and the way I perceive physical education programs. Disclosure of my previous experiences and position as a high school physical education teacher was made to all participants before data collection commenced. This disclosure was made to help build rapport and put participants at ease during observations and interviews to ensure genuine and natural participation (Gall et al., 2007). The students in the participating teacher's classes were informed of my presence, the reason I was coming, and the study I was going to conduct, prior to my first day. A formal introduction to the students was made when I arrived. At the time of my introduction, I disclosed my intentions, discussed the reason I was there, gave the students information about my background, and asked them for their possible participation in the study. By revealing my intentions of the study, visiting the school repeatedly, and getting to know the

participants throughout the study, I was able to develop a friendly, yet professional, relationship with the participating teacher and students.

As a teacher I have experience observing others in physical education settings and have spent countless hours making observations, identifying key features of my students, and assessing their progress in my classes. I have also been involved in a number of professional development (PD) opportunities based on gathering and processing information for assessment measures, building relationships, and understanding curriculum. These opportunities helped me identify and judge particular situations and events during observations. The PD I attended also helped me develop the skills necessary to organize and interpret the data collected to better understand the factors influencing the exemplary program. I also enlisted the help of two other physical education teachers with a background in research, to discuss the data collected and interpret the data generated from the participants into meaningful information which was instrumental in the data analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

I feel my past experiences, combined with the new knowledge that I gained from some of my graduate classes on qualitative research, have helped improve the quality of my data collection and analysis. However, qualitative research is subjective as the researcher is the primary data collection instrument. Therefore I do recognize that some of my experiences could also hinder my work. For example, I could misinterpret certain behaviours or actions based on my own experiences or preconceived notions. As such, my role as a researcher in this study was to understand what participant's behaviours meant to them rather than impose my interpretations on their behaviours (Lecompte & Schensul, 1999). "Through induction, qualitative researchers approach a phenomenon by setting aside preconceived notions to formulate, but not test, a theory about that phenomenon, moving from simpler to more complex constructions or descriptions" (Hays & Singh, 2011, p. 18).

By identifying my own bias, taking into account my personal views on physical education and its importance, and being involved in the research process, I believe my skills as a researcher were improved and that the insight I gained from this study may be used to help advance the knowledge in my field.

Data Collection

In this study, data was collected through a variety of methods. By utilizing a wide variety of sources to gather data about the phenomena, one can enhance the trustworthiness of the findings (Shenton, 2004). The practice of relying on multiple methods is commonly known as triangulation. Both triangulation and trustworthiness is improved when multiple methods and data points are used in collection and analysis (Patton, 2002). Moreover, Patton (1990) suggests that triangulation is not to demonstrate that multiple data sources arrive with the same results but rather may in fact show inconsistencies in the data which can be of equal importance in data analysis. The aim of this multi-methods use in data collection is that throughout collection and upon completion, themes and patterns that emerge from analyzing and reflecting will be verifiable and identified by participants as accurate interpretations or perspectives (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In this study, there were five sources of data: participant observations, documents, personal journal, visual artifacts, and interviews. Participant observations commenced from the onset of my first classroom visit. Course outlines, selection guides, handouts, and classroom documents were collected and used throughout data analysis to increase my understanding of the physical education program and schools' culture. The teacher also shared her weekly attendance records which helped track student absenteeism and its impact on student participation. Focus group and individual interviews were also used to gain insight into the experiences of the participants in the program. These interviews were of great importance to this study as these discussions were often quite passionate and revealing. The participants had strong opinions to share on the physical education program and their experiences. All data collected was used to determine the course content, classroom procedures, routines, and expectations. The data was also used to relate the participants' experiences in the program to the factors they perceived as increasing their engagement and satisfaction in physical education and a physical activity setting. By collecting data using multiple data collection strategies, an understanding of the program was attained and the themes and patterns that emerged from analyzing and reflecting on the data were verifiable as accurate interpretations of the participants' experiences.

Observations

Observations offer a firsthand account of the situation that is being studied and the behaviours of participants that they may not share in interviews (Merriam, 2009). The

observations in this study took place in the natural setting and location of the participants' school and physical education class. Observations were recorded in a field journal and were written either at the time the observation took place or shortly after if I was participating with the class. The collected data helped provide insight into the factors that influenced the satisfaction and engagement of young women in the physical education program. Taking on an "observer-participant" role as a researcher, I was able to gather a large amount of information with targeted observations while casually interacting with individuals through conversation, at appropriate breaks and times, to establish a wide range of information within their group (Gall et al., 2007). In this role, the students and the teacher understood that I was collecting data for a research study. However, I also participated in the class when it helped to gather data and when it was preferred and beneficial to the participants. My participation also provided me with an opportunity to develop a relationship with the participants and make them feel comfortable and at ease with my presence in the classroom. The teacher and students proceeded with their usual routines and behaviours during class time which helped me identify class routines and content, the social and learning environment of the classes, the physical education experiences of the participants, and the dynamics of the student teacher relationship.

Visits to the school began informally prior to data collection. I made trips to the site to become comfortable with the context, people, and the activities to be observed. Observations of the first five classes began in January, nearing the end of the first semester and continued for two weeks. This provided me with the opportunity to observe the culmination of several physical education classes. These end point observations allowed me to see how the participants, interacted, participated, and felt at the end of a term. In February, I was able to witness the start-up of the second semester classes. This was an appropriate time to gather data on initial class routines, management, and relationships which are often developed during this time. Insight into the characteristics of engagement, implementation of curriculum, teaching strategies and other influences that affect young women's satisfaction and engagement in physical education, were gathered during the observation sessions.

During my time at Carter High School I observed 24 classes, and visited the school at least twice a week over a three month period. Visits continued to the school until saturation of data was reached. I knew saturation had been reached when no new information, insights, or understandings were forthcoming (Merriam, 1998, p. 183). As I was in an "observer-

participant” role, observations and field notes were gathered concurrently during the observations. All field notes and researcher comments were transcribed into a word document as soon as time permitted following each observation and interview. A timeline of the sequencing of data collection and analysis can be found in the audit trail for this thesis (see Appendix E).

Interviews

To ensure the credibility and transferability of the data, it was important that both the observations and interviews took place in natural settings (Gall et al., 2007). Therefore, with the permission of the teacher and students, focus group interviews and individual interviews were conducted at the participating high school. Due to teacher and student scheduling commitments after school hours, all interviews were conducted during class time with the exception of two interviews which were conducted during teacher preparation time and during a student’s spare. To minimize the loss of instructional time, consultation between the researcher and the teacher took place to arrange the most convenient time and setting for the interviews. When preparing for interviews with both teachers and students, questions were formulated in conversational statements to encourage participants to speak about the phenomena with as little prompting as possible (Smith & Osborne, 2008). Ensuring that questions were open-ended and conversational allowed participants to be the experts in data collection because it gave them a chance to talk about memorable aspects from the class and reflect on past experiences they had in the program. A copy of the interview questions was shared with the participating teacher prior to the interviews being conducted. All interviews were audio recorded; transcribed in a password protected word document, on a password protected computer; member checked (if requested) to verify the transcription was accurate; and stored for future analysis. All participants who requested to review their transcripts signed a transcript release form (see Appendix F). As a means of ensuring the comfort and trust of all the participants, I was the only researcher conducting all focus group and in-depth personal interviews.

Focus Groups. Focus group interviews with all 66 student participants were used to gain a better understanding of the experiences of young women in the physical education program. I was also interested in how these experiences impacted their engagement and satisfaction. Focus group interviews were used as research has found that the interactions among the participants may spark students’ memories and stimulate the students to state feelings, perceptions, and beliefs that they would not express individually (Gall et al, 2007). This interview format is

“often more enjoyable than one on one interviews and decreases the fear and anxiety regarding the interview process” (Thomas, Nelson, & Silverman, 2005, Hays et al., 2011, p. 253). The young women who volunteered for the study were placed in groups of 3-8 depending on the amount of students per class and the times they were available to meet. When I asked Mrs. Thompson, the physical education teacher, if the girls should be structured into groups based on relationships or peer conflict, she said that all of the students worked well together and that it would not be a problem. Therefore, groups were formed by asking participants, “Who wants to be in the first group, second, third?” The young women in the focus groups appeared to be at ease with one another and talked openly about their experiences, engagement, and likes and dislikes in the program. A semi-structured interview guide using questions based on McLeroy’s socio-ecological levels of influence (1988) (see Appendix G) was used in all focus group interviews. An initial set of questions was followed up with several open-ended questions to probe deeper for information that was not considered at the onset of the study (Merriam, 2009). My initial role in the interview process was to lead the discussions, but my role soon changed to facilitator, as the participants were very comfortable with one another and often lead the discussion in directions that I had not previously considered.

Initially 10 grade-alike, student focus groups were formed, each of which were comprised of three to eight participants. Each participant was assigned a number to provide privacy and confidentiality of all given responses during the focus group interviews. Three grade nine focus groups were conducted in the second week of the second semester, and subsequent focus group interviews were conducted three weeks later with the same participants. Initially, these grade nine students had little insight on the program as they were new to the school and the physical education program. For this reason I wanted to provide them with a second interview to see if they had gained more insight into the program or if their perceptions of the program had changed. Therefore, data was collected from a total of 13 focus group interviews in the study.

Individual Interviews. In-depth individual interviews were conducted with six purposefully sampled students who had participated in the focus group interviews. A variety of students exhibiting different levels of engagement and satisfaction were chosen to gain more insight on female engagement in physical education. Students were also chosen based on the need to probe deeper into some of the remarks they had made in the focus group interviews. These individual interviews also took the form of open-ended questions and followed a similar

semi-structured interview guide. I originally thought that the individual interviews would make it possible to obtain information the participants may not reveal in any other data-collection method (Gall, et al., 2007) because they may feel more comfortable discussing the information one-on-one. However, I found that the information I gathered during the individual interviews corresponded to what had already been stated in the focus groups, therefore I reduced the number of interviews originally planned.

A general interview guide was developed for the individual interviews and was based on similar questions from the focus group interview guide. This guide was used to see if any new information would emerge from the young women in a one-on-one setting with the researcher. The interview guide was semi-structured and focused around the following topics: (a) student views regarding the benefits of physical education; (b) what characterizes meaningful student engagement; (c) the importance of engagement and the factors that influence it; (d) the factors that are most important to maintain engagement in physical education for young women; (e) the barriers to participation in the physical education program; (f) participant views on programming as a means of increasing engagement in physical education; and (g) their level of satisfaction in their PE program and the reasons for it (see Appendix H). These questions were used to gain an understanding of the students' views relating to their engagement in their physical education program. Information was also gathered on the students' reasons for their engagement, and the possible ways to improve engagement in physical education.

In-depth individual interviews with the participating teacher in the exemplary program also took the form of open-ended questions (see Appendix I). These questions were used to gain an understanding of the teacher's views relating to: (a) what she characterized as student engagement; (b) the structures she implement to improve female engagement in physical education in her program; (c) the factors that influence student engagement; (d) the factors that inhibit student engagement; (e) community and policy influences on her program; and (f) the benefits of and barriers to young women's participation the physical education program.

Course Documents

Course documents used in the class, such as, the provincial physical education curriculum, year plans, course outlines, handouts, and assignments were reviewed. These documents were used to increase my understanding of the factors in the program that influenced the engagement of young females within the observed classes. Merriam (2009) suggests that

documents are often a good source of data as they are easily obtained and do not intrude upon or alter the settings that the presence of an investigator does. The physical education course outlines helped determine the expectations and objectives of the courses as well as the activities and assessment provided to the participants within the program. At the same time, classroom documents such as yearly plans, monthly calendars, and lesson plans were used to generate an understanding of the skills being implemented and taught, the outcomes of the curriculum being represented, and the climate of the class. Photos of the surroundings, bulletin boards, locker rooms, gymnasium, equipment rooms, and facility were used to generate a sense of the atmosphere in which the students were working in. These photos were also used to further understand the factors and influences that engage young women in physical education and enhance the overall depiction of Carter's physical education program.

Documents

Data collection also included looking at archived data at the school, such as, trends in attendance in physical education classes, enrollment numbers of females in elective physical education and extra-curricular activities. As engaged students have lower drop-out rates and attend school regularly (Appleton, Christenson, & Furlong, 2008), analyzing these documents provided insight on student engagement within the exemplar physical education program. The documents were analyzed to determine the tendencies of the female population in the physical education program at Carter High School.

Personal Journal

Often the written word is used to think about and reflect on what has been observed and can also express things that cannot be verbalized. In this study I kept a personal journal which included my thoughts and ideas generated by my observations, discussions, and conversations. My journal was kept separately from the observations I recorded and served as a tool for reflection and shed light on specific experiences I found intriguing and exceptional, felt conflicted about, or had more questions about. I also used this journal to jot down reasons I changed some of my original thoughts on how I was going to conduct the study and the reasons for doing so. In this capacity the journal served as a log of events that took place throughout the study to preserve timelines, conversations, and observations in a logical sequential order.

In previous work I have also kept a personal journal to enhance my practice through professional reflection which I found rewarding and useful. After each visit I made to Carter, I audio recorded my thoughts, feelings, and wonders about what I had heard, observed, and experienced on my way home. The drive home provided solitude and time for me to record and organize my thoughts, deeply think about and review the happenings of the day, speculate about what was going on in the program, and think about the direction to take in the days to come.

Data Analysis

Data collection and analysis is an ongoing process that should occur simultaneously both in and out of the field (Merriam, 2009). Strauss and Corbin emphasize that qualitative research studies involve a continuous interplay between data collection and data analysis (1998). For this reason, transcribing data after each observation session helped to review the purpose of the study, capture reflections, present initial themes, and provide insight into “what to look for in [the] next set of data collection” (Merriam, 2009, p. 170). While in the field I continued to read literature related to the study and the data that I was collecting. With each observation, journal recording, and interview, the information I gathered from the participants usually generated more questions which aided in reshaping and refocusing the study as it proceeded. According to Merriam “data analysis is the process of making sense out of the data and involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read” (p. 175). The steps taken during data collection in this study were analyzed simultaneously with the collection of data for each data source and is described below.

As data collection and analysis in case study research occur concurrently, inductive analysis was used at the start of data collection. This process helped ensure that all data collected converged in an attempt to understand the overall case, not the various parts of the case, or the contributing factors that influence the case (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Once the first set of data was transcribed, coded, and reviewed any speculative themes, hunches, and ideas to pursue was noted and explored further during the next collection session (Merriam, 1998).

The constant comparative method was used throughout data collection for the initial identification and development of common themes or patterns in the data (Merriam, 1998). According to Merriam (1998) the method is used to compare one segment of data with another to determine similarities and differences. The data is then grouped together based on the

similarities and is placed in a preliminary category. As Merriam recommends, the data analysis in this study began with the first observation, the first interview, the first document read, and continued until the decision was made to end data collection. Data collection and analysis continued until I found saturation of categories, exhaustion of sources, and the emergence of regularities (Gall et al, 2007). I knew saturation had been reached when no new information, insights, or understandings were forthcoming (Merriam, 1998, p. 183). The information that I was obtaining from the focus and individual interviews became redundant quite quickly and very few new pieces of information were developing to constitute subsequent interviews. After the final focus group interview and in my sixth individual interview I sensed that all participants were confident that their stories and experiences had been discussed in-depth and completely.

Two other Physical Education specialists with a background in research were enlisted as critical friends. According to Miles and Huberman (1994) a critical friend is described as a colleague or individual who helps provide context for the researcher to push critical and supportive feedback onto the findings. Both individuals acted as mentors in the process of research and provided support and feedback on the findings as they emerged during segmenting, coding, and the preliminary categorization of the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Their input also helped ensure that the data being analyzed remained true to the original questions and case.

Once the simultaneous data collection and analysis ended, the materials were organized in a case record to easily access and retrieve any segment of data that was needed for more intensive analysis (Merriam, 2009). According to Patton (2002) “the case record pulls together and organizes voluminous case data into a comprehensive, primary resource package...and is organized for ready access either chronologically and/or topically” (p. 449). In this study all observations and interviews were stored based on the date of the interview and were easily accessible chronologically. The case study database (or record) was therefore an important tool for data management prior to the intensive analysis of the case study data.

The following steps suggested by Merriam (1998) were followed during data analysis in this study. First, to begin data analysis I reread the research proposal to make sure the data analysis matched the purpose and questions of the initial case. Second, I read and reread all of the data that was collected and made notes and comments in the margins, posed questions, and reflected on the data and its relationship to the next steps in data analysis. This continuous review of data allowed me to be aware of commonalities and highlighted areas that needed more

confirmation, probing, or clarification. Next, the notes and comments I made during data collection and data analysis were developed into an outline or system of classification (coded) based on their regularities and patterns. Finally, these patterns were transformed into categories based on the content found and how each of the pieces of data fit together. Once I reviewed the categories, I enlisted the help of a critical friend to discuss the nature of each category, the reason for its development and whether it was deemed as satisfactory.

In staying true to Merriam's procedure as soon as possible after each observation session all field notes were transcribed into a word document and comments and reflections were added for future reference to help guide impending data collection sessions. Throughout the interviews the participants were frequently asked to clarify their answers or asked if the notes being jotted down accurately depicted what they were trying to express in their comments. In the three follow up grade nine interviews and the six individual interviews data that was previously heard was reviewed before the subsequent interviews began. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed immediately after each session. The transcription was verified, with the written notes, to ensure all comments were correctly associated with the participants' assigned number. The transcripts were then returned to the participants who requested them, for their verification to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the data. Once confirmed these notes along with segments found in the transcription were initially analyzed for their similarities and then categorized as either a potential promoter (PR) or inhibitor (INH) of female students' engagement in physical education. This initial categorization was not helpful and I quickly deviated from this coding system. Instead I analyzed the data line by line, adding a brief descriptive word along the margin to identify consistencies within the data. This analysis and review allowed me to identify pieces of information that were relevant to the research questions and search for topics that were mentioned frequently. I then highlighted all of the data with similar content with separate colored highlighters. This process helped to regroup and narrow the codes each time I reviewed the data and the development of the initial categories for the most part became an intuitive process (Merriam, 1988). This procedure helped me develop the following initial categories: relationships, competence, acceptance, attachment, feelings of pride, activities, skill development, goal setting, preparing students for the future, curriculum, expectations, motivation, and role modelling. Once the categories were developed I began to assign specific statements and phrases from the data collected to each category. At this time I

cut up quotes from transcripts, my personal journal, and observations and placed them under each of the headings I had made for each category. As text can often become decontextualized when separated (Merriam, 1988) I made sure to include reference numbers for each piece of data (interview number and line number) so it could be traced back to its original source in order to maintain its true meaning. At the same time any outliers or data pieces that had multiple forms of significance were cross-referenced with other pieces of data and placed into the best fit category.

Once each data piece had been sorted into categories I then began to compare the information in each category to see if they should be merged. Merriam (1988) refers to the grouping of similar categories as “clustering”. The process of reviewing and clustering required a great deal of time and reflection and allowed me to gain a better understanding of the data, as I began to search for themes. Three recurring themes emerged naturally from the data: Sense of Belonging, Confidence and Ability, and Lessons Learned and will help the readers understand the factors that influence young women’s engagement and satisfaction in physical education.

Trustworthiness

Providing context for trustworthiness in this qualitative research study was achieved by determining and adopting several strategies to enhance the credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability of findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Ensuring a clearly defined purpose, question, and framework and careful consideration and planning of the collection process, analysis, and interpretation of data also increased the trustworthiness of this study. Various sources of data were used and compared to broaden the depth and scope of understanding of the research phenomenon in order to verify conclusions and strengthen the study’s usefulness to other settings (Marshall & Rossman, 1993, p.144). By following these procedures triangulation and trustworthiness in this study was improved.

Credibility

According to Merriam (1998), credibility, deals with the question, “How congruent are the findings with reality?” (p. 213). To increase the credibility of this study many measures established by Lincoln & Guba (1985) were addressed and followed. First, the research method

chosen for this study was carefully considered and investigated to adopt the correct method for the chosen question of wonder. Second, an effort was made to develop an early familiarity with the chosen case site, prior to data collection, to understand the organization and create a rapport with the participants. According to Lincoln & Guba (1985) this strategy is known as “prolonged engagement” (p. 85). In addition to my personal experience as a physical education teacher several papers and presentation were completed and many informal conversation around the topic of female engagement occurred with friends, colleagues, other physical education teachers, professors, and fellow masters students studying in the same discipline.

Triangulation also helped increase the credibility of this study. Triangulation involves the use of different methods during data collection. Observations, focus groups and individual interviews, document analysis, and personal journal reflections formed the major data collection strategies for this case (Shenton, 2004). “The integration of individual and focus group interview data creates a more comprehensive picture of the phenomenon by searching for consistencies and inconsistencies in data” (Hays & Singh, 2011, p. 263). During data analysis in this study the constant comparative method was used to identify similarities and differences that cut across all pieces of data collected. According to Guba (1981) the use of a variety of methods concurrently compensates for their individual limitations and demonstrates their benefits.

Another strategy used to increase credibility of the data collected was to offer each individual an opportunity to refuse to participate in the study or withdraw from the study, without penalty, prior to the combination of data. This strategy helped increase the credibility during the data collection sessions as only those who are genuinely willing to take part and prepared to offer data freely were involved. Other strategies used throughout this study to increase the credibility were: a) frequent debriefing sessions with physical education colleagues and supervisors; b) feedback from my physical education colleagues and supervisors on the data collection and analysis throughout the project; c) member checks of transcribed interviews (for participants that requested them), which Lincoln and Guba (1995) consider the single most important provision that can be made to bolster a study’s credibility; and d) a journal of “reflective commentary” was kept throughout the study to limit bias in addition to observations (Shenton, 2004).

Finally, according to Patton, the credibility of the researcher is especially important in qualitative research as it is the person who is the major instrument of data collection and analysis

(1990). By describing my background, experience, and bias, throughout each phase of the study, I promoted the credibility of the rich information gathered. Disclosing my personal information also helped convey the actual situations that have been investigated and the contexts that surround them.

Transferability

Merriam (1998) proposes that external validity, known as transferability in qualitative research, is concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations. Before establishing the research question I carried out an extensive literature review in the field of physical education. This review was carried out to determine what was known and not known regarding my topic of interest. Throughout the review, numerous journals and scholarly articles were found and read to determine the research question. From the review of the journal articles, I concluded that more research needed to be conducted on determining the experiences of young women in exemplary high school physical education programs. Specifically, my hope was to determine the factors that are present in the exemplary program that impact young women's satisfaction and engagement in physical education and ultimately their choice to sustain their participation in physical activity and enroll in elective physical education. I also wrote many papers and gave a few presentations related to my topic of interest to gain a better understanding of the literature.

I thoroughly investigated literature on qualitative research methods and enrolled in two classes related to this topic to increase my understanding on how to conduct a qualitative research study. The information obtained from the classes impacted my decision to choose a case study method for my research. Although the findings of this study are unique to the case I have described they could be used as a reference for other researchers. "In qualitative case studies the researcher can generalize but it is more likely that the readers will determine whether the research findings fit the situation in which they work" (Eisner, 1991, p. 197). Lincoln and Guba (1985) also suggest it is the responsibility of the investigator to ensure that sufficient contextual information about the fieldwork site is provided to enable the reader to make a transfer to their own study and context. To help the reader make sense of the findings from this study to determine if it meets their own experience or situation, a clear depiction of the school and site along with rich descriptions of the participants' experiences were provided. It is my hope that "given the thick contextual description and vivid portrayals of participants, most

readers will have little difficulty recognizing situations that are parallel to their own, or detecting assertions that make no sense in their own experience” (Locke, 1989, p.12). The findings of this case may be used to question what accounts for differences and similarities in other information seeking research as well as provide future investigators with the knowledge necessary to conceptualize the context in which the data was collected.

Dependability

“To address the dependability issue more directly, the processes within the study should be reported in detail, thereby enabling a future researcher to repeat the work, if not necessarily to gain the same results” (Shenton, 2004, p. 71). Dependability was achieved throughout this study in three ways: first, a detailed explanation of the research design and its implementation was included; secondly, details of data collection and methods were thoroughly outlined; and thirdly, a final reflection on the planning, process, implementation, and effectiveness of the study was carried out. By following this process there is an increased chance that if the work were repeated, in the same context with the same methods and participants, similar results would be obtained. At the end of this study a collection of rich descriptive data was produced that included a trail of paperwork that could be used at a later date to replicate or further analyze the data gathered for this study (Guba, 1981).

Confirmability

The concept of confirmability is the qualitative investigator’s comparable concern to objectivity (Shenton, 2004). In this study researcher bias must be discussed to reduce its effect throughout the study. Through reflective commentary, a biographical sketch, and stating researcher bias during data collection, investigator bias was reduced thus increasing confirmability of the findings in this study.

Also critical to this process is the “audit trail,” which allows any observer to trace the course of the research step-by-step via the decisions made and procedures described by the researcher (Shenton, 2004). In this study, personal recordings and a personal journal was used to document any and all changes that occurred throughout the study and their effect on the quality of the findings and were noted in the data analysis section.

Limitations

As in all qualitative research there are limitations associated with this study. First, the proposed study is limited to young women aged 13-18 enrolled in a high school physical education program in a small city in Saskatchewan. I chose this age to study because the activity level of female students in this age category declines significantly and continues to decline throughout their high school career. Second, I chose to use a small, urban centered, school in Saskatchewan. Therefore, the findings of this study may be limited to the sample population and the type of school that the participants attended. This creates limits on transferability to other populations such as rural or elementary schools.

Using a case study research method also limits its applicability and transferability due to the decreased sample size of participants used. Given the limited sample size the breadth within the sample can result in the over or under representation of specific views or opinions (Patton, 2002). For example almost all of the young women expressed their satisfaction with the physical education program therefore there may be an underrepresentation of unsatisfied females represented in the data. Another limitation is that observations only occurred two or three times a week and access to the teachers and students' everyday practices were somewhat limited.

Although this study is ethically approved, and ethical procedures were followed with all participants, such as explaining the purpose of the study, the notions of confidentiality, the freedom to withdraw without consequence, as well as obtaining consent for participation, audio taping the topic of engagement and satisfaction in the physical education program may be sensitive for some individuals. This sensitivity may have limited participant responses and resulted in participants refraining from answering truthfully or expressing their ideas and opinions or acting naturally when observations were taking place. However, I do not feel that the students felt or acted in this way at any time throughout the study.

Two other possible limitations are that ethical problems could arise if it proves difficult to disguise the identity of the participants to be studied (Gall et al., 2007) and sometimes researchers own subjective feeling may influence the case study and the data collected. However, the main limitation of using a case study method is the difficulty of generalizing the findings to other situations (Gall et al., 2007). Because this study deals with only one exemplary physical education program, its participants, and teacher it may be difficult to transfer the conclusions drawn from this particular case to others with similar instances. Case study methods may also be

difficult to replicate and can be time consuming dependent upon the data collection methods chosen.

Ethical Considerations

This study followed the research protocol approved by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board. When conducting research with participants it is important to “show respect for research participants, protect them from avoidable harm, and honour their contributions to research knowledge” (Gall et. al., p. 69). Moreover, in a qualitative case study, “ethical dilemmas are likely to emerge at two points: during the collection of data and in the dissemination of findings” (Merriam, 1988, p.179). As the main researcher, I worked vigorously to ensure participants were comfortable and that their anonymity and confidentiality were maintained.

Prior to the initiation of the study a completed research proposal was submitted to the Ethics Committee, the Director of Education of the participating school division, and the participating teacher. The study was initially discussed by the teacher to the students in her physical education. One week before the study was scheduled to begin I travelled to the school to explain the purpose and nature of the study during class time. At that time questions were answered and any concerns were addressed.

In this study voluntary participation was requested and participants had the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time. Student and parent consent forms detailing the purpose, procedures, and documentation process were provided to all participants with my contact information if any questions or a clarification of the study was required. Confidentiality measures were followed and included but were not limited to, the assignment of numbers to participants during interviews, collection of data on password protected equipment, and secure storage of data on a password protected computer.

From the onset of the study, students’ names were never attached to transcripts or used in field notes. A pseudonym, which is typically used in qualitative research, was only assigned to the teacher, principal, and one male student in the writing of the study but not the female student participants as there were a large number interviewed, 66 in total, and as a researcher I wanted to keep the statements objective and allow the reader to follow the data without trying to follow a particular participants comments. Female participants were assigned a number, by the researcher

and direct quotes from the focus group participants are referenced from the transcripts themselves with the grade, transcript number, and the student assigned numbers. Individual interviews are reference from the transcripts with the grade, interview number, and line number. Although the teacher knew which students were taking part in the interviews, none of the data could be traced back to an individual student as each of them were assigned a pseudonym and a number. Prior to all interviews with the students, assent forms were reviewed and information outlining the intent of the study, the possible risks to the students, transcript review, and how to withdraw were covered. Students were also informed that the data collected would be kept in confidence and stored in a secure location. I explained to them that I would be the only one listening to the transcripts and transcribing them and once the study was completed the data would be stored at the University of Saskatchewan in the College of Kinesiology by the co-supervisor of the study, Dr. Louise Humbert, for a period of five years after the completion of the study. At that time students were asked if they would still like to continue, were asked to sign the assent form, and given the opportunity to withdraw without question.

As previously stated in the limitations section, participants' anonymity could not be guaranteed during focus group interviews, however, measures were taken to encourage all participants to establish confidentiality amongst their group members. Throughout this study I maintained high standards and was rigorous in following all ethical procedures that needed to be addressed.

Chapter Four: Findings

“Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together success.”

~ Henry Ford

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into the shared experiences of young women in an exemplary physical education program to answer the question:

What factors are present in the program and how do they influence the engagement and satisfaction of young women in physical education?

From the qualitative analysis of observations, field notes, personal records, classroom documents, my personal journal, and the transcripts from 20 interviews, a rich description of the factors that engage young women in physical education and activity emerged. The factors that contributed to the sustained engagement and satisfaction of the young women are described in detail in this chapter along with the factors that may limit their likelihood to engage in physical education. Direct quotes from the students (FG – focus group or SI – student individual interview), teacher (TI – teacher interview), and my personal journal (PJ) are used to describe the factors. These quotes add descriptive details from both the students and teachers, in their own words, and helped to clarify the experiences they had within their physical education program and how they felt about the program itself. In this study the physical education program pertains to and encompasses the curricular content, intramurals, extra-curricular activities, and community events. Based on the data collected and through the words of the participants, a story has unfolded and a better understanding of the factors that affect young women’s participation and engagement in physical education within the physical education program at Carter High School.

Welcome to Carter High School

At 6:00 a.m. I finished dressing, grabbed a snack for the road, said good-bye to my husband, and ran upstairs to give my sleeping boys a quick kiss. The weather had been extraordinarily warm for the second week of January and I was extremely happy because the roads were clear. I had purposely left early that day because I wanted to make sure that I could take my time, gain my bearings, and enjoy my drive. I remember feeling both nervous and excited for the next chapter in my journey to begin. I could not wait to meet Mrs. Thompson.

After several emails and conversations I was eager to get to know the women with whom I would be spending the next three months. Two hours later I had finally arrived at my destination. It was only 8:00 am but the streets were already lined with student vehicles and I had difficulty finding a place to park. I pulled into a spot a few blocks away and as I made my way down the street, a large brick building loomed before me. At first glance, it seemed like any other school; students were outside chatting, some were heading inside, and others were playing catch on the front lawn. I headed for the front door and was graciously met with smiles and hellos from some of the students outside. As I walked through the doors I immediately felt comfortable. It had been almost three months since I had stepped inside a high school and it was refreshing to hear all of the familiar sounds and feel the vibrant sense of purposefulness in the building. Upon entering the main doors the school motto, “Excelling Together,” was displayed on a large banner just inside the front hallway along with the mission statement, “Carter school is committed to ensuring that its students get a high performance education in a collaborative environment.”

Reading that statement instantly got me thinking about the school’s culture and illuminated what values and beliefs are important to those who come here to teach and learn. I continued forward through adjoining doors, and into the main hallway. At that point two paths were presented to me; to the right the main office, and to the left the gymnasium, my home. As I stood there a woman approached me, extended her hand, and introduced herself, “Hi I am Mrs. Thompson, the physical education teacher, it is nice to meet you. How was the drive?” After a few minutes of chatter we turned right and headed toward the main office to meet the principal. Upon entering, the first thing I noticed were numerous newspaper articles showcasing both student and teacher accomplishments displayed on the bulletin boards between the principal and vice principal’s offices. These included highlights on the school’s sports teams, drama productions, and community activities. There was also a large display of provincial trophies, sports paraphernalia, and awards along the side wall beside the reception area.

Mrs. Thompson quickly introduced me to the principal, Mr. Savoy, and I thanked him again for letting me conduct my research in the school. He smiled confidently and let me know that I was welcome anytime and assured me that I would be observing an integral part of the school, their physical education program. I asked him a few questions about student population, course offerings, and collegiate goals. He explained that the school had a population of

approximately 620 students and that Carter school was the only comprehensive high school in the city and offered a wide variety of courses in academics, fine arts, and skilled trades. As I moved back through the reception area I had the opportunity to look at the course selection guide for the school. Upon first inspection of the guide I immediately noticed there were a lot of course offerings for the students to choose from. I also saw there were a number of elective physical education courses available to students in grades 11 and 12. When I asked Mrs. Thompson if a lot of students chose to enroll in the elective classes she commented that their department's enrollment numbers were very high. She further explained that due to the high volume of students wanting to enroll in the classes, selection procedures were needed. In fact, for some of the most sought after classes, interviews were conducted to select the students who would be accepted. I just about fell over! I found it intriguing that at this school they were having to turn students away from elective physical education courses unlike the high school I taught in where we often had to collapse classes because there was not enough interest. I continued to talk with Mrs. Thompson about female enrollment and she surprised me again! She explained that for the most part the in-school, and high performance coeducational elective classes were split 50/50, but they also had an extra section of a "girls only" physical education class to attract young women who did want to participate in coeducational physical education. This led me to believe that physical education at Carter was highly valued by many of the students including young women. I quickly realized that while I thought I was entering an ordinary high school, I was wrong. My initial image of Carter School was false...it was not as ordinary as I expected!

After our visit to the main office we headed toward the gymnasium. Along the way I noticed that the hallways were covered with student photos. I was surprised to see pictures of students outside each classroom that read, "Excelling in Music," or "Excelling in PAA." It seemed that each class emphasized the importance of students' doing well in their school work and felt it was important to display those accomplishments. As we walked past the cafeteria I also noticed that every pillar was engraved with the names of former students who had won graduation awards. I was truly astounded at the amount of student recognition on display throughout the school and as I walked toward the gymnasium I became even more delighted.

Continuing through the first set of doors into the foyer that surrounded the gym I immediately sensed that the gymnasium was the hub of the school. Pictures of a variety of

students in drama productions, athletics, and other events around the school scrolled through on a TV screen at the entrance of the foyer. The sounds of balls bouncing and music filtered through the air, into the hallway, and brought a smile to my face. Mrs. Thompson continued on ahead into the gymnasium as I paused to examine and reflect on the pictures, articles, and photos that covered the hallway that preceded the gym. Student athletes, teams, and current physical education students were on display. I was excited to see that there was also an Excelling in Athletics picture along with an Athletic Honor Roll picture which confirmed my initial inclination that both academics and athletics were highly valued at this school. There were also numerous newspaper clippings covering the walls on athletic accomplishments as well as individual pictures of current student athletes from every team. Further down the hallway, previous city and provincial award winners were showcased. In addition a “Hall of Fame” included pictures and biographies of previous student athletes who had been inducted for accomplishments in sport and the community. Just before I entered the gymnasium I noticed pictures of students and teachers involved in the intramural program and community events as well as pictures of current grade nine students who were successful in completing challenger runs.

These pictures demonstrated to me this school valued physical activity. The pictures clearly indicated that students’ participation and personal movement achievements and accomplishments as well as school team successes were honored, appreciated, and respected at Carter High School. In my 13 years as a teacher and a coach I have entered dozens of schools and I can honestly say that I have never felt like I did when I entered Carter High School and their gymnasium. Carter High School was different. There seemed to be a community of people who share the same vision, goals, ideals, and purpose: valuing individuals and their accomplishments, both mind and body.

The Heart and Soul of Carter

According to Frieberg and Stein (1999) school climate can be described as the heart and soul of a school. Climate is often what motivates both teachers and students to want to be involved. Climate is often thought to be a surface characteristic, something that is easy to change and dependent upon a person’s perceptions and the way one feels. A school’s culture is described as a way of thinking, is based on values and beliefs, and evolves over time (Fiore, 2013). At first I believed what I was experiencing and feeling at Carter was the impact of a

positive school climate. However, as my visits continued it became apparent that it was more than just surface appearances, it was a way of thinking, the “heart and soul of the school” was the school culture. I feel it is important to discuss Carter High School’s culture and the influence the physical education program has on the traditions, values, and beliefs that have been established to better understand the impact the program has on the members of this school.

My observations of the students, teachers, and one young man in particular, Ted, brought the importance and influence of the physical education program on the school culture and the school community to light. Ted was a grade 10 boy and was one of the first students I met when I arrived at Carter. Ted was in the gym all of the time: in the morning, at breaks, during class, and at lunch. Any time that he came down to the gym he was welcomed by everyone. He was never turned away and was always acknowledged and accepted by those around him. I feel that he knew he was safe, he belonged, and he was welcomed in this space. This young man was not alone in his feelings of acceptance and belonging in the physical education program at Carter. Many other young women recognized that they too felt accepted and often stated they felt that they belonged in the gym:

Our school is accepting and everyone cares. (FG 11-6-3)

It was clear to me that the physical education program, (class, intramurals, extra-curricular activities, and community events) at Carter High School strived to make students feel comfortable in a physical activity setting and attempted to bring students, staff, and community members together to work toward similar goals. Both students and teachers recognized and discussed the culture within the school and the aspects they perceived had contributed to its creation. The students and teachers at Carter believed a culture of being active was valued and imbedded in the school community and had evolved over a number of years. Mrs. Thompson herself credits Carter’s school culture to several factors, one of which is the school’s physical education program:

School culture... comes from your extra-curricular program and things like the polar bear run where we are encouraging kids and staff in any athletic or non-athletic background to make a difference, to show you care, and come and be active because they are healthy enough to do that. The gym is wide open at noon hour and mornings for anybody to be active in and we have a lot of teachers that are very active. We celebrate being physically active, we put it over the intercom, ‘congratulations to whatever’, and we ring the bell when good things happen athletically as well as other accomplishments in the building. We also make sure that there are lots of opportunities in our building for

non-athletes to be active like CORE muscle training at noon, so I think that contributes a lot. (TI March 7th, 2016)

Her description is a good example of how climate can help build culture within a school. At first the action of ringing the bell may have been introduced and helped shape the school's climate. When the bell was rung students knew something good had happened. As this action was repeated over the years an expectation was formed. Now the students and teachers at Carter expect that if they do well they will be able to celebrate accomplishments which has made wanting to do well part of the culture of the school. I also observed this aspect of the school culture when I saw posters throughout the school recognizing the accomplishments of many of the students at Carter in a variety of activities, academics, and clubs. These actions clarified the school's beliefs on the importance of acknowledging accomplishments and providing support and opportunities for all students to be successful in all aspects of the life of the school.

All facets within a school affect its culture. According to Stoll (1999) school culture manifests itself in rituals, customs, stories, and ways of treating each other. It is, in other words, a system of meaning that influences how people think and how they act at school. So who then builds a school's culture? Zakrzewski (2013) suggests that building a positive school culture has to involve everyone: staff, students, administration, and community members. She also states that "there is no magic formula" (p. 1) but rather a positive school culture is dependent on how much everyone gets on board and agrees with the vision and values that are being represented in the school. According to Mrs. Thompson the vision and focus at Carter is on "connections". The school's goal is to try to ensure that each and every student can or has connected with an adult in the building. As a result, a student-teacher advisory time was implemented during the current school year and takes place every Monday for twenty minutes. A variety of activities such as discussing random acts of kindness and how they could be implemented, working on improving study habits and goal setting for classes, or discussing topics that students are concerned about such as graduation and future careers are used to help build connections between teachers and students.

Although it is important that all members are involved in creating a school culture, current research suggests that the principal has a lot of influence on the organizational and cultural factors of the school (Hoy, Tarter, & Ho, 2006; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). Furthermore, principals are often seen as agents of change and as Leithwood

(1992) suggests can impact the school through the transformation of the school culture. It is apparent the administration at Carter High School feels that physical activity and the physical education program is valuable. They also recognize the role the program plays in the development of Carter's school culture and are willing to invest money to improve and sustain the program. Mrs. Thompson made reference to the role the administration at Carter played in supporting the program:

Our administration is on board because I can go to them and say I need thirty steps, the cost is 2000.00 dollars and that is where I would like to spend our money and they would be accepting of that. They also trust that I am an expert in my field and will listen to me and I greatly appreciate that. (TI March 7th, 2016)

On my first day at Carter, I entered the gym and my initial reaction was to quickly note down how clean and bright the facility was. The wooden gymnasium floor was shining and clean, the paint was crisp and vibrant, and the equipment was all allocated to a specific area beside the weight room for easy access for students. It was obvious that great care and pride was taken to ensure that the gymnasium was well kept and inviting to all. Approximately thirty students were in the gymnasium. The score clock displayed 4:53 and was counting down the minutes that the students had left before having to put away the equipment and get changed for their first period classes. Both physical education teachers, who have been teaching at the school for over 16 years, were conversing with the students in the gym and weight room. The clock sounded and the students returned the equipment to the proper location and headed off to the change rooms. Maintaining a facility, valuing equipment, and providing opportunities for students to be active are all aspects of the school's climate and ultimately build into the culture of the school. When asked about the school's culture Mrs. Thompson stated:

I think we have an active culture in our building and we have worked hard at that. I don't think it just comes. This is my 16th year here so we have been able to create that culture [in the school] and the students have bought into that. (TI March 7th, 2016)

Mrs. Thompson also discussed how much the community, in and around the school, helped contribute to the culture of the building. She talked about donations the school received for many of the different programs offered, the volunteers that help run programs in the school, as well as the support she received when trying to replace the old gymnasium flooring:

We worked really hard at it [replacing the gymnasium floor] and the community chipped in. We raised money and sold a square foot for 20 bucks to raise the money. I really wanted the new hardwood floor to be one of the legacies that I left behind because I want people to know that we really worked hard to get that. So when I look at what we

accomplished as a community over the last 16 years, we got a new floor, electric bleachers, floor mats, new weight room flooring, painted the gym, stadium chairs, new sound system, at least 15 new things, we have accomplished a lot. (TI March 7th, 2016)

So how does Carter High School's culture connect to my research questions and ultimately the purpose for conducting this study? I believe that a positive school culture, will enhance the likelihood that students will become engaged and involved in all aspects of the school. As stated earlier positive school cultures are learning and caring cultures that promote student belonging and connectedness. According to Yassie-Mintz (2009) school climate can positively impact students' levels of engagement and connectedness. He also discusses that engagement is defined as the relationship between the student and the school community, including the school adults, peers, the instruction, and the curriculum. When students are engaged in the daily events in school, they experience a sense of "voice" and feel as if they are an important part of the school community. In addition, students who feel connected and accepted within the school community are more likely to experience academic success and less likely to engage in risky behaviors (Blum, 2005).

The pictures of students displayed throughout the school with the captions "excellence in ...athletics, music, PAA" were a testament to Blum's (2005) findings and were echoed by both Mrs. Thompson and her students in the interviews I conducted. Not only were the young women willing to be a part of the daily workings of the school and physical education they were also choosing to be involved in the school's intramural and extra-curricular programs. Mrs. Thompson spoke about the importance of her students having activities to keep them busy and involved in the school. She also stated that the kids at Carter school were "good" and that there were not a lot of behaviour problems, she credited this to the high involvement of students in school activities. One student supported this when she talked about her perceptions of the involvement of students at Carter school:

Everyone is involved and if you aren't, you go to a different school. (FG 12-6-1)

Other students reported there were a variety of activities they could get involved in at the school, free of charge, at opportune times, to increase their own fitness levels:

I think I've gotten good at the strength part of it, like I feel like I have a pretty strong core. I mean like I am a dancer so I kinda need one but like everything that Mrs. Thompson does like strength twice a week and I join the CORE at lunch every Tuesday and like for myself I feel like I'm pretty good at that kind of stuff now so I get involved. (FG 10-10-4)

In my visits to the school there were always a number of students in the gymnasium, working out, playing games, or participating in intramurals. It is clear the program at Carter provides opportunities for all students to be involved and plays an integral part in increasing students' perceptions on the importance of being active:

Any kid can come to our intramural program any noon hour if they want and do whatever they want to do as long as it's safe and it's active. The weight room is open and the gym is wide open. Then we also have on Tuesday's a personal trainer comes in and we open the gym for CORE muscle training and strengthening and we have a really good turnout to that. Sometimes we have our classes join that and other times it's just people who want to be there for an extra workout. (TI March 7th, 2016)

One good thing about our [intramural] program though is that every teacher has a team so we don't just have a teacher's team we try to get as many teachers involved and then the team also has to have so many grade 9, 10, 11, and 12 students. Then we also make it so say its basketball you are only allowed to have one senior player and one junior player so you have to have kids that don't play to get your team started and usually all the kids that play on the teams want to play so we end up having lots of teams. (TI March 7th, 2016)

There's a variety of different activities that we can do so it helps a lot of people cause if they don't like one thing at this time it gives them a chance to kinda get to try something else like the next time that it comes along. (FG 10-10-4)

Many students also commented on the 'image' Carter is known for. They believe that Carter is seen as a school that values physical activity for everyone and is recognized for its success in athletics and involvement in community events:

Carter is a really physical school, like physical activity. [Teachers] do really encourage everyone to take part in something. (FG 10-3-4)

A few other young women also commented on how others view the school and the activities that are offered for anyone to participate in:

We're known for our sports...when visitors come into the school and they look at how many people are involved they're like, this is awesome, like I want to come here and be involved like all these other people are. (FG 10-2-1)

When it's the start of like an intramural, like hockey or basketball or anything, the teachers go around and they're like in the hallways and they'll just say to like some random guy or girl, 'do you want to play intramurals?' and they say it to like everyone because they are always trying to get people on their teams and make their teams. (FG 11-1-4)

These comments confirm that the physical education program in place at Carter draws young women into participating in a variety of physical activities and sports and plays an integral role in the incredible culture within the school.

Mother of Carter

Mrs. T is like the Mother of Carter. She knows everyone and is always asking everyone how they are doing or what is going on in their life. I don't think that Carter school's gym program would be anything like what it is without Mrs. Thompson. (FG 11-5-5)

At the end of every interview I conducted, my final question always was: "Is there anything that you think is really important for me to know about the physical education program or anything you want to talk about a little bit more?" Every response to this question went back to Mrs. Thompson. The participants continually discussed the relationship they had with her and the impact they felt she had on each of them as well as the physical education program at Carter. The students at Carter felt that Mrs. Thompson is an incredible role model. She is passionate about her work, is well organized, understands the physical education curriculum, and makes them feel comfortable. Furthermore, the young women said she is motivating and is involved in multiple aspects of the school as a teacher, coach, and mentor. I consistently heard that Mrs. Thompson was the reason the young women chose to engage in the physical education program and what makes the program exceptional. Therefore, it is important for you, the reader, to gain a better understanding of the teacher who had the vision, tenacity, and perseverance, to get the program off the ground and in the state that it is now...let me introduce you to Mrs. Thompson.

Mrs. Thompson is three years away from retiring and is in her 16th year at Carter School. When I first met Mrs. Thompson I thought she epitomized the stereotypical physical education teacher. She was fit, enjoyed working out and being active, believed in the inclusion of a sport education model, was passionate about the benefits of being involved in physical education and activity, enjoyed coaching and building relationships, and had chosen to become a physical education teacher because of the positive experiences she herself had experienced being involved in physical activity:

I got involved in athletics in grade 8....it was a really positive way for me to be active and then the more I was involved the more I realized that it was something that I wanted to do, to be a phys-ed teacher and that would be as a result of the sport involvement. (TI March 7th, 2016)

However, as the students stated in their interviews she is so much more. From my first impression and through my continued interactions with Mrs. Thompson, I soon understood what the girls meant and why the girls felt such a strong connection to her. Undeniably, Mrs. Thompson is a “spark plug”. She treats her students fairly, offers a balanced curriculum with a variety of options, and is continuously trying to improve her practice. In addition, Mrs. Thompson is always on the go, is invested in learning alongside her students, and is both motivating and encouraging:

[Mrs. Thompson’s] just a really good motivator, like during the runs yesterday she was talking over the microphone and was encouraging us to keep going and running with us. (FG 10-10-4)

Even more incredible to me was the way students of all abilities and backgrounds gravitated to her and how she could make each of them feel important and valued in the physical education program. She was always asking students about their interests outside of school, encouraging them to join community events and extra-curricular activities, and inviting them to take part in intramurals and other special events that were scheduled before school or at lunch.

In the short time I was able to work with this remarkable teacher, I too learned a great deal. A few of the practices she included in her own teaching were contrary to my own beliefs and what I implemented in my own program. For starters, Mrs. Thompson’s program is very structured and routine. Not to say that my own is not, but her program is very rigid and defined, black and white, teacher-centered in planning, with very little grey area for negotiation. On the first day of class Mrs. Thompson provides her students with a schedule of units that will be taught throughout the term. She also provides students with a monthly calendar that lists all of the activities taking place each day. I also use a year plan in my own practice but often build the units around the polled interests of my students. Using this method usually takes a few days to organize as you have to go through all of the responses from each of the students. I always thought including input from my students would increase their engagement in the activities being taught. However, from what I found through my research at Carter, young women enjoyed having the activities planned out for them each day without their input. They trusted in the knowledge and experience of their teacher and the activities she chose to include:

She always has something planned out, like she doesn’t just wing it, she knows what she’s doing and she tries to make it interesting. She doesn’t just want us sitting there, she wants us to make good use of our time. (FG 11-1-6)

However, the young women did state that they were given choices within each unit to work on individual skills or engage in different activities and groupings dependent on their skill level. They also emphasized that they felt they had control of their own learning and were able to choose what they wanted to work on every Friday during their personal wellness time:

On Fridays we get to go into the weight room to just work on whatever we want. What we want to get better at. (FG 9-13-6)

Secondly, although Mrs. Thompson offers a variety of activities, her classes are predominantly sport and fitness based with an explicit focus on cardiovascular and musculoskeletal training for all students. For example, each class includes a twenty minute fitness warm-up. The classes usually commence with an 8- to 15-minute warm-up jog at moderate to vigorous intensities, a flexibility component, followed up by muscular strength or endurance exercises. Students are also asked to participate in monthly fitness testing and assessment for grade 9's and 10's included: a 12 minute run; one minute maximal push-ups; and one minute maximal abdominal crunches. The grade 10's are also asked to complete a one minute muscular endurance (burpees) and one minute cardiovascular endurance (lateral jump) test.

Not only is fitness emphasized in physical education classes at Carter, there is also a strong fitness component in the intramural program. Mrs. Thompson organizes and invites professionals from the community to come into the school at noon to facilitate fitness based activities. These activities are offered on a weekly basis at no additional charge to staff and students. It is apparent that the school is in support of improving the fitness levels within the school community and the sessions I observed and participated in were very well-attended. The high turnout to these sessions surprised me as much of the literature I have read suggests that many young women see fitness testing and competitive sport based curricular models as barriers to their involvement in physical education and participation in physical activity.

In a study conducted by Olafson, young women described a dislike for both the structure and content of their physical education program which was comprised primarily of team sports (2002). Moreover, Olafson found that young women often perceive themselves as unskilled and credits this to increasing their dislike of the inclusion of sports in their physical education classes. Many researchers have also strongly criticized the use of fitness tests in a physical education setting (Corbin, 2002; Naughton, Carlson, & Greene, 2006; Rice, 2007). One of their

main arguments is that fitness tests may actually contribute to diminishing interest in physical education and physical activity in general. In addition, some authors have suggested that the use of fitness testing in physical education is undermining students' motivational constructs such as confidence, self-esteem and sense of self as a physical activity participant (Corbin, 2002; Rice, 2007). However, contrary to the literature the young women at Carter enjoy the focus on fitness and sports. Many of the students discussed the impact both sports and fitness had on their own satisfaction and engagement:

I want to take the gym class so I can just help keep that fitness level, I like being fit and this class helps me do that. (FG 12-5-5)

We do a lot, all different sports, we go through all the sports volleyball, floor hockey, basketball, badminton, football, pickle ball, I like them all I like everything. (FG 10-3-5)

The young women also discussed fitness testing and their reasons for enjoying participating in the testing:

I like the fitness tests, after you get to track everything you get to see all your results from each different time. The results are based on like how many laps you do, your reps for a certain amount of time I like it because you get to visually see what you are doing, sometimes it's hard to see your own body changing cause you see it every day. (FG 11-5-6)

In a focus group discussion, all of the participants agreed they had enrolled in physical education because of the high volume of fitness in the class. During another focus group interview many of the young women also discussed their satisfaction in learning how to use weights properly and the enjoyment they felt when engaging in the daily runs and strength components in the class:

I really like learning how to use the weights and like different equipment or even just learning how to use your body to work out, it will help you like when you're at home or something so that you can like target like one thing that you want to work on and you can learn how to properly do it in this class. (FG 9-13-4)

It is undeniable that Mrs. Thompson's planning, preparation, attitude, involvement, and passion for physical education and her community helped build the physical education program at Carter. It is also evident that this program has had an incredibly positive effect on the young women involved. The thoughts and experiences of the young women I observed and spoke with can be summed up in the following comments:

This is the best gym program ever and I wouldn't change it for the word. (SI 9-6-32)

I like our program I think it's great, compared to other schools I don't know if we have anything different or that great of a phys-ed program it's mostly just the teacher. (FG 10-10-1)

Contrary to the feeling that the success of the program was solely due to her efforts, Mrs. Thompson stated that she felt the program would thrive anywhere as long as teachers invested their time and their hearts. She believed that if other teachers took the time to learn the outcomes of the curriculum and implemented them in their classrooms, got involved in extra-curricular and community events, motivated and engaged their students, and most importantly built positive relationships with students the physical education program could be successful at any school.

I've worked hard to be successful as a coach and a teacher. I have spent hours of my own time designing what I need to be successful on both fronts teaching and athletically. I spent a tremendous amount of time becoming a good teacher and again that has been a choice. I really do believe it [the program] is possible in another setting but the ticket to that is time. You know time is such a precious thing to all of us and how we use that time is important. And for me over the past 27 years of my career I put a lot of time into my profession. I really believe that that is crucial so if you have people willing to put in the time and say ok where do we want to go with this. Like do I think that I could walk into another building and do this all over again, absolutely. I couldn't start it at year 27 but I have been in here, this is my 16th year, could I have walked into another school and had the same success? Absolutely. I could have absolutely taken my model and beliefs of this program and been successful at any school. I know every community has certain things like living factors or social concerns but I think that I could go into any other school across the province because I think the model works. (TI March 7th, 2016)

Mrs. Thompson's influence on this program and the young people at Carter is irrefutable. As a researcher I saw the impact she had on the development, implementation, and preservation of the physical education program and the role it plays in helping to establish the school culture at Carter. As a physical education teacher I also know that physical education teachers' efforts are not always recognized. The hundreds of hours it takes in maintaining a physical activity setting is much more demanding than maintaining a single classroom. Coordinating gymnasium schedules, ordering equipment, hosting events, and maintaining the change rooms, gym floor, and office spaces are a lot of responsibility and work like this often goes unnoticed. On top of all of this many people also do not realize the hundreds of hours that most physical education teachers volunteer when coaching school teams. Mrs. Thompson mentioned all of these topics in our time together. She also discussed the importance of maintaining balance in one's life and how difficult that can be in the role that she is in. Unfortunately, for most PE teachers feeling undervalued and run off ones feet is the norm and at Carter school there are times when Mrs. Thompson feels this way. Not only is she a teacher and multi-sport coach, she is also the department head, SSSAD rep, SHSAA rep, a parent, and a partner. This speaks volumes to the

dedication Mrs. Thompson has to the physical education program and her desire to maintain high enrollment and engagement of students in the program at Carter.

Fortunately, Mrs. Thompson's efforts were recognized and acknowledged on many levels in the community this past year. Although I could tell that Mrs. Thompson does not like to be in the limelight and often down plays the amount of time and effort she puts into the physical education program she did mention how thankful she was to receive so much recognition this year for all of her efforts:

This year to get so much recognition is awesome. My team was voted team of the year, I was coach of the year, and I won the PRISM award for being an influential person so that was huge. I was also nominated for citizen of the year for our city but that was a little "out there" for me because I see my community as Carter, not so global as [city name] because everything I do is based around Carter so my community to me has always been a little smaller. (TI March 7th, 2016)

Even though she may not get the formal recognition she may deserve, her students continually discussed the impact she had on them and the knowledge they had gained from participating in the physical education program. For Mrs. Thompson that was the best recognition she could get. Knowing that what she was teaching was important and would be used by her students later in life was of the utmost importance to her and was one of the main goals of her program:

*PE is absolutely relevant and I think the kids know too...we talk about that a lot with the grade 9's too in their journal reflection and a lot of them will tell me I have more energy than I used to have, I feel better about myself I have more confidence in myself and I know they are going to be able to use it later in life and that's the point right. So that's massive that's huge what more could I ask for?
(Personal Conversation February 4th, 2016)*

Is Mrs. Thompson the main reason the physical education program at Carter is successful? Perhaps...and for many of the students in this study, the answer to that question is absolutely yes. However, according to Mrs. Thompson there are other factors within the program that could increase the chance that it may be successful in other buildings if the factors were replicated and implemented. A few of the factors that she attributed the success of her program were:

*If you set a good culture, a warm culture...a culture of movement, expectations, routines, develop relationships, get involved and be passionate and care about your students and content. You also need time. Time is such a precious thing to all of us and I have been in this building for 16 years, that means something.
(Personal Conversation March 2nd, 2016)*

Not only are the young women at Carter motivated to participate in all aspects of the physical education program they also continue to take what they have learned and apply it in their daily lives. I believe the key to this program is building a community that values movement and activity for everyone. The culture of the school and the role the physical education program plays in building that culture is also connected to the sustained engagement of young women in physical education. The data I collected gave me insight into the lived experiences of both the teacher and the students and clearly identified the factors that influence these young women's choice to engage in the program and stay active. In the following section, the factors that young women identify and attribute to sustaining their engagement in the physical education are explored in relation to their impact on their experiences within the program.

Emergent Themes

Throughout my observations, document analysis, and interviews I continually heard about and saw the culture that is lived daily by the members of Carter School. As I continued to gather different pieces of data I began to see that the school's culture permeated through each of the pieces I analyzed. The themes that emerged from the data were all linked to the active culture of the school and this culture greatly influenced the engagement of young women in the physical education program.

The process of data analysis was very difficult for me. There were many times throughout data collection and analysis when I felt that I was sinking into a deep, dark, abyss of information with no sign of light to lead me out. At these times I felt that my character was truly tested. I am of the mind and was raised to believe that things fit nicely into compartments, everything has a place, and often my actions and thoughts flow in a linear sequence. However, the research process has taught me that not everything can be neat and tidy, at times is chaotic, and often takes us new directions.

Initially, I developed and based my research questions and methodology in my proposal around the socio-ecological model (McLeroy et al., 1988). However, during the analysis of the information I collected it felt forced to try to impose this model on my findings and analyze my data based on the levels of influence of the model. Even though I crave things to fit and have a place, using the socio-ecological model did not feel authentic; I felt I was forcing data into predetermined categories. It was at this point that I really felt like I was sinking and was not sure

how to make sense of the data I collected. On that dark day, I met my co-supervisor, and as I shared my frustrations she reminded me that it was OK for data analysis to be messy. She likened it to having an abundance of coats laying on the floor and trying to find the correct hook to hang them on. I realized that while there may be enough hooks for all of the jackets on the floor, some of the jackets belonged on the same hook because in some way they were similar. In the same way the initial categories I had constructed, (my hooks), also started to merge and grow because of the similarities in the data in each of them. This discussion helped me think about the hooks in my own research and which coats belonged on each of them. This process took a long time for me and really made me think deeply on the data I had collected and how each of the pieces fit together. After the encounter with my supervisor I began to view my data as a puzzle, each piece on its own meant little, but as they came together they created a beautiful picture of the exemplary program I had observed. In the following section I will tell a story about the three hooks that helped me to organize all the information I had collected: a) sense of belonging; b) confidence and ability; and c) lessons learned.

Sense of Belonging: “Today I am going to be Iron-Man”

The first time I saw Ted walk into the gym, his face lit up. He ran over to grab a basketball and headed for the bleachers. He was different from the other students and had an extra helper to assist him in his classes. Mrs. Thompson immediately acknowledged him, asked how he felt that day, and how his week-end had been. She proceeded to ask him if he remembered what day it was, he gave her a smile and said; “Today I am going to be Iron-Man.” She then grabbed the ball from him and gently said, “Well then I guess you don’t need this.” I remembering thinking to myself, “I wonder how being Iron-man relates to the class?” More students started to filter into the gymnasium from the locker room and Mrs. Thompson took the time to smile and greet many of them while taking attendance. The grade 10 students sat down on the bleachers and awaited their instructions. I was amazed at how many of the students seemed excited for the day’s event. I began to wonder what was going to happen and when I looked at the whiteboard I saw the activity, the students were going to participate in a 30 minute run, hence the “Iron-man” comment. No moaning, no groaning, no complaining, I really could not believe what I was seeing. Students were chatting quietly with one another while putting

their hair up, tying their running shoes, and filling up their water bottles. I truly had to pinch myself, and looking back on my observation of this event that day my thoughts were:

I honestly don't know what is happening in this class. I feel like I am in the twilight zone. Kids are actually acting excited to be running 30 minutes but I'm not sure why. I don't hear any complaining and it seems like this is nothing out of the ordinary. (PJ – January 14th, 2016)

After attendance was taken Mrs. Thompson told the students to grab a mat so they could stretch out before the run. Students ran for their mats, sat down beside their friends, and began stretching. I walked around to hear the conversations and was surprised again that nobody was complaining or upset. Mrs. Thompson reminded the kids that the goal that day was for everyone to run 15 minutes without walking, she then added that if they really wanted to challenge themselves they could continue for the next fifteen minutes. She also provided an option for those students who wanted to stop after the first fifteen minutes to work out in the fitness center or stretch in the middle of the gym. After that she had all of the students stand in front of the school symbol, cover their hearts with their right hand and pledge:

I do solemnly swear to try my best in the 30 minute run today. I will pick a pace that I can handle without walking and I know that I can do this and even though it is not going to be easy I know that I have worked hard and I've been training for this all semester. I am physically and mentally prepared to take on this challenge. We are all in this together and I promise to be encouraging to others but will make sure that I focus solely on myself during the run and not on my friends. I will feel proud of myself when I complete the run. Go me, Go Carter. (Taken from Field Notes, January 14th, 2016)

I repeated the pledge alongside the students and immediately felt a strange sense of commitment to each of them and our task at hand. The pledge itself left me feeling encouraged and inspired me to not only try my best but to also encourage, empathize with, and support the students and staff around me. I had only been in the building twice prior to the run but those around me made me feel like I had been there forever. Many of the students gave me encouragement and advice. One student told me I should double knot my laces so I would not have to stop during the run and many others warned me that it might get hard but to just keep going. There were also a few students running through the group handing out high fives and cheering in order to get everyone pumped up and prepared for the run. To be honest it felt like I was at the starting line of my last half-marathon run. The only difference was at those runs I am with adults who are all engaged and chose to be there, yet here I was among high school students who were mandated to

participate in this run...but yet the feelings of encouragement and support were the same. Could it be that these students were actually participating in this because they wanted to?

As I crouched down to double knot my laces, the students lined up for the run. I could not help but search the crowd and look for “Iron-Man”. As I watched him stretching it surprised me to see how comfortable he acted in this space, actually how comfortable everyone looked in this space. They all seemed to fit into this class, this was why it seemed like it was no big deal to everyone, because they felt like they belonged. I asked the students about the run and they said they were used to running because they do it all the time in class. They also said they did not mind running with their classmates, both male and female, because everyone made each other feel comfortable. These feelings were expressed by many of the students in both focus group and individual interviews:

My friend, she is very shy. She doesn't even talk to people to even like talk to her friends it takes her awhile but, in gym, she always is more active and she talks to people and she's more talkative and I'm just like that's kinda not how she usually is but I think that it's a better way because she's actually sharing and I think it's because she knows it's a safe place for her and she knows that she belongs and no one will judge her. (FG 10-3-3)

Many of the participants also discussed the environment created in the gym and how it made them feel:

Like whether you're in intramurals or something like you're always welcome and everyone is always welcoming. (FG 10-10-2)

If it's another class most likely you wouldn't be talking to everybody because you're not interacting with other students but Mrs. Thompson makes sure everyone is friends and everyone feels comfortable. (FG. 11-1-6)

[Mrs. Thompson] doesn't want anyone to feel left out, she wants everyone to be together, she really wants to get everyone involved and she motivates everyone to participate. (FG 10-10-4)

I feel comfortable in gym class but that's like the only class I feel comfortable in. (FG 12-1-2)

The last comment sent my mind spinning because in a lot of the literature I reviewed, physical education classes are seen and described as places where many young women feel the most uncomfortable. I followed up with the young women who made that comment in an individual interview so I could ask her some more information about her statement. At that time she mentioned that she felt accepted in the class even though she was not an athlete. She described an environment not frequently associated with physical education:

I feel accepted because there are others that are not the fittest and aren't on sports teams and they are along with me and they are doing ok and so am I and we all have a good time. The teacher is very accepting and tries to keep you active even if you can't do everything. (SI 10-5-12)

Belonging is also built on strong relationships. In the physical education program at Carter it was apparent that both the teacher and students believed that developing and nurturing positive relationships were important in sustaining young women's engagement and participation in physical education. One young woman talked about how nice it was to have a period of time at the beginning of the semester to get to know her classmates:

I feel like just kinda with being with everyone for that initial time period just gets you to get know people and be more comfortable with them. (FG 10-2-3)

If you set a good culture [the girls] will be risk takers and by taking risks they usually realize they can do more than they thought and that's the key right there, you have to be able to build relationships with them [the girls] so they go, 'oh I trust her enough that I will follow where she's telling me to go' and I think that is huge. A warm culture, they have to know that you care about them and that doesn't mean that its peaches and cream. (TI March 7th, 2016)

In both of these examples, building relationships appears to increase the participants feeling of acceptance and likelihood of trying new activities in the physical education program.

Mrs. Thompson set the tone in her physical education class from day one. She made sure that students felt welcomed by acknowledging each of them and getting to know them on a personal level. Mrs. Thompson accomplished this through candid conversations, journaling, and by having students complete bucket lists (a list containing a number of experiences or achievements that a person hopes to have or accomplish during their lifetime) so she could get to know each of them better. She also made it very clear to the students that they would be working closely together, with a lot of different people, and recommended they get to know each other. One way she facilitated students getting to know one another was by continually having students work with a variety of partners, not just their immediate friends:

[Mrs. T] will split up your friendships so you partner with other people. (FG 11-1-5)

During my class observations I noticed that students did not have trouble pairing up with new individuals and often even with others that were not necessarily in their own circle of friends. I found this interesting because I often find in my own classes that students either gravitate to their friends or to students of similar skill level. When I asked the young women about this in the

focus groups they admitted that they often do pair up with their friends but Mrs. Thompson made them pair up with a variety of their classmates during the first month of class which made them feel more comfortable when choosing new partners. The comments below are only three of many that illustrate the idea that numerous girls felt the teacher was fair and that they were valued based on their own capabilities:

You feel comfortable with being a partner with anybody in the class and you can engage and you can just be comfortable with being friends and being partners with everybody because everybody has to do the same thing. (FG 10-2-1)

I feel like I am not being judged because you always have somebody at the same fitness level as you because everybody has a different fitness level and everybody is just kind of everywhere. (FG 10-3-8)

Mrs. Thompson expects the same from everyone but sometimes she expects more of the athletes in their areas like if you are a basketball player she expects more from you in that area then from someone who has never embraced that sport, she starts with where you are and tries to get you better. (SI 10-5-14)

Mrs. Thompson ensured that her students respected and were accepting of one another to help each of her students feel safe in the program. She also made sure that everyone was participating in the activity and praised her students for the effort they put in. Mrs. Thompson modeled the behaviours she expected from her students; she engaged in the activities, treated others with respect, corrected inappropriate behaviours in a sensitive manner, never berated or embarrassed participants, and always came to class with a positive attitude and encouraging words.

The young women involved in the physical education program reported feeling comfortable with not only Mrs. Thompson but also within a group of their peers, both male and female. In my observations I noted, on numerous occasions, instances where students were encouraging and helping one another to complete difficult tasks. While participating in the 30 minute challenge run, one young man who was obviously a very good runner would high five or tell people they were doing a great job every time he passed someone. His actions had a positive effect on the young women in the coeducational class:

I can do long distance but I can do it better when people that are long distance runners will run by and say like oh you're doing good, keep going, and stuff. Like [Brad], he did that all run every time he passed you he was like oh you're doing good, you can do this, and I'm a sprinter so it's harder for me to do long distance but he made it easier. (FG 10-2-2)

I also noticed that students gave each other positive feedback during drills and games and not once did I hear a negative comment being made between classmates. A young woman who had transferred from another school talked about the differences she experienced in Carter's physical education program:

I like phys-ed at Carter more because you don't get picked on if you aren't good at something like for example I am bad at like basketball but I wasn't picked on or teased because I am bad at it um and like at my old school I was always bullied like always picked on because I was terrible and stuff and I was shy but here you feel comfortable. (FG 12-1-2)

Many more comments from the participants were made regarding the importance of having positive peer relationships, and in most cases the young women acknowledged that being accepted by their peers increased their likelihood to engage in the physical education program.

During my observations I made several notes on the interactions between Mrs. Thompson and her students. Looking back through these remarks I continually saw that on several occasions I noted that Mrs. Thompson had an easy-going demeanor with her students and always carried herself in a professional manner. She liked to joke around and interact with each of her students and enjoyed being engaged in the activities with them. Her disposition and the way she included all of her students in her banter seemed to make them feel like they belonged and were welcome:

I think it is important to talk to the kids about other things that are totally irrelevant to what you are doing, like what are other things they do [the student does] in their life or what they did on the weekend [because] then kids know you care about them. (TI, March 7th, 2016)

Mrs. Thompson also recognized the importance of not only building relationships with her students but following through with them over their four years at Carter. She involved herself in activities in the program and participated alongside her students. Mrs. Thompson also made it her mission to try to talk to as many of the students in the school as possible. She facilitated this by leaving the gymnasium, on her breaks, to walk through the hallways to meet and greet many of the students who were not enrolled in her classes at the time. I could see how much she valued interacting with all the students at Carter and her need to let them know she cared:

I try to take the relationship that I have built with that kid and carry it out throughout their whole high school career. So taking the time to, every time that I see them, talk to them you know I really value my relationships with kids cause if I don't have a positive

relationship with kids it kind of makes for a hard day right and I was talking about how my day is always so busy but I like all my kids so that's a really cool thing.
(TI March 7th, 2016)

This statement had a real impact on me at this point in my research. Up until this moment in time all of my observations and discussion had focused on factors that made students feel comfortable, safe, and accepted in the physical education program and what Mrs. Thompson did to make sure this happened for the students benefit. However, in speaking with Mrs. Thompson it is now clear that she believes that it is in everyone's best interest to build positive relationships to improve their lives, including her own. This conversation also made me reflect on my own teaching experiences and how getting to know my students impacts me.

As a young teacher I spent hours prepping and planning my lessons to make sure I knew my subject area, could answer questions, and make my lesson engaging for students. There were days I experienced success and days that I faltered. Some days I felt I had the best job in the world and others the worst. I now wonder, if I had spent the same amount of time building relationships with my students: Would the lessons have gone better? Would the students have engaged more? Would I have felt more success as a teacher? From what I observed of Mrs. Thompson's program I believe the answer to all of those questions would have been yes!

Although building relationships between teachers, students, and peers can play an integral role in establishing a sense of belonging, so too can attachment. Attachment to school has been identified as a basis to provide students with confidence. A variety of factors which contribute to attachment to school include feelings of importance, appreciation for the value and relevancy of education, and a feeling of belonging to the school community (Dworkin, 1987). I think for students to feel like they belong they have to believe in the importance of a shared purpose and identify with the goals and philosophy of the program and what is being learned. In the past few years, the division I teach in (Saskatoon Public School Division-SPSD) has provided professional development for teachers related to increasing the engagement of students within our schools. One area that is proven to have a positive effect on increased engagement is the idea of students making attachments in the school. According to the SPSPD Curriculum Renewal Document, "Belonging is not just about relationships among people but also *to* things, ideas and actions" (2010, p. 2). In Carter's physical education program the young women often discussed their commitment to being active and the impact the program had on their activity levels and lifestyle. I believe these actions increased the young women's attachment to the

physical education program which in turn gave them a sense that they belonged and were connected to the program. All of the young women now had a shared purpose with those around them, to be active. They had committed to work toward maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

I see this connection as similar to my own commitment to running. When I was younger I joined a variety of running groups and twice a week we would all get together and go for a run. Rain or shine, sleet or snow, I would always be there. I would go because I felt committed to a shared purpose and goal and wanted to encourage those around me, much like the young women in this program. I am now quite certain that being committed to a shared goal has helped develop a sense of belonging amongst the young women in this program much as it did for me. In many ways the people in my running group were very different. We were different in age, pace, and running abilities; yet, we all came together each week because we wanted to get better and being with others, even though we were different, made that goal more likely to happen. Perhaps then, having a shared goal and feeling like you are part of a group plays a role in helping the young women in this physical education program feel like they belong and want to participate.

In the two and a half months I was at Carter I observed students participating in the physical education program and working hard to stay committed to being active. A lot of the students shared that they enjoyed being active and connecting with their peers in class. Many of the young women also commented that they felt it was important to help others get active and stay positive:

We do the 12 minute fitness test and everyone is like cheering everyone on to try to improve and do their best. (FG 10-3-7)

My mom is working on losing weight and so I want to help her and encourage her and it seems like from watching her if she has someone to work out with it's good for her. (FG 9-7-4)

The comment below also shows the reciprocal relationship between peers and the help that they give and receive from one another:

I think it is also my peers in this class that make me be feel really comfortable because I have like friends and we all just kind of push each other like in our runs we will have like a partner and we will all say like encouraging things like keep going and stuff like that. (SI 10-6-15)

As stated earlier, Mrs. Thompson treated her students fairly whether they were boys or girls, skilled or non-skilled, athletic or non-athletic. I feel this also added to the less skilled students' comfort level and sense of belonging:

Mrs. Thompson makes us do like, she doesn't say like oh girls you go do it this way and guys you go do it this way she's like ok everybody do it so it's good, it's fair. (FG 10-2-2)

She's not like some gym teachers who only care about the football players or the volleyball players. She doesn't just care about them because they play sports she actually cares about everyone. She doesn't just pay attention to specific students and then if another student isn't doing anything she doesn't just leave them, she yells at them too." (FG 10-10-1)

[Mrs. Thompson] treats everybody as equal, which it always should be but you know like she will talk to everybody in the hallways and be like, 'Hi how are you?'. (SI 10-6-21)

Even though Mrs. Thompson worked very hard to provide an atmosphere where everyone felt like they belonged, a few of the young women discussed the need for more "girls only" weight room time because they did not like working out in front of the boys. In my observations at Carter, I did find that the weight room was usually dominated by male students during noon hours and after school. In both of the co-ed grade 10 classes I also felt that the boys took control in most game situations. However, Mrs. Thompson would often give the young women a role in the activity that required them to make ball contact, or be involved in the game rather than shrink to the sidelines. I also felt that Mrs. Thompson designed the co-ed classes around individual movement activities to increase the likelihood that all students would feel comfortable and participate. In other instances, Mrs. Thompson provided the class with more than one activity option to choose from to increase students' interests and the involvement of young women. The accounts below discuss these barriers, some of which were based on previous experiences the young women had in coeducational classes:

Like in elementary school like because we relied on the boys for most things and we just let them take over you know what I mean. So being able to just really focus on yourself was really nice and definitely less intimidating. (FG 9-4-5)

I think just being in [high school in] an All Girls PE class compared to one with boys or something just makes me more confident because girls aren't judging you on your physical fitness when you are doing work-outs and stuff. (FG 11-5-4)

The boys always just thought we needed help, yeah it would be boys vs. boys and girls vs. girls and then the boys would always come over and think we needed their help but we didn't want their help. (FG 9-8-2)

When the boys are around I feel like we have to meet up to the guys expectations.

(FG 11-6-5)

I think it would be cool if there was a special time where just the girls could use the weight room because not a lot of girls go to the weight room due to the guys in there.

(FG 11-6-5)

It was also clear that Mrs. Thompson tried to alleviate some of these concerns by creating a feeling of equality amongst the students and providing special opportunities for young women. An ‘All Girls’ and segregated grade nine course were in place in the course selection guide and a Gym Blast was held once a year at noon for girls only:

We also have a girl blast once a year and we usually do that in May and our goal is to get a hundred girls into the gym at noon hour doing Zumba and that’s fun.

(TI March 7th, 2016)

I also witnessed Mrs. Thompson taking the time to discuss the importance of feeling confident in front of the boys, especially in physical education. Students in the program also appreciated when Mrs. Thompson’s discussed gender differences and took what she said to heart:

I think Mrs. Thompson really thinks it’s important that we are segregated for at least a year so that we can definitely make sure that we can work out in front of anyone. Like we shouldn’t be afraid of working out in front of anyone that we should feel comfortable around people while we are working out and we should be able to focus, keep focused on ourselves whether there’s boys or not we shouldn’t really like by after high school we shouldn’t really have to worry about feeling self-conscious. (FG 9-4-5)

When the young women felt comfortable and confident it also increased their engagement levels. Their engagement was evident in their desire to attend class, participate in the activities, try to strive for improvement, and experience the delight of being active in a social environment with their peers. Through the analysis of observations, conversations, and interviews it is evident that the development of a positive environment and positive relationships is crucial in helping students feel valued, affirmed, and cared for. The physical education program that I observed at Carter High School created a positive environment where young women felt they belonged, were valued, and were not being judged by the teacher or their peers based on their own abilities and skill levels. These factors are important components to consider when developing a space where students can feel they “fit in” and impact young women’s motivation to engage in physical education and activity.

Confidence & Ability

This spring my son Kipton received a gymnastics report card. The document was given to us a few weeks before his final lesson and outlined the skills that he had mastered and those that he still needed to work on in order to move on to the next level. I went through the report card with him and we talked about the skills he would have to practice, one of which was the teddy bear stand. The next week after arriving home from his gymnastics class I followed him into the house and watched him amble up the staircase. I proceeded into the kitchen and began to make supper. Thirty minutes passed and there was no sign of my son coming down the stairs for a snack, a hug, or to colour a picture – which were all usually part of his daily routine. My curiosity got the best of me so I went upstairs and found a red faced little boy smiling ear to ear. I asked him what he had been doing and he smiled shyly and said he had something to show me. He got down on the ground and leaned up against our couch and did a teddy bear stand. I cheered and clapped and gave him a big hug and he looked at me with puzzled eyes and said, “Mom why are you so happy, that’s not really a teddy bear stand.” I opened my mouth to protest but he slipped his finger over it and smiled again. He then moved into the middle of the room, started muttering something quietly to himself, and proceeded to do another teddy bear stand, this time without any support. He did it! I jumped off the couch, picked him up, and swung him around. When I put him down he pointedly looked at me and said, “Now that was worth cheering for.” I smiled at him and told him what a great job he did and praised him for how much he had practiced. Then I asked him what he was saying to himself before he tried the teddy bear stand. He looked at me as if I should know the answer and said, “I think I can, I think I can.”

Potency means “to feel able”. Such a feeling comes in having influence over one’s learning and having a strong sense of self-efficacy or belief in one’s own abilities (SPSD Curriculum Renewal Document, Our Stories, 2010). Reflecting on the day my son learned the teddy bear stand, my experiences teaching and coaching, and the work I have now done in this research, I understand that improving one’s skills positively impacts confidence. In this study, many of the young women discussed the need to feel competent in their ability to learn and execute skills correctly in order to feel confident participating in the activities in physical education. They remarked that feeling skilled increased their confidence in a physical activity setting and their likelihood to participate in the physical education program. From the data I

collected it seems that perceived competence is an important factor affecting young women's enjoyment of their experiences in physical education and increased their motivation to participate. At Carter school many of the young women I spoke with reported that: practicing skills in a safe, enjoyable, environment; accomplishing their goals; and mastering skills were three of the main reasons their confidence level increased.

I Think I Can

As an adult, I continue to be active and participate in activities I enjoy, and at which I am skilled. The same holds true for the participants in this study. However, the young women also mentioned that in order for them to feel confident in their skills and abilities; they needed a safe place to practice in order to improve on the skills they had or to develop the skills they were learning. Often our emotional states, physical reactions, and stress levels can impact how we feel about our personal abilities in any particular situation. For example, if one's stress level is high when speaking in front of an audience, one usually does not seek out those types of opportunities. For this reason, little experience or practice is gained in speaking in front of audiences thus decreasing one's confidence in those sorts of situations. Similarly, the young women in this study relayed that they had to "like" (enjoy, feel safe, be comfortable) the space that was established in order for them to seek out opportunities to practice new skills.

At Carter school the young women participating in the physical education program seemed to enjoy the activities they engaged in and the skills they were learning. In many cases not getting pumped up to try new things, do one's best, or put extra effort in was almost impossible because Mrs. Thompson was always encouraging the students to do their best, challenging them to push a little harder, and cheering them on to improve their skills. Through social persuasion, Mrs. Thompson, often had her students believing they could do something before they even tried:

I didn't realize I could motivate kids as well as I can until about my seventh year of teaching. That's when I realized how powerful I could be if I used my motivation techniques in the right way. So I have tried to build that into my teaching day after day. It's exhausting, it's not easy to do but I know that it's a gift I have been given so I try to pass it on through my teaching on a daily basis and it really gets the students engaged. (TI March 7th, 2016)

This encouragement seemed to increase the participants' confidence and prompted them to give their best effort in trying to acquire new skills. A couple of young women discussed the effect of Mrs. Thompson's encouragement on the way they viewed their own physical abilities:

[I liked] how much she challenged us because um when we first started like the first day I thought oh god this is going to be so intense like I am so nervous for all of this but um she really like gets you to push yourself and like go out of your comfort zone and I really enjoyed that I ended up really enjoying it and getting better at things I didn't think I would. (FG 9-4-5)

I agree, when uh she challenges us and since we did the thirty minute run I never thought that I could do that but I did she would build us up to that. (FG 9-4-4)

Mrs. Thompson created a safe and comfortable environment for her students to practice skills. In both segregated and co-ed classes students were often given the choice to separate into different groups based on their perceived ability. These groupings were made so the students could gain confidence and improve their skill level in a comfortable setting with others who had similar ability. Many of the young women talked about how much they enjoyed working with other students who they perceived as having comparable competence. In addition, they felt motivated to continue to practice if they saw their similar skilled partner was successful in acquiring the skill.

There were also times in the co-ed classes when students were separated by gender to increase participation amongst the female students. Some of the participants in the study admitted feeling more judged when boys were around and in a few accounts they felt inadequate when compared to the boys. Many of the young women also commented that in their past experiences in coeducational classes, the boys often tried to take over or make the girls feel less competent. Mrs. Thompson explained that she often separated the boys and girls to provide a safe environment for the female students to practice the skills being learned. She grouped the students this way to decrease stress levels and allow for a feeling of comfort for the young women due to real or perceived differences in ability with their male classmates. From my observations, this strategy of grouping by gender, seemed to increase the young women's confidence to participate and practice the skills in class. One young woman discussed the importance of having time to practice in order to feel confident to play the game with her peers, both male and female:

Like when we did flag football we started off with just guys and girls separate so we got comfortable with like punting the ball and doing all the skills but then she mixed us all together so that made me more confident because I knew how to do it. (FG 10-2-1)

At other times Mrs. Thompson paired students up who were of differing abilities (boys with boys and girls with girls) so the skilled student could help the less skilled student practice and learn the skill. Although the students were of varying skill levels the young women in the physical education program stated that they appreciated learning skills from the higher skilled partners one on one:

If somebody is not good at basketball she'll put them with someone who is good at basketball so that they can help them out and they can feel like oh I have someone helping me and not just like playing basketball and showing off. (FG 11-1-4)

In a number of interviews the young women also mentioned they appreciated their teacher's ability to make the teams fair by mixing up the varying skill levels of the students during game play:

She makes sure teams are even. She evens out the teams so it's not like one team doesn't really know what's going on. (FG 11-1-8)

On one occasion, I was asked to divide the students up into teams during a game of long ball as Mrs. Thompson had been called away to answer a phone call. Not knowing the students, their strengths, or their skill level made the task very difficult. Once the teams were divided a few of the students commented that one of the teams was stacked. Luckily, Mrs. Thompson arrived just in time, switched two players from each team, and once again the world was at peace and the teams were even.

The participants in this study made it clear that if they felt competent at specific skills they were more likely to engage in the activities included in the physical education program at Carter. In the classes I observed, students were given ample opportunity to practice specific skills within a unit while Mrs. Thompson gave them immediate feedback on how they were doing or how to improve. On numerous occasions she modeled the skills and the students would then practice them. The skills were continually practiced until the students felt confident or the skill was mastered and could be repeated successfully in various situations such as games or more complex based drills.

Many of the young women also discussed the importance of individuality and being able to practice skills at their own pace and at their own level. In Mrs. Thompson's classes both genders spent a great deal of their activity time focusing on their own fitness or individual skill

development. This time allowed many of the students an opportunity to acquire and master new skills, which increased their engagement and motivation to participate in physical activity. In my own reflections and observations I saw many of the young women eagerly participate in activities they thought they were skilled in or thought they could get better at. On one occasion two young women who were clearly skilled in badminton quickly changed out and started setting up the nets so that they could get started with a game. Other participants also discussed that if they were good at the skills that they had acquired they felt confident in engaging in those activities:

I'm really good at like canoeing and cross-country skiing so I like it when we do those activities. (FG 12-6-1)

I like doing activities that you like to do because you know you are good at them. (FG 9-9-6)

As stated earlier, Mrs. Thompson acknowledged and accounted for the varying skill and fitness levels of her students. She used a student-centered approach to establish a starting point for each student to individualize the learning based on their ability. This personal attention empowered students and made them feel that they were not being judged or compared to others. Mrs. Thompson ensured that all students participated in the same activities and taught them how to modify the skills and activities based on their individual ability.

While observing a grade 10 class I saw one young woman start doing push-ups from her toes. After she had completed 17 toe push-ups, she dropped onto her knees and completed 22 more. When I asked her about the modification she explained that Mrs. Thompson always taught them how to make specific exercises and skills harder and easier. She also expressed that she felt good about having alternatives she could use when she was too tired to continue the “regular” way but still had enough energy to keep going with a modification. It was clear that learning the modifications and new skills, increased the student’s confidence to engage in the activity and extended their participation. Another student shared similar thoughts on learning how to make adjustments based on her individual needs:

I like the weight room and I like that we are all doing the same things but we have choices we can make [the exercises/skills] harder or easier based on what we can do. (FG 10-10-4)

The students also understood that they were not all of equal ability but mentioned that Mrs. Thompson knew each student’s limits and always told them to focus on themselves rather than

their neighbor. Many of the young women in the class appreciated being able to concentrate on what they were capable of rather than being compared to the skills of others:

[Mrs. T] lets you, like even when we are doing our circuit, she lets you like go at your own pace she doesn't expect you and you don't have to feel like you have to keep up with everyone else. (FG 9-13-4)

In addition to feeling they had the opportunity to acquire skills at their own pace, many of the young women commented that it was also important to them that they were not judged on how good they were at the skills they practiced, nor how many exercises they could do. Many of the participants' commented that in Mrs. Thompson's class it did not matter if you were skilled or not because she did not judge you on your skill level, but rather on your level of participation. I found this comment interesting and asked these young women a little more about how that made them feel. They responded almost in chorus that not being judged on their skill level took pressure off of them and made them feel more accepted and comfortable in the class.

Throughout my research and in discussion with the Mrs. Thompson, she mentioned that her students were never assessed based on set standards but rather on the goals they set for themselves, their improvement, the curricular outcomes, and their participation in the class.

Many of the young women also commented on this aspect of the class:

That's another thing. You don't feel judged because you don't get marked on how well you do you just get marked on how hard you tried to improve and how much effort you put into it. (FG 10-3-2)

Although the participants talked about not being judged or marked based on their skill acquisition they made it very clear that they still worked hard to learn new skills and improve. A few of the young women in the focus groups talked about specific sport and movement skills they had acquired over the semester and how it made them feel more confident in their ability to participate in activities that required those skills. An example of this thinking can be seen in the following statements:

I think I learned a lot about basketball so I am good at basketball, I am good at volleyball too. (FG 9-8-6)

When she was teaching us about the sports she um, you definitely understood um like the sport and you like got to learn about it if haven't played volleyball or football or basketball before, you know what I mean she taught skills and rules and when I learned them I felt I could participate. (FG 9-4-5)

Many of the participants also discussed the acquisition of new health (e.g. muscular strength and endurance) and skill related fitness components (e.g. agility and speed) and stated

they felt they had made gains in their fitness levels. In every focus group an improvement in strength and running ability was discussed. One particular student I observed and talked to comes to mind when reflecting on the gains the participants stated they had made on their fitness levels. This young woman openly discussed her weight problem and the difficulties she had engaging in any type of physical activity. As the class has a large fitness component I was not exactly sure how this student would feel about participating in the activities. Much to my surprise, on the very first run day she ran one length of the gym, walked the sideline, and then ran the length of the gym again. She continued this pattern for the entire eight minutes. By the fourth week of my observation she could run three quarters of a lap before walking one sideline and would repeat that sequence for the entire nine minutes. When I congratulated her on how much better she was she smiled and said that she had acquired a new skill, learning how to pace herself, and said she could not wait until she could run an entire lap without walking.

During my time at Carter I saw many of the young women acquire new skills in many different units of instruction. While these skills were acquired through different activities they all had one thing in common; the effect they had on the participants. It was clear to me that the students felt more confident engaging in activities once they had acquired the skills necessary to participate. In one situation I had a chance to introduce a new game to them and automatically a few of them were a little apprehensive about playing the game. Before I started explaining the rules of the game I told the students that we were going to warm up first. I had them join a partner and grab one soccer ball. I then asked the students to kick the ball back and forth under control. For the most part this went well and most of the pairs were able to continuously keep their ball in motion. I then asked the students to roll the ball to their partner and then had their partner kick the ball back to them. Every participant was successful at this task. After they had warmed-up for a few minutes, they put their balls away and I sat them down to explain the new game.

Before I started my explanation I asked the participants if they felt confident kicking the ball when it was rolled to them. Every student immediately put their hand up. I then asked how many of them were confident they could run the width of the gymnasium, again 100% approval from each of the students. When I stated that these were the two hardest skills needed to play the new game I immediately saw smiles appear on the students' faces, felt a shift in the atmosphere from nervousness to excitement, and once the rules of the game were explained, all of the young

women eagerly began to participate. It is truly a miracle how feeling competent in the skills required for an activity can increase students' confidence, make them feel successful, and increase their motivation to participate and try new things. Mrs. Thompson also recognized the importance of helping the students in Carter's physical education program feel confident. She talked about the different types of activities she includes, the skills she teaches, and the atmosphere she attempts to create to make the students feel successful and proud. She often used fitness components and health related outcomes from the curriculum as a vehicle for individualizing students' opportunities for success:

I think that if I can set them up to succeed then I think that is huge. That would be why we talk about 'pick a pace you can handle without walking' cause we can succeed at that, it doesn't have to be a certain pace. We add a minute on every two weeks so that there is gradual intensity. Any time that girls can feel that they have accomplished something they feel good about themselves. So I think everything I try to do is based around how I can make them feel successful. (TI March 7th, 2016)

I also experienced the joy of watching some of the young women experience success. During one class, the participants were working on their balance and agility and one young woman continued to try to use a bosu ball to complete a squat. By the end of her third try she had mastered her balance and at the end of the first minute she had completed two full squats while balancing on the ball. I could tell from the smile on her face that she was pleased with herself. An even better sign that her confidence level had risen was that during the next minute she felt she was good enough at the skill to help her friend try to master it as well.

Feeling competent through the acquisition of learned skills and feeling successful in completing something challenging were two factors the young women in this study associated to increasing their confidence. The accounts below reflect these findings and bring insight from the experiences of the participants:

Even if you were like struggling like with a certain run in the week or say if you were struggling with the thirteen minute run cause you were getting your fitness a little bit more challenged or whatever, the picture would almost like motivate you to get, to not walk in the runs to keep your pace up cause once you take that picture you feel good about it and then she posts it up on the wall and then you look at it and everybody is there and then you feel accomplished. (FG 9-4-5)

If you run the whole thing you get a picture of your group and it's just something to feel good about and be recognized like look at me I can run like 12 minutes every three times a week like that's pretty awesome and they do the same thing for the thirty minute run. (FG 11-5-7)

Furthermore, many of the young women also credited the physical education program at Carter for pushing their boundaries and providing them with opportunities to test their limits and feel successful and proud of what they could accomplish even when they didn't think that they were capable of doing it:

Like in grade nine you have a chance to do a thirty minute challenger run and so many people thought they couldn't do it and they did it. (FG 9-7-2)

Like for example last year there were a lot of things that she told us to do that I didn't think that I could do. Of course I tried them and failed at most of them but I tried again and then I got better and like this year when we did push-ups I got much more than I thought I would because of how much we did last year. (FG 9-7-4)

While you're running you kind of want to give up but you don't because you like realize that you have already gone so far in it and you kind of feel gross afterward but you also feel proud of yourself like cause you think, I actually did that, I didn't think that I could do that. (FG 9-7-1)

I also witnessed many young women smiling and high fiving one another after their challenger runs. It was evident they were proud of their accomplishment and when I asked them how they felt they told me they were delighted because they could complete a task that seemed impossible at the beginning of the year. I knew how they felt because I had experienced the same feeling and wrote about it in my own personal journal:

At the start of the class today it seemed the girls were both excited and nervous for the run. I was too, as I promised them I would run with them and I was hoping I would be able to complete it! When we finished the run we all gathered under the school logo and had our picture taken to signify that we had made it through the run without walking! The girls were smiling, chatting, laughing, and walking a little taller as they headed for the change rooms. It's amazing to me how good you feel when you accomplish something that isn't easy. I can see firsthand how proud the girls were of their accomplishment and I felt it too. I'm sure this will boost their confidence and maybe even motivate them to keep being active. (PJ January 14th, 2016)

"I think or feel I can do this" is an important expression I heard from the young women in this study and is tied to their motivation to engage in physical education activities. Likewise, the young women attributed their resistance to participating in activities or joining future physical education classes to the fact that they did not feel skilled in physical education or a physical activity setting. The participants also expressed that a lack in confidence levels kept them from joining teams or working out on their own outside of class. Many young women expressed that before taking part in the physical education program at Carter they lacked the physical stamina to participate and that is why they did not engage in activities.

In one of the focus group interviews a young women talked about how difficult physical education had been for her in the past and how she was only taking the class now because she needed a credit to graduate. However, in the same breath she talked about how being involved in Carter's physical education program made her feel a little different about being active:

I did it because I needed the credit and my friend is in it and it got me out of another class that I didn't want to take. But then I kind of liked being active, plus I like being active and don't want to sit like a couch potato all day cause your sitting in a desk all day long during school like for every class and then you go to gym and you get to run around and you get to be active and you're not just sitting on your butt for an hour which is nice. (FG 12-1-2)

During observations I saw the same young women consistently take part in all of the activities and even choose to do the challenger run at the end of the semester. She completed the 30 minute run without walking and I saw her smiling and high-fiving many of her classmates that day. As the interview progressed I asked her about what I had seen in my previous observations and she commented that:

I've never been good at sports and I have asthma too so I'm not good at anything so I didn't participate [in previous physical education classes]. When I finished the 30 minute run I realized that I was good at running but everything else I just feel like I am not very strong at or anything. (FG 12-1-2)

This quote spoke to me because it emphasized how feeling successful, even if it is only at one skill, can increase the confidence levels of young women and the possibility that they will continue to participate in a physical activity setting.

From the data that I collected and analyzed it is apparent that due to the physical education program at Carter the young women felt proud of their accomplishments, experienced success, and are seemingly more inclined to continue engaging in physical activity. Carter's physical education program enabled the participants to challenge themselves, engage in new activities, and strive to improve and reach their goals, all of which were factors they credited to increasing their confidence.

Are we Literate?

Physical literacy is defined as “the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life” (The International Physical Literacy Association, 2014). All four of these interconnected elements are included in the physical education program at Carter and are

unmistakably linked to the satisfaction and engagement of young women in Carter high schools physical education program. As physical educators we strive to develop physically literate students so they can move confidently and with control in a wide variety of activities. I believe the focus on the development of fundamental motor skills is the foundation for developing physically literate students. Mrs. Thompson also recognized the need for her students to acquire skills to increase their physical literacy and contributed feeling competent to an increase in young women's confidence levels and participation in a physical activity setting:

Once girls gain confidence they will try new things and that's huge. They will try new things that they didn't think they were going to try before like the 30 minute run is a big one. I mean that is huge when they say oh my god I ran it, and every single one of them will say that is the highlight of their PE class, because they think: I didn't think I could do that but I can. (TI March, 7th, 2016)

The young women also believed that feeling competent increased their motivation to engage in other forms of physical activities and events in both their present physical education program and community. The importance of feeling competent was key to increasing the participants' confidence:

After I did the 30 minute run I felt like I could do anything, now I run for 15 minutes and it doesn't seem bad at all now I can just go for a run. (SI 10-3-9)

[After you learn a skill] you actually have more confidence when you're like walking outside you're not like other people who are kinda like, you know, walk and act as if there's no meaning in life so being more confident now I am actually putting more power and emphasis on what I feel. (FG 9-4-1)

I believe the acquisition of new skills is a key factor in engaging students in physical education and increasing young women's confidence levels. I found that many of the young women in this physical education program were more than willing to learn new skills, accepted challenges, and were eager to try new activities. I am certain that this involvement and eagerness to participate displays both student engagement and increased confidence levels amongst the participants. It was also evident that the girls felt that they had acquired these skills through their physical education program.

On numerous occasions I heard the young women make connections between feeling skilled and confident and engaging in physical activity after school hours. In many cases they discussed the activities they participated in outside of school and how the physical education program at Carter helped them prepare for those activities:

So if you're in gym and you're staying in shape then you can get through you're entire dance without laying on the floor dying, like tapping for four and half minutes and then you're just done, but if you're running in gym everyday then you're like yeah that's ok I got this. (FG 10-10-1)

I would say that it gets me ready for, like I play baseball, so I'd say that it gets me ready before the season starts like with the running. Like we just started running and the 8 minutes [in PE class] was hard for me cause I haven't run since ball but when we run up to the 15 minutes it helps me like run around the bases. (FG 9-7-3)

These quotes highlight the young women's motivation and confidence to participate in activities outside of school and the connection they made to what they are practicing or learning in Carter's physical education program. The actions of these students illustrate how the four elements of physical literacy interconnect and play a role in shaping students' beliefs and values surrounding physical education and activity.

Goal setting also played a role in the participant's opportunity to feel competent, motivated, knowledgeable, and responsible for their own participation and improvement in their ability. Once again thinking back to my own school division's curriculum renewal documents it was stressed that "students must have a sense that if they act, and act strategically, they can accomplish goals" (Johnston, 2004, p.29). Goal setting was implemented in many of the classes that I observed and carried out for the duration of the semester. First, the young women were asked to identify a component of fitness they felt they needed to improve; next, they had to set goals and make a plan that they could follow; and finally, they had to follow through. In many of the focus group interviews the young women talked about setting their goals, striving to achieve them, and the success they felt when they did:

We all set goals in our personal wellness plans. We all work on them together, well I mean just at the same time. We have different goals but we all do it at the same time to try to get better. (FG 10-2-1)

When we make our goals she always told us not to compare ourselves to someone else in the class, we are supposed to do it at our own pace and at our own time but like from the past we were always being pushed to be the best in the class, here it's more relaxed so it's better for me. (FG 9-7-5)

Other young women also shared their thoughts of feeling confident because they had set and improved upon their goals:

You get to see how much you have improved and then like doing the crunches and push-ups on Tuesdays and Thursday really helps, you can see how much you've made progress so that's cool. (FG 10-3-7)

Everyone sets their own goals then we try to improve them. I like when we are all working at our goals even though they are different we are trying to improve.
(FG 11-6-3)

It shows you just how much your body can do if you put your mind towards it.
(FG 10-3-3)

I like just seeing the results. You can definitely see like results by the end of the semester.
(FG 11-5-4)

Setting individual goals and tracking personal goals was a common occurrence. Mrs. Thompson recognized the importance of setting goals and the role it plays in improving young women's self-confidence and physical literacy when the goals can be attained:

I ask them to write about how their body is feeling and they say, 'It's stiff and sore but it's OK because I am meeting my goals.' We talk about that [goal attainment] a lot with the grade nines in their journal reflection and a lot of them will tell me that they have more energy than they used to have, that they feel better about themselves, and that they have more confidence, so that's massive...what more could I ask for?
(TI March 7th, 2016)

While at Carter, I observed students bringing duo-tangs to class to record and document their goals and the headway they had made. Many young women also made the comment that even though they never thought they could do the run, they did, and setting goals helped them build up to it. Another girl from the same focus group commented that building up for the continuous runs was one of her main goals, because if she did it then she would get into the picture as long as she did not walk, and that made her feel awesome.

The participants in this study made it very clear that if they felt competent they were more likely to engage in physical activity in and out of school. Evidently, Carter's physical education program played a role in increasing the confidence levels of the young women by providing them with opportunities to engage in activities to increase their physical literacy.

Lessons Learned ~ Today and Tomorrow

Relax close your eyes. Take some deep breaths in and out and focus only on yourself. Feel your body relaxing and all the stress leaving. Now try to think about and answer these questions in your head. Name the five wealthiest people in the world, name the last three Heisman trophy winners, name the last two Miss Canada winners, name one winner of a Noble or Pulitzer Prize, name the winner of the last three World Series. The point – none of us remember the headliners of yesterday. The names of the people that won these awards are not second rate achievers, they are the best in their fields. But the applause dies, awards tarnish, and achievements are forgotten. Accolades and certificates are often buried with their owners. Now here is another series of questions that I want you to try to think about and answer in your head. Think of a few

teachers who have aided in your journey thus far in school, name three friends who have helped you through a difficult time, name three people who have taught you something worth remembering, think of a few people who have made you feel appreciated and special, think of three people you enjoy spending time with, think of at least two people that you would consider to be a hero and their story has inspired you. My guess is the second set of questions were much easier for you to answer. The lesson: the people who make the difference in your life are not the ones with the most credentials, the most money, or the most awards. The people who make a difference in your life are the ones that care about you. How do you want to be remembered? What is the legacy that you are living/leaving behind at Carter based on the choices you make on a daily basis? Is the legacy you are leaving behind the one that you will be proud to be remembered for?

The old adages of “do unto others as you would have them do unto you” and “if you do not have anything nice to say do not say anything at all” come to mind when I think about Carter’s physical education program. There are many other passages I could add that would also paint a picture of the lessons that are woven into the teachings of Mrs. Thompson and the standards she holds her students to. The knowledge students attain from the subject matter being taught, the lessons students learn when they first enter her classroom and get to know the expectations, rules, and regulations, and the importance of using what they have learned to increase their understanding of their own identity, values, and beliefs are all discussed in this theme.

Subject Matters

The “SPA” excerpt is one example of the lessons learned in Carter’s physical education program. Mrs. Thompson strongly believes it is important for her students to learn and use the lessons they learn, today and tomorrow. She incorporated this aspect into her classes’ weekly routine by including SPA time. Every Friday she included 20 minutes of relaxation time as well as an opportunity for students to work on their personal wellness plans. During this time, the students’ laid on individual mats and closed their eyes. For the next twenty minutes Mrs. Thompson often played soft music in the background as she talked her students through relaxation techniques and gave them tidbits to think about, life lessons. Often the lessons were about the importance of leaving a legacy, helping others, being kind, and making the most of what one has. On other occasions she read her students uplifting stories of overcoming obstacles, talked about the benefits of participating in physical activity, and relayed the importance of remaining in physical education.

Thinking about and participating in the SPA activity time gave me yet another glimpse into one of the techniques that Mrs. Thompson used to make her teaching and activities meaningful to her students. She often asked her students to think about and grapple with existential questions to help them better understand themselves and how their identity, values, and beliefs impacts the people around them. Many of the girls commented on the SPA time activity and discussed how it resonated with each of them:

I like the SPA time, you lay there and listen to the relaxing music and she [Mrs. Thompson] talks to you in a relaxing voice. It makes me feel relaxed and I leave feeling better. (FG 11-1-2)

[During SPA time] she will be giving us some life lessons like a yoga person, she'll be like you should go out more, experience things, meet new people and she'll say some motivating stuff in there like a yoga person would say. (FG 11-1-4)

Throughout the course of two and a half months I was able to observe and gather insight on the content taught by Mrs. Thompson in the physical education program at Carter. The class itself was highly individualized, met the outcomes of the written curricula, integrated fitness, and promoted and valued participation and engagement. Mrs. Thompson continually stressed the importance of having a culture in the school that values movement and activity and the role the physical education program played in helping to build that culture:

I want the kids to be active from the minute they walk into the gym. I want you to see kids active and not see kids not moving. Actively engaged, moving and engaged, in whatever it is that you are doing. That happens through creating a culture of movement, expectations, routines, relationships, and caring, and getting involved and being passionate and caring about your students and content. (TI March 7th, 2016)

It is apparent that Mrs. Thompson truly believes that physical education is important, relevant to both students and society, and should be valued as an important subject in school. She discussed the philosophy behind the development of the physical education program and believes its main goal is to “Promote a healthy, active lifestyle for the students at Carter.” This aim is very similar to the purpose stated in Saskatchewan’s written curriculum, “to develop confident and competent students who understand, appreciate, and engage in a balanced, healthy, and active lifestyle” (SK. Ministry of Education, Wellness 10 Curriculum, 2012). Mrs. Thompson also explained how this applied to the program, why she thought the physical education program was important, and how she would help the students achieve the goals of the program and develop skills that they could use in years to come:

It is my hope that through various challenges, discussions, experiences, and activities done throughout the semester that students would learn to understand the importance of making informed, healthy decisions about their lifestyle that would lead them to living healthy, active, prosperous lives. (TI, March 7th, 2016).

During my visits I found that Mrs. Thompson was very knowledgeable in her subject area, knew the outcomes of her curriculum, and was well planned. Many of the young women discussed these same traits and when they came to class they knew that they would be active and would be participating in the learning that was taking place:

I just liked how we are always doing something, there is always something happening, like I've went to other gym classes before like because at my old school because it's just small so if you don't have class you could just go to the gym and they [students] were always just sitting there doing nothing and just don't know what to do. Mrs. T always has stuff for us to do, she can be tough at times definitely but she doesn't mean it to be a bag she's just doing it for our own good. (FG 11-1-1)

This gym class was different for me cause I only moved here last year so I like went from doing nothing in my gym class cause we didn't really do anything and then I came here and like you do like, you run and you do workouts and everything so I wasn't used to it but it's good I like being pushed kinda to do stuff. I don't like just being lazy doing nothing. (FG 11-1-2)

The comments from these participants were echoed by many of the other young women, as many agreed, being in Mrs. Thompson's class affirmed that being active was important and they felt that she did a good job of providing them with a variety of opportunities to be active in class.

Throughout her lessons it was apparent that Mrs. Thompson wholeheartedly believes that physical education is important and her subject area is valuable and worthwhile for all of her students. From the onset of my visits this was very clear. Mrs. Thompson continually stressed the importance of the skills and knowledge being learned in the class. She also provided her students with examples on how they could use their new knowledge and skills outside the school setting and in the future:

Phys-ed is absolutely relevant and I think the girls know it's relevant because they can see positive changes to their bodies mentally and physically and we talk a lot about that in their journal reflections on a weekly basis. (TI March 7th, 2016)

Another aspect the students talked about in the interviews was being involved in physical education and activity and the effect it had on their overall health. Not only did they discuss the benefits physical education had on their appearance and body but also on their emotional and psychological wellbeing. One young women talked about some of the material that they had learned during a classroom session:

We learned that exercise releases endorphins in your brain that makes you happy after exercise. (FG 9-9-2)

Several young women talked about the benefits they associated with being involved in the physical education program:

This class was good, I feel like it made me physically better and feel better about myself, overall. Mrs. Thompson pushes us but she doesn't do it in a mean way she does it in a loving way so that we get our best physical and mental education and we can try more things. (FG 10-2-1)

I really enjoy coming to gym. I actually wish sometimes that we had it all year because we actually stay fit for the most part because Mrs. Thompson is really good at getting us out of our comfort zones. I definitely learned how to be more mentally tough or whatever she calls it in this gym class because of how she challenged us. (FG 9-4-5)

A great deal of research has been conducted on the benefits associated with participation in physical activity and physical education. Mrs. Thompson believed teaching students about the benefits of physical activity was important and included this in each of her lessons. Many of the young women not only knew the benefits of physical activity but could also describe the relationship between their own participation in their physical education class and the improvement they also saw in their overall well-being. Mrs. Thompson also talked about the activities she planned and implemented in her classes. She believed participation in the planned activities would hopefully help increase the overall well-being and fitness levels of her students so they could lead healthier and happier lives.

On several occasions I saw Mrs. Thompson incorporate knowledge of the human body into her lessons as the students were working out. One activity she used was a heart rate circuit. She set up thirty stations in a circuit and at each of the stations she also set out a fact card about the human heart and how each exercise they were doing would improve their heart health. Some stations had facts about the human heart size, beats per minute, and names of the different parts. She wrapped up the lesson by having students take their heart rates and discussed what they had learned about activity and its connection to their heart health. Mrs. Thompson believed her students enjoyed being active and thought using hand-on teaching methods and experiential learning increased her students understanding of the benefits that physical education and activity had on their health:

I would say the biggest trend is that girls really want to be active and they want to be fit, they want to be healthier. Now that does not mean that they are trying to be skinnier but

I do believe that the majority of the girls want to find some way that they enjoy moving their bodies that will keep them healthy. (TI March 7th, 2016)

Many of the young women also appreciated that Mrs. Thompson always took the time to connect what they were learning to other aspects than just the physical benefits they would receive from participating in the physical education program. During my observations I wrote down specific examples Mrs. Thompson used in her classes to clearly identify the benefits physical activity has on one's physical, psychological, spiritual, and social domains. Mrs. Thompson spent a lot of time educating her students on the need to maintain a balanced lifestyle and recognized the importance of being active and its effect on students' mental health. She often talked to the young women about having a healthy body and its connection to maintaining a healthy mind and feeling "well":

Girls want to be active for lots of different reasons, a lot of them like the way they look when they are working out and I believe that if I have done a good job in grade nine and 10 they actually find the mental part, I find lots of girls say that, I mentally feel better when I am being active, so that's huge. (TI March 7th, 2016)

At the same time Mrs. Thompson also believed it was not only her job to teach the outcomes, knowledge, and skills within the curriculum but also to demonstrate and get involved in each of the activities to set a good example for her students. She always made a point of discussing the reasons for learning the skills or knowledge implemented in the class and its connection to improving the students over wellness. The young women in the focus group acknowledged that Mrs. Thompson always engaged in the activity she was teaching and tried to make the lesson meaningful:

She's not just a teacher to sit on the side and tell us what to do, she practices what she preaches, she knows what she's talking about and she makes sure that we know the benefits of what we are doing. (FG 11-1-5)

The girls also felt Mrs. Thompson tailored the learning in her classes to suit the needs of each of them and brought the lessons to life by connecting it to their lives and interests:

I think I am pretty good at the strength portion and I like work out quite a bit with my dad. I'm not really into sports because I dance and sports aren't really my thing. But in gym Mrs. T knows that and she has strength twice a week and we just kinda work out what we want in the weight room. (FG 10-10-1)

These vignettes have led me to believe that Mrs. Thompson predominantly uses a humanistic approach to guide her practice (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009). In many ways she acts as a facilitator and tries to foster a collaborative learning culture within the program.

It was also common for the students at Carter to take their learning outside of the classroom to engage in community events. Mrs. Thompson's hands-on approach was highly motivating and relevant for the students and was continually discussed by them in the interviews. Students found the excursions fun and enjoyable. One student even acknowledged the importance of getting community members involved in what they were learning and including them in events that the students were also taking part in:

[Anyone can be involved] in opportunities like the polar bear run. (FG 10-3-1)

When I asked what the polar bear run was the students explained that it is an event held in the winter, is similar to the Terry Fox run, and is open to everyone to participate, including community members. The main purpose of this event is to raise money for cancer research and awareness in the school community. I think the inclusion of these learnings in the program helped build a positive connection between Mrs. Thompson and her students through her valuing of their individual accomplishments, acknowledgement of their individual strengths and identity, and her continuous encouragement of their efforts.

Similarly, many of the participants conveyed that they believed the skills they had acquired and learned in the physical education program could be applied to activities they were doing on their own or could be used in other activity settings:

I definitely think now like after this class I know for me I am definitely going to be working out. I've been eating way healthier than I used to. After this class I've also been working out way more at home and stuff. [Also] just being able to have the motivation to work out. (FG 9-4-5)

Mrs. Thompson always talks about lifetime fitness and even after this class, so for someone who was trying to get active or get in shape, then I think it would help because even after the class was done they would probably stick with it because of like everything that she said. (FG 10-3-2)

I feel like by learning how to use like the weights and like the different equipment or even just learning how your body can work out will help you when you are at home or something so that you can like target one thing that you want to work on and you can learn how to do it properly in this class. (FG 10-10-4)

Two more young women also commented on the connection they felt there was between what they were learning in class and how it may help in their future careers:

I liked the heart rate lab when we learned to take our pulse. No one ever taught that before and I want to be a nurse so I think that's important to learn. (SI 10-3-3)

I want to be a physio-therapist and help people so I think this class is really important because I get to be physically active and it will help me for my future. (SI 11-1-4)

These young women clearly felt the subject matter they were learning was important and would be useful in their lives today and well into their futures. By the end of my data analysis and throughout my interviews it was very evident that the lessons learned in Mrs. Thompson's classes resonated with her students and played a role in what they internalized as significant learnings. It is clear to me that students' who took part in Mrs. Thompson's classes felt the content was meaningful and were putting it into practice today and had developed the skills to continue using it tomorrow.

House Rules

My experiences in this study have reminded me of the importance of establishing an environment where students know what is expected. The establishment of rules and routines can help increase students' opportunities to learn and their desire to participate. Thankfully, I began my observations of Mrs. Thompson's program at the end of a semester. At first I thought I was going to begin my observations at the start of a new semester but Mrs. Thompson suggested that I come out to observe for the last three weeks of the term. In hindsight this could not have been better for me...not only did I get to see where the students ended up but also how it all began. When I visited her physical education class at the end of the semester, I was surprised to see all students were changed out, everyone was participating, and there was a definite routine established:

I'm not sure if Mrs. Thompson told her kids that I was coming today or what because all of them seemed to be on their best behaviour. The classes went very smoothly. Everyone was changed out and participating, even in the co-ed classes the girls were participating in the activities and everyone seemed to be enjoying themselves. It's clear that the students know what the routines of the class are because they all went about them without Mrs. Thompson really having to say anything. However, I can tell that she is very passionate about teaching and got involved in the activities. She wore a microphone the whole day during the classes and encouraged her students in the activities they were doing, the effort they were putting in, and kept telling them to work hard and challenge themselves. She taught four different lessons, they all had a fitness component in them and then an activity but it didn't matter what the activity was because she used the same motivational techniques in all of them. During lunch she participated in a CORE class with students who came down to participate in that as well. I was exhausted by the end of the day and I didn't do anything. I'm excited to see what happens over the next few months because I don't think every day can be like this. (PJ January 19th, 2016)

At the end of the semester, when at most schools students are packing things in, Mrs. Thompson's students continued to engage in the class, worked hard to improve their skills, and

consistently attended. I marveled at the learning environment and atmosphere that was established in her classes and discussed this with Mrs. Thompson on a regular basis. She chalked it up to the fact that there were rules and routines in place from day one. She also pointed out that each of the students had agreed to these regulations, by signing the class's course outline at the beginning of the semester, and they knew what her expectations were.

The young women in this study also talked about the routines in the class and the expectations that Mrs. Thompson had established to ensure that learning could take place. These expectations were lessons learned by the students and they saw the importance of what each of the rules meant and why they were being implemented, even if they did not agree with all of them. Many students discussed some of the class rules and their meaning in our interviews. They talked about the need to change out to make sure they did not have to wear their sweaty clothes the rest of the day, the need to take out their jewelry so they would not injure themselves or their classmates, and the need to wear indoor running shoes so that they would not mark the new gymnasium floor.

When I toured the facility I also noticed that there were reminders of the rules and routines on the doors of the change rooms both inside and out. The signs had a checklist of reminders for the students including to clean up after themselves, lock up their belongings, take out jewelry, etc. Mrs. Thompson also stated that she thought establishing a program that is very routine based alleviated a lot of the questions and excuses she used to receive from students and increased their amount of activity time:

The program is very routine based and we are very black and white. I actually spend a fair bit of time, a couple of days at the beginning of the class not to be so rushed into getting the girls engaged but certainly taking the time to educate them on why we do what we do and why we have the routines that we do and I think that helps a lot because they understand why we are asking them to do things. (TI, March 7th, 2016)

As I stated earlier, I was very fortunate to get a glimpse into how the routines and expectations were taught at the beginning of a new semester. As an outsider looking in...I knew from the minute that I stepped into Mrs. Thompson's classroom there was a prevailing expectation that all students would participate and be involved in the activities taking place. The students in the study confirmed this feeling in the interviews:

Well Mrs. T tells us it's not an option, [not participating], she will tell us it's not going to be easy you just have to push yourselves and do your best. (FG 11-1-5)

Each day at Carter I jotted down how many young women sat out or did not participate in the activities. To my astonishment, in over two and a half months of observations, only two young women sat out and in both situations they had injured their ankles in other activities. However, they were still changed out and took part in the class but did an alternate activity, usually in the weight room.

I believe the rules and routines established in Mrs. Thompson's classes are very similar to most other physical education classes however, the difference is that she makes sure her students follow through on them. One rule that I did find different was that she did not accept notes from parents excusing their child from participating in physical education. Both students and parents were made aware of this and if a student was to be excused from physical education class a phone call was required. Mrs. Thompson explained to me that she thought this was an important regulation because she then had the opportunity to speak to the students' parents about the importance of participating in physical education and the alternative activities she expected the students to take part in. The main point of this rule was that at any given time students were expected to participate and the teacher made sure that happened:

I expect a call from parents, not a note. I can't talk to parents if I get a note. I think it's important they know what we are doing in class and if their child is injured or absent they need to know they can still do other things or make-up for the activity time they lost. (TI March 7th, 2016)

Many of the students also commented on this expectation and reiterated that even if they were injured, Mrs. Thompson always had an alternative activity to keep them active:

If you miss a class you have to get your parents to sign [a make-up sheet] to say that you did activity for like an hour. (FG 10-3-5)

A lot of people who can't run will use the bike instead. (FG 10-10-4)

Mrs. Thompson also made it very clear that like any other class, the students could expect to get out of the class whatever they put into it, or that they would reap what they sow.

Basically, she was telling her students that the good things in life come mostly from the experience that you get from participating, and putting in effort. Mrs. Thompson further explained that accountability was the difference between leading and following, contributing and just existing, and learning from mistakes or hiding them. I believe these statements set the tone for the class and once again clarified that ultimately the students were responsible for their own learning. The rules, expectations, and routines established in the physical education program at

Carter clearly play a role in engaging students in physical education. Not only does Mrs. Thompson provide clear guidelines for her students to adhere to but she also provides them with structure and consistency that evidently increases their motivation to participate in physical activity. Understanding that there are consequences for particular actions and expectations to uphold are two major lessons learned in this program. These teachings permeated through the program and had an impact on the students, coaches, and community.

Life Lessons

As each participant spoke about their experiences in the physical education program, it became apparent that they were not just talking about the content of the class but also the life skills and lessons they were learning. These life lessons were a part of the routines, expectations, and development of the program. There were undertones of character and moral education in many of the actions and attitudes that were built into the lessons being learned.

The first day I arrived at Carter, I immediately received my first lesson. Mrs. Thompson asked me stand up in front of the class and quickly solicited a volunteer from the bleachers to introduce me to her peers. The young women came down, looked me straight in the eye, shook my hand, and introduced herself. She then proceeded to ask me a few questions about myself, then turned to her classmates and introduced me. I was both amazed and amused by the gesture as I myself felt it an important skill to learn and spent a day or so explaining its importance to my own children when they were both around three. At the time I wondered why and when this skill was being taught. I had an opportunity to witness the “why” and “when” during one of my observations on the first day of the new semester. After taking attendance, Mrs. Thompson began to describe the importance of a handshake. She explained that introducing yourself to someone when you first met was a kind gesture and would create a positive first impression. She also discussed that by shaking someone’s hand you are basically entering into a contract. She further remarked that once everyone in the class shook hands with one another they were now accountable to help one another do the best they could in the class. She then taught her students their first lesson; how to shake someone’s hand. She had each student introduce themselves and shake her hand and then had the students practice their handshakes while they introduced themselves to one another formally:

At the beginning of the class she made us like shake hands with everyone like the first day so we all felt comfortable with each other and she said we were locked in to doing everything and helping everyone now. (FG 11-1-3)

[What content was important to learn?] The handshake cause when you go to go for a job interview like she said they're looking for people that are confident and that want the job and not shy or anything and my mom told me last night that if you shake a person's hand while you're trying to get a job um it shows trust and everything so she taught us how to shake someone's hand, I never really knew how to do it before. (FG 9-4-4)

Upon reflection, this lesson illuminated Mrs. Thompson's sense of care and intention to build a sense of community amongst herself and her students. This gesture made everyone feel important, valued and included in the class. I also believe that this gesture signified accountability and confirmation from the students that they were prepared to take part and share in the learning which made it relevant to them.

In observations and interviews I noted that Mrs. Thompson always used the phrase, "An Attitude of Gratitude," with her students. She consistently asked students to use their manners and treat others as they would like to be treated. She even handed out cards to her own students and team players that had this note transcribed on it:

Individuals of good character display an attitude of gratitude. They appreciate the people they know, the things they have, and the opportunities they are afforded...and they show it! Who did you thank today? Who should you thank tomorrow? My challenge to you is this: hand write a note to someone to thank them for being a part of your life, for what they have done for you, or just to say you care. Work on showing an attitude of gratitude daily and you will say something very positive about yourself! GO FOR IT!!

What amazed me about this message was that students were extremely invested in following through with the action of thanking someone and believed that it was an important value to learn. In fact, Mrs. Thompson had not handed out the card to her team members yet and they were actually coming up to her during break and asking her about it because they had some people that they really wanted to thank.

Many of the participants spoke about the life lessons they learned from Mrs. Thompson and it was clear they understood the importance of these lessons. One student talked specifically about social responsibility. She commented that in the physical education program they had learned that it was important to be kind, help others, and include everyone. Many of the young women discussed learning these skills and having opportunities to use them:

Mrs. Thompson teaches you that when you volunteer that you are actually doing something good for the world, so it's kind of neat. (FG 10-3-4)

Mrs. Thompson taught us to make sure everyone doesn't feel left out. (FG 10-10-4)

Mrs. T makes you be friends with everybody. (FG 11-1-6)

Another life lesson that was overtly being taught was the importance of being passionate about one's career and the concept of practicing what you preach. This was obvious the first day I stepped into Mrs. Thompson's class. Her true passion and desire to pass on the importance of being involved in physical education and activity was evident. Mrs. Thompson was changed out, prepared to engage in activity with her students, and praised students for their efforts throughout the class. The young women themselves also spoke highly of their teacher and how passionate she was about her job and the information that she was teaching. They talked about how she modelled the behaviours she expected from the students and actually did the activities with them:

She does it with us, I have never had a gym teacher that actually does activities with us. (FG 11-1-1)

She's not just there just to be there she's actually coming into her job and she likes it, you can tell she likes her job, she's a hard worker. (FG 11-1-6)

She does it with you and she understands different fitness levels so she doesn't expect you to be like perfect at fitness. (FG 11-6-5)

Anytime we do something Mrs. T tries to like even if we are playing games if she's not with us she's always like running beside us and screaming at us through the microphone and telling us to keep going like, 'I see you standing there, don't just stand there, start going'. (FG 10-10-1)

Mrs. Thompson brought life to the physical education program through the use of direct instruction, student-centered learning activities, demonstration, analysis of movements, and experiential learning. She also had students think and reflect on how the content they were learning in class would or could be used in their future. I believe the students in this program were given ample opportunity to engage in discussions and think deeply about the information they were learning and its application to new experiences and situations that they may encounter. At the end of one of her lessons Mrs. Thompson pronounced "This will be the most important class you ever take." I remember nodding to myself in agreement and then reflected back on a time in my own teaching when I have frequently found myself having to defend my position as a physical education teacher and my subject area to both colleagues and administration. The emphasis on academic subjects and their place in society in comparison to physical education and its importance was also recognized by the students in this program. One student commented on the pressure she felt from her parents to take classes that would "help" in her future. She was

frustrated that their parents did not understand the vital role that physical education played in her life today and in the future:

[The electives I take] all kind of depends on them [my parents] because they are more focused on all the academics stuff and all that so I'm still trying to figure out if I'm going to take an extra math or something or if I'm gonna go into a phys-ed, I want to but I will probably have to ask my parents on what they want and then go with that, they basically tell me what I have to take and then I take it. (FG 10-3-8)

My parents have told me that I shouldn't take physical education, [they said] that I should take different classes that are actually going to help me in life but I think phys ed. will help because if you are not active at all during school and if you don't have time like after school either you're out of shape and you can't do everything. So phys ed. just gives you that one hour of activity, it also just calms you down which helps you with everything else, it helps you focus on your academics which will definitely help you in life. (FG 10-3-8)

Fortunately, there were very few comments similar to the ones this student made. Although the parents of this student are probably not alone in their thinking I feel that Carter's physical education program is seen as relevant and important to students, teachers, and the community. This was clear in both the students' and teacher's comments as well in the observations I made of the community getting involved in the physical education program. Community members were willing to pitch in for wrestling matches, home tournaments, as well as participate in the intramural program and special walking, running or activity events put on by the school. It was also evident from the data that I collected that the students not only understood the benefits from being involved in the physical education program but were also choosing to engage in more physical activity outside the required class because they knew it would continue to benefit them. Mrs. Thompson made reference to this when she stated:

I think I have done a good enough job if they come to the gym on their own. That's why I am always bugging kids about coming to CORE and then I think, that's great if you come. (TI March 7th, 2016)

This comment is a testament to the program and clearly shows that the lessons learned are important in engaging young women to participate in physical education. I believe that Mrs. Thompson uses the physical education program as a medium for teaching important decision making skills and fosters attitudes that build on the importance and relevance of physical education in the lives' of each of her students. The connections that students were making between what they had learned and its application in everyday situations is apparent in the comment expressed by one of the students in the program:

*Our last fitness test I didn't get my goal. I went to "Calico", which is like umm a fast food place at the mall, at lunch because I had forgotten about the fitness run. So I didn't feel that great and I just realized from the last run and this run that we did that the difference of eating clean and healthy before the run is that you just feel better.
(FG 9-4-5)*

I believe the lessons learned by the students involved in Carter's physical education program are lessons that students will continue to use and remain intact today and tomorrow.

Summary of the Findings

In this study, sense of belonging, confidence and ability, and lessons learned emerged as three themes associated with young women's experiences in Carter's physical education program. The physical education program provided a variety of opportunities for students to participate and find value in getting involved as well as promoted the need for the development of life skills and character education. In many cases the participants of this study felt connected to their peers and teacher, felt supported and acknowledged, and believed that they belonged in a physical education setting. The young women in this study also felt the program provided learning opportunities where they could develop their skills and abilities, were challenged, and could be successful. The students also discussed the connection between being able to use the skills and knowledge they acquired; today and in the future. It was also clear that the role of the teacher played a major part in increasing the engagement and satisfaction of young women in the program. The physical education program at Carter provided a unique environment where students felt comfortable, capable, and engaged in their learning.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION & REFLECTIVE THOUGHTS

“The Journey of A Thousand Miles begins with a Single Step”

~ Lao Tzu

My Journey

It is not often that one is afforded the opportunity to step into another teacher’s classroom for the span of almost three months to observe, understand, and learn from their practice. Luckily for me it happened! I found this opportunity enjoyable, puzzling at times, and overall rewarding on a variety of levels. I believe embarking on this journey has also tested my resilience, persistence, and courage. I believe that one of the most important things that I have learned pursuing my Master’s degree is understanding the process of research. Through this process I have reflected on my own practice, values, and beliefs and navigated how they impact my own teaching, curriculum, classroom environment, and students. I felt many of the experiences shared by the participants in this study reflected some of the same beliefs I hold such as; the need for teachers to role model, participate, and build positive relationships. On the other hand, some of the experiences challenged my beliefs, in particular the scheduling of non-segregated physical education classes and the teaching of a fitness-based curriculum.

Through this experience I have gained a great sense of accomplishment, satisfaction, and learned many new skills. Too often as teachers we get wrapped up in our own little bubble and continue to teach the same content, the same way, with small tweaks dependent upon on the goals of the school in which we are teaching. As time passes we often see what we do as “right”, view our programs as best practice, and deviate little from what we feel “works”.

This study has given me the opportunity to experience and take part in an exemplary physical education program and understand the intricacies of its development and its influence on the engagement of young women in physical education. I was able to gain a greater understanding of the factors that engage young women from their accounts and experiences in the program. I was also able to see first-hand the important role the physical education program at Carter High School has played in establishing a culture of inclusion that truly values movement and activity. I do not hold a false sense that the physical education program at Carter High School is perfect in every way or that I have found the answers to all of my questions. However, from what I observed and heard from the lived experiences of those involved in the

program a few factors make this program exceptional. Exceptional in the fact that it engaged and sustained young women in the program and increased their motivation to enroll in elective physical education classes and remain active on their own time or remain active out of school hours.

The goal of this research was to explore an exemplary physical education program and the experiences of the young women and teacher participating in it. The following research question guided the study:

What factors are present in the program and how do they influence the engagement and satisfaction of young women in physical education?

Engaging females in physical education has been recognized as a challenge for high school teachers (Rich, 2004; Slater & Tiggermann, 2010) and their disengagement in physical education has been well documented (Azzarito, Solmon, & Harrison, 2006; Flintoff & Scraton, 2001, Gibbons & Humbert, 2008, Sulz et al., 2010). Often young women are perceived as the ‘problem’ and are seen as responsible for their lack of participation in physical education (Azzarito et al., 2006; Flintoff & Scraton, 2001). Contrary to findings that suggest the problems lie with the young women who participate in physical education classes, the participants in the present study reported that they enjoyed being active in their current physical education program. When asked why they thought young women in other physical education programs may not feel the same way they discussed a variety of possible reasons. The young women at Carter believed disengagement and decreased participation would occur if physical education was seen as a program where only skilled athletes could succeed and belong and as a subject and place that was void of meaningful interactions and information. They also thought that dissatisfaction in physical education is perpetuated when a program is seen as unwelcoming, unsafe, unequitable, judgmental, not individualized, or the knowledge and skills have no direct relationship to them, thereby decreasing young women’s motivation to participate in physical education and activity. The young women also mentioned they felt fortunate to participate in a physical education program that was nothing like this!

From the research I have conducted in this study and the program that I explored I believe there are numerous factors that foster young women’s participation, engagement, and satisfaction in physical education. An essential component is the teacher. An exemplary program has an exemplary teacher. Such a teacher values: building supportive relationships to

foster a sense of belonging in a physical activity setting; providing an atmosphere where students set individual goals and strive to meet these goals in a safe and equitable environment; modelling behaviours that are congruent with the expected behaviour in the classroom; developing a classroom that allows students to take risks without ridicule; and teaching a balanced curriculum that facilitates students learning and allows them to make meaningful connections to their own lives. The message from the young women who participated in this study was clear; if these factors could be met in physical education they were more likely to participate and engage in the program. As a result three themes emerged from the analysis of the data: a) sense of belonging, b) confidence and ability, and c) lessons learned. In the following section the three themes are defined, discussed, and linked to the young women's experiences and current research in the field. Recommendations are made where appropriate and are based on the findings from the study along with future wonders and possible research ideas.

I Belong Here

This theme provided insight on the factors that help young women feel like they belong in the gym at any time; during physical education class, intramurals, or sports and fitness activities. If they feel like they belong they are motivated to participate. Being accepted by both their teacher and peers, feeling valued and affirmed in a physical activity setting, and developing positive relationships in the physical education program were three recurring factors observed and reported as fostering a positive sense of belonging amongst the participants.

According to Willms (2000):

Most students participate in academic and non-academic activities at school, and develop a sense of belonging – their friends are there, they have good relations with teachers and other students, and they identify with and value schooling outcomes. But many students are not engaged. They do not believe their school experience has much bearing on their future, and they do not feel accepted by their classmates or teachers. Gradually these students withdraw from school life, and become disaffected from school. (p.3)

The results from my study concur with the literature on the importance of student engagement and sense of belonging. It was clear when the young women at Carter felt they belonged and were included they were more likely to engage and participate in the physical education program as well as physical activities outside of school. Feeling accepted and safe and being treated fairly are all aspects that contribute to the development of a sense of belonging amongst the

young women in Carter's physical education program. The participants in this study revealed how important it was to have a space in the school where they felt they belonged. They also discussed the need for that space to be welcoming, inviting, and inclusive to all students in order to increase their motivation to participate and engage in the program.

Research has shown that at times, the gymnasium can be a competitive place where students feel exposed and shamed (Gibbons & Humbert, 2008; Ntoumanis, Pensgard, Martin & Pipe, 2004; Olafson, 2002). However, the participants in this study felt a welcoming, supportive, and inclusive learning environment had been created in their current physical education program and it was clear that Mrs. Thompson used a variety of techniques to help cultivate that environment. First and foremost, the young women believed that Mrs. Thompson set a tone early on in the class for students to treat each other with respect. She cared about and respected each of her students and made sure she acknowledged and reinforced positive behaviours with a high five, a smile, or even a nod. The participants also believed many of the activities they engaged in were focused on cooperative learning to provide opportunities for positive social interactions between themselves and their peers. They gave examples of many different games they had played throughout the term that required them to cooperate and communicate with their classmates. In addition, they felt that these games helped to initially break the ice and made getting to know one another easier. Moreover, the young women stated they preferred a learning environment that emphasized cooperation and included everyone. This enjoyment of cooperative learning environments is consistent with the findings of a study conducted on social interaction preferences by Ruiz, Graupera, Moreno, and Rico (2010). The study determined that young women favoured interactions and activities that were cooperative and non-competitive (Ruiz et al.).

Another reason the young women felt like they belonged and were accepted in the program was because they never felt left out and always had a friend or partner. Mrs. Thompson continually used a variety of partnering systems such as; birthdays, number of siblings, shoe size, etc. to make sure that the students would get to know one another and feel safe when asked to partner with an individual other than a close friend. This strategy helped Mrs. Thompson create a respectful and safe environment and helped students feel comfortable and safe. Gibbons (2014) labels this strategy as a "relatedness-supportive action" for teachers and credits using this action to helping build a community inside the physical education classroom.

The young women in this study also reported feeling like they fit in, regardless of their athletic ability. They expressed that Mrs. Thompson made everyone feel welcome and did not only pay attention to the athletes in the class but instead took an interest in all of her students. The students attributed this to the fact that Mrs. Thompson ensured that everyone participated in the same units of study and expected that they would try their best based on their own ability. They also mentioned that Mrs. Thompson was always inviting them to take part in events outside of the classroom setting, like intramurals, extra-curricular, and community events.

Mrs. Thompson also made sure her students knew that she thought all of them could learn, be successful, and reach their full potential. Her assurance also helped promote equity amongst the students because they felt they had a shared purpose; to be the best that they could be. They knew their personal efforts would be acknowledged and they would not be compared to others. Being allowed to participate to the best of one's ability promoted a feeling of belonging amongst the students and had them working together to help challenge and encourage each other to work hard to reach their individual potential. Feeling safe, accepted, and treated fairly contributed to the development of a sense of belonging in Carter's physical education program. All of the strategies Mrs. Thompson put in place helped establish a safe and caring environment which made the young women feel accepted and increased their motivation to engage and choose to participate in physical activity inside and outside of the school.

Willms (2002) also states that a "*sense of belonging* at school pertains to students' 'attachment to school', which has to do with feelings of being accepted and valued by their peers, and by others at their school" (p. 8). Similarly, in the school division where I work, belonging means to feel valued, affirmed and significant (SPSD Curriculum Renewal Document, Our Stories, 2010). The data I collected from the participants confirmed this definition and in many cases the young women discussed their teacher's ability to make each of them feel important, recognized, and part of a community.

Mrs. Thompson always made time to acknowledge each of her students as they came into her class and made sure that she encouraged them when they were successful or needed motivation to continue. In one instance, I saw a young woman having difficulties completing the 30 minute run. I could tell that she was just about to quit but at that very moment Mrs. Thompson caught up to the young woman and they ran the last six minutes together. Many of the participants confirmed my own observations when they stated that Mrs. Thompson was very

motivating and cheered them on when they were struggling. The participants also talked about how positive Mrs. Thompson was and how she participated alongside them to model the behaviours she wanted them to learn. It was apparent that Mrs. Thompson is passionate about teaching physical education and wants her students to know that she supports and cares for them.

Mrs. Thompson's actions support the findings of relatedness in the self-determination theory. According to Ryan and Deci (2000) people have three basic psychological needs that must be satisfied in order to achieve intrinsic motivation, such as participating in physical education out of sheer pleasure. One of these needs is relatedness which entails a sense of social attachment and belonging. Through her actions Mrs. Thompson established a supportive learning environment where students felt valued and affirmed.

Research has also shown that relatedness is particularly important for girls, and that social relationships play an important role in their participation (Pfaeffli & Gibbons, 2010). The young women at Carter school also perceived the relationships they had formed in class as a factor to increasing their engagement and motivation to participate in the physical education program. They reported that they felt accepted and had built positive relationships amongst their peers, both male and female, and their teacher in the physical education program.

In an examination of the experiences of adolescent girls in physical education, Shen, McCaughtry, Martin, Fahlman, & Garn (2012) found that female students' feelings of relatedness to their teacher were found to be a significant predictor of their level of engagement in physical education. On several occasions I observed Mrs. Thompson talking with her students to try to get to know each of them better. She intentionally scheduled time in her class to talk with her students individually to identify their goals, activities they were involved in, as well as everyday likes and dislikes. Students also noticed the effort Mrs. Thompson put into building relationships with each of her students and embraced that as a sign of her caring nature. Noddings (1995) described teachers as very special people in the lives of children and spoke to the importance of spending time "developing relationships of trust, talking with students about problems that are central to their lives, and guiding them toward sensitivity and competence across all domains of care" (p. 61). Mrs. Thompson commented on her commitment to building relationships with her students and players. She often ventured outside of the gymnasium to greet and talk with students she no longer taught because she felt it was important to continue to stay connected with each of them. It was evident that the students felt they had a positive

relationship with Mrs. Thompson, and this relationship allowed the students to be comfortable and feel like they belonged. Young women shared numerous examples of the extra time that Mrs. Thompson invested in getting to know them and the actions she took to make sure that they also got to know one another.

In addition to the important role that the teacher-student relationship plays in increasing motivation, researchers have also demonstrated that students' social connections with their peers enhance their motivation (Shen et. al., 2012). Furthermore, positive relationships with peers influenced students' motivational behaviour in physical education classes (Furrer & Skinner, 2003). Due to the environment created by Mrs. Thompson, the young women were able to form positive relationships with their peers and these bonds made them want to participate in the physical education program. The participants discussed Mrs. Thompson's intentions of having each of them get to know one another better and how she used deliberate grouping or team formation to nurture newly formed relationships. Many of the students also reported that they were given opportunities to work with a variety of their peers in different contexts based on their individual needs and skills and this helped develop stronger relationships with their peers.

The young women also mentioned that Mrs. Thompson provided them with opportunities to take on leadership roles, and encouraged them to try a variety of positions in different games and activities to increase their self-esteem and involvement. Mrs. Thompson's actions are supported by the literature that discusses ways to increase the self-esteem of girls and young women in sport and physical activity. The Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity (CAAWS) suggests that teachers can "positively influence self-esteem and provide girls and women with ongoing incentive to participate and personally succeed in physical activity endeavours." (p. 1, para 4, 2013). In addition by "allowing participants to try different roles within the game or activity as opposed to always being only on one position on a team" (p. 2) self-esteem can be enhanced.

Above all else the students talked about Mrs. Thompson's desire for students to encourage and support one another in the program. Many of the young women felt motivated and supported by their peers and attributed that feeling to the positive relationships they had formed. One surprising finding that came out during data collection was the comfort levels of the young women who participated in coeducational classes. Research shows that an all-female environment in physical education is usually preferred by young women because it allows them

more opportunities to participate and they feel more comfortable without boys in the class (Humbert, 1996; Pfaeffli & Gibbons, 2010, Yungblut et. al., 2012). Similarly, research has shown that often males tend to “take over” and dominate in a physical activity setting and this negatively impacts female involvement in physical education (Humbert, 1996; Wright and McDonald, 2010). However, in the present study, many of the young women participating in the non-segregated Wellness 10 classes reported that they did not feel uncomfortable participating alongside their male counterparts. They further commented that because of the supportive nature established in the class they did not feel intimidated by the presence of the boys. These findings are in line with a growing body of research conducted on the interactions between genders in coeducational physical education classes. Specifically, if students feel comfortable with and supported by their male and female peers then they may be more likely to participate in physical education activities and have a more enjoyable experience (Casey, Eime, Payne, & Harvey, 2009; Hills & Croston, 2012).

Some of the young women also reported feeling more challenged and active when the boys were involved in the activities compared to when they were in segregated classes. A study conducted by Butler (2014) reported similar findings when interviewing female participants in physical education. The young women in Butler’s study who chose coeducational physical educational classes attributed better competition, more challenging activities, and being able to try harder as reasons for their choice. The young women participating in the grade 11 in school elective class at Carter also stated similar reasons for choosing a coeducational physical education class. They maintained that they enjoyed being integrated with the boys because it made the games faster paced and the activities more challenging. On the contrary, many of the grade nine participants in segregated classes expressed their enjoyment of being separated from their male counterparts for many of the same reasons found in the literature: males dominated activities, they had feelings of reduced competence and skill abilities, and they felt uncomfortable being active in front of the opposite sex (Felton, Saunders, Ward, Dishman, Dowda, & Pate., 2005; Gibbons & Humbert, 2008; Pfaeffli & Gibbons 2010; Sulz et. al., 2010). The varied responses of young women in Carter’s physical education program is reflected in the literature on choice to enroll in segregated or coeducational physical education (Pfaeffli, 2009). Even now, coeducational physical education continues to be a topic of debate among researchers, in an attempt to create equitable learning environments for students (Carpenter & Acosta, 2001;

Portman & Nelson, 2001). The difference between the responses of the participants in grades nine and the young women in grades 10 -12 was interesting to discover and it appears that as the young women at Carter moved through high school they felt more comfortable interacting and participating with the opposite sex in a physical activity setting. That being said I believe providing choice for young women is still important in elective physical education as it creates another option for young women who prefer segregated classes to be active and engaged in physical education.

In conclusion, many of the young women discussed the welcoming atmosphere, cooperative environment and comfort they felt with Mrs. Thompson and their peers in the physical education program. They were comfortable pairing up and participating with a variety of their classmates, and felt that physical education gave them a chance to interact, socialize, and learn with their peers in a non-threatening environment.

I Am Able

Having a safe place to practice and acquire skills, mastering skills to participate in a wide range of activities, and working toward individual goals have a positive effect on perceived confidence and influence young women's enjoyment, enthusiasm, and choice to engage in physical activity on their own (Gibbons, 1999; Gibbons & Gaul, 2004; Sulz et al., 2010) Within this study, the participants associated their satisfaction in the physical education program in part because it gave them a place where they felt they were accepted and fit in; regardless of their skill level. These feelings contradict much of the research to date on this topic. In a study by Flintoff & Scraton (2006) female students who reported feelings of low perceived ability were not likely to enjoy and engage in physical activity. Contrary to this, students in this study who perceived themselves as less abled and unskilled reported feeling accepted and enjoyed being in the physical education program and engaging in physical activity. However, many of the participants did comment that they were more likely to participate or try something new if they felt able and were confident they had acquired the necessary skills to engage in the activities. These findings suggest that perceived competence, self-efficacy, and agency are important factors that affect students' experiences in physical education and their motivation to participate.

In the book *Choice Words: How Our Language Affects Children's Learning*, Peter Johnston (2004) states:

Children who doubt their competence set low goals and choose easy tasks and they plan poorly. When they face difficulties, they become confused, lose concentration, and start telling themselves stories about their own incompetence. In the long run they disengage, decrease effort, generate fewer ideas, and become passive and discouraged. (p. 40)

Based on the research Johnston conducted on the language teachers use to build agency in their students he believes, “Children with strong belief in their own agency work harder, focus their attention better, are more interested in their studies, and are less likely to give up when they encounter difficulties” (p.41). Similarly, the students at Carter High School maintained that receiving encouragement (“you can do it”) from Mrs. Thompson and their peers, increased their confidence and attributed these actions to increasing their motivation to practice and acquire new skills and competencies. What is more, they believed the encouragement they received from Mrs. Thompson helped them to continue even when the task was challenging, such as fitness runs that built cardiovascular endurance. This belief in one’s ability to succeed and desire to persevere in a particular situation reflects positive self-efficacy (Bandura, 1994). The actions of the young women in Carter’s physical education program confirms Deci and Ryan’s (1985) theory that an optimally challenging environment where one is exercising and extending one’s capabilities increases competence.

The young women reported feeling comfortable participating in many of the planned activities in the physical education program but at the same time attributed being able to practice in a safe environment for their motivation to practice new skills to increase their competence. Establishing a safe environment where less-skilled students feel comfortable engaging in the learning is a tough feat in any class. Undeniably, it is even more difficult in physical education because students’ physical ability is on display, for everyone to see, at all times. In a study conducted by Gibbons and Humbert (2008) female participants revealed they were dissatisfied with their physical education experiences due to the public nature of performing skills. The pressure to perform amongst peers can be daunting, as a result establishing an environment that reduces pressure and stress is needed to motivate young women to participate in physical education and practice new skills. Fortunately, the students involved in the physical education program at Carter participated in a non-threatening atmosphere which increased their motivation to practice and acquire new skills and competencies.

The environment established in Carter’s physical education program provides opportunities for students to determine their individual skill level and offers them a safe place

and time to practice and improve upon their skills. In my observations, students were often grouped based on ability; and in coeducational classes, by gender, to provide a safe environment to practice. In doing so, the young women in the program felt confident and engaged in a variety of activities and when asked to participate alongside students who were more abled or opposite gendered, they felt they had acquired the skills they needed or felt non-pressure from their peers. Purposeful grouping provided students with the opportunity to practice with and see others of similar ability improve and be successful in acquiring new skills. Bandura (1994) denotes this as “vicarious experiences”. He believes that one can gain self-efficacy from watching others be successful. Moreover, watching someone of perceived similar ability can increase self-efficacy and confidence and this can make students feel they may also be able to attain the skill being practiced.

As indicated in the handbook, “Actively Engaging Women and Girls,” having a positive perception of one’s own physical abilities, progress and potential for future success or mastery contributes to the engagement and participation of young women in sports and physical activity (CAAWS, 2012). Furthermore, even when students see value in a task, if they do not believe that they can be successful, they are unlikely to exert effort (Wigfield & Eccles, 2001). The data collected in this study supports these findings as one of the most important factors reported to increasing the participants’ confidence and competence was the opportunity to experience success. Many young women stated if they did not feel they could be successful they would usually abandon the task or withdraw prior to the onset of the activity. For this reason it is important for teachers to structure their learning tasks so that students are able to experience some level of success.

In Carter’s physical education program Mrs. Thompson included a variety of strategies to help students improve their skills and feel success. She took pride in getting to know each of her students’ limits and abilities and provided developmentally appropriate tasks for varying student abilities. She provided modifications and challenges to increase engagement and enhance the opportunity for success. Mrs. Thompson also used goal setting to encourage her students to work toward individual successes rather than set standards. Many of the young women described their enjoyment of discovering their baseline fitness levels, setting goals to improve their health and skill related fitness components, and working toward improving the goals they had set. Clearly being in control of what they wanted to improve upon and knowing they could

be successful, made them work hard to try to achieve their goals. The participants confirmed that being able to focus on their individual goals made them invest in their learning and increased their motivation to attend and participate in physical education.

Assessment also played a role in the participants' choice to engage in physical education. The young women asserted that not being judged on their skill level but rather on the effort they put in to accomplishing their goals increased their participation and made them practice more, achieve their goals, and feel able. The findings showed the young women felt more competent and less threatened when they perceived that Mrs. Thompson emphasized improvement based on self-referenced standards. These results support the idea that a focus on personal improvement and mastery of tasks, rather than on outperforming others, provides an environment that promotes learning for all children (Biddle, 2001).

According to Lyu and Gill (2011) perceived competence is a key motivational determinant of physical activity behaviours in adolescents, and motivational determinants are influenced by the class environment. Therefore, establishing a safe place for students to practice and acquire new skills and engage in physical activity is needed and important in order for young women to increase their confidence and competence in physical education. Based on the research examining factors influencing competence and motivation, it can be assumed that students who perceive the physical education environment as a safe and inviting space could end up developing a higher perceived physical competence and increased motivation to participate. As indicated earlier from the findings in this study, Carter's physical education program has seemingly enhanced many of the young women's perceived competence levels and provided them with opportunities to be successful on some level; thus, increasing their confidence and enjoyment in physical activity and physical education.

I Value Physical Education

If I take just one important finding away from this study it is that our influence as a teacher is far reaching. From the findings of this research it is apparent that the actions, beliefs, and passion of a teacher are critical to increasing the engagement of young women and their motivation to participate in physical education. One must understand that the teacher impacts every aspect of a physical education program from its inception, through the activities being planned and implemented, to the lessons that are learned, the meaning young women take away

from those learnings, and ultimately the choice young women make to value and engage in physical education and activity. Therefore, it is important that educators spend time planning their curriculum and are mindful of the content they include and how it is delivered in order to keep students feeling safe, successful, connected, and engaged (Hughes & Adera, 2006).

From the stories told by the young women in this study it was clear that valuing what they were learning was integral to their choice to engage in the program. They repeatedly talked about many of the valuable lessons they had learned like shaking hands and looking people in the eye when talking. For many, these learnings may not seem like curricular content as curriculum is often seen only as a document, textbook, or syllabus used to teach a specific subject (Wiles & Bondi, 2011). However, as the young women in this study were describing what they were learning it was clear they were also talking about curriculum; one that is viewed as lived and influenced by a teacher's experiences, beliefs, bias, and general opinions; in essence "life".

Glatthorn (2000) describes seven domains to curriculum:

- (1) recognized curriculum delineated by scholars and professional organizations;
- (2) written curriculum that appears in state and school district documents;
- (3) taught curriculum that teachers attempt to implement;
- (4) supported curriculum that helps implement or deliver the curriculum resources such as textbooks and computers;
- (5) assessed curriculum that is tested and evaluated;
- (6) learned curriculum, what the students actually learn;
- and (7) hidden curriculum, unintended curriculum (p. 109, 110).

Traditionally, teachers have been most influenced by the learned and assessed curriculum (Ornstein, Pajak, & Ornstein, 2011). Similarly, Glatthorn (2011) states that "teachers are perhaps most sensitive to the learned curriculum, making their decisions on the basis of students' needs, as they perceive them, and students' responses to the taught curriculum (p. 111).

Therefore, what is determined by the teacher to be taught is of the utmost importance in engaging young women in physical education. Although teachers are professionally bound to teach the outcomes of the "written" curriculum there are many other valuable learnings that are influenced by the teachers' beliefs and values. Mrs. Thompson clearly understands the outcomes of the provincial physical education curricular documents and puts a great deal of effort in planning to meet the outcomes in her physical education program. However, the young women in her classes talked not only about the "academic" content they were learning but also about what they called the "other" content. They did not view the other content they had learned in Carter's physical education program such as life skills (emotional awareness and responsibility, integrity, healthy relationships, communication skills, etc.) as "curriculum". It is evident that

Mrs. Thompson views the physical education curriculum as everything that is lived and learned in her program. She believes the curriculum is not only the outcomes and indicators, the knowledge and skills, but also the life lessons her students learn, the culture of her classroom, the social interactions and relationships that are built, and the intentional values and beliefs she displays and practices. Mrs. Thompson believes that all of these learnings from the “lived curriculum” help provide all students, regardless of their perceived ability in physical education, with the skills to become leaders, grapplers, amazing, competent, confident, kind, respectful, and world changing people – “with an attitude of gratitude”. Mrs. Thompson’s principle goal is to facilitate learning so all of her students can use the knowledge they have learned in her class to be ambassadors for themselves, be positive contributing members of society, and be able to make conscious decisions on how to improve and maintain an active lifestyle in their futures.

Many of the young women who readily engaged in their physical education classes valued the curriculum being taught and saw the content as beneficial to their overall wellbeing and to their future educational goals. Feeling that subject area content is relevant, supports much of the research based on sustaining the engagement of young women in physical activity and physical education (Gibbons & Humbert, 2008; Pfaeffli 2009; Sulz et al, 2010). Engaging students through curricular connections also illustrates the importance for educators to teach their students that participation in physical education can positively impact all aspects of their health and well-being.

The young women in Carter’s physical education program liked the content they were learning and enjoyed participating in the activities that were planned. Previous research addressing the low participation levels of high school girls in physical education have shown that a loss of interest amongst young women often occurs because they lack a feeling of autonomy, have little input in the development of the class, and have few choice aspects in relation to what they are learning (Azzarito et al., 2006; Flintoff & Scraton, 2006; Gibbons, 2009; Pfaeffli, 2010). It is interesting to note that while the literature emphasizes the importance of offering young women choice in their physical education classes, the participants in this study were satisfied, engaged, and motivated to participate in the program even though they had little choice in many of the aspects of the class! Mrs. Thompson’s program is highly structured and teacher centered. She has pre-established units and activities scheduled for her entire term. At the start of each semester she provides her students with an outline of the scheduled units and activities to be

studied. There is very little input gathered from her students on the units they will be learning, however they do have some choice in the skill level group they want to join or the health related fitness component they want to work on within each of the units. Furthermore, many of the young women appreciated the knowledge they perceived Mrs. Thompson had, saw her as an expert in her field, believed she was capable of planning activities accordingly for them, and respected and trusted her decision on the units to be taught.

Many studies have also reported increases in the participation of adolescent females in physical education by incorporating a variety of lifestyle activities (Gibbons et al., 1999; Gibbons & Gaul, 2004; Gibbons, 2009; Felton, et al., 2005). Although Mrs. Thompson did include many of these types of activities (e.g., walking, biking, golfing), the physical education program at Carter is heavily influenced by a fitness and sport based model. Literature has shown that the traditional competitive sport model does not always meet the needs of female students (Gibbons et al., 2009). Furthermore, in a study conducted by Fraser-Thomas and Beaudoin (2004) female students stated they preferred recreational individual activities versus team sports and competition. The findings of the current study conducted at Carter High School both supports and contradicts these results. On one hand Carter's physical education class is sport based, is structured around the extra-curricular program, and acts as a catalyst for students to learn and practice the skills required for them to be comfortable trying out for school teams, joining in sport based intramurals, or using their skills in the future to engage in physical activity as adults. On the other hand; although the class has a major focus on sport, Mrs. Thompson is a proponent of learning outcomes that focus on fair play and positive sporting behaviour during game play. She allows her students to choose the level of play they are comfortable with, competitive or non-competitive; and uses strategies to increase team play (e.g., number of passes before scoring, accumulative score over four games, etc.). These findings are also consistent with Pfaeffli's (2009) study which reported that when the focus during sport and game play is on playing well rather than beating the opponent, young women reported feeling less pressure to compete and were able to try harder and enjoy physical education. The young women involved in Carter's physical education program had similar feelings and stated they enjoyed practicing skills in each of the sports, enjoyed the variety of sports they were taught, and also felt value in understanding the rules and regulations of different types of sports so they could enjoy them out of school.

No matter what activity was planned for the day there was always a fitness component. Mrs. Thompson was an advocate for teaching her students the benefits of being active and believed that educating students on how to manage their own fitness provided students with knowledge they could use today and in their future. Time and time again the young women discussed their satisfaction with the fitness testing they did, the cardiovascular runs they engaged in, and the health related fitness components they learned. In a study done in Saskatchewan, Sulz (2008) found the opposite to be true. The female participants in her study reported a dislike for running in physical education and viewed long runs as unfavorable. In contrast, at Carter school, there were only three out of 66 young women who stated they did not enjoy running in their physical education class, which is an astoundingly low number. Most of the young women found their runs challenging and although they were long, they were motivated to run with their peers and see if they could meet their goals. Evidently, these findings are congruent to the recommendations of many researchers to include fitness activities based on personal fitness and personal physical activity goals to increase female students' participation (Gibbons & Gaul, 2004; Gibbons et al.; Olafson, 2002).

According to Mclean (2003) learning is best placed in meaningful contexts that show its inherent utility and capitalizes on students' interest. Therefore, it is imperative that if students are going to be motivated to learn they must see some sort of value in the activity, or have a reason to engage actively. Mrs. Thompson believes that placing emphasis on lifelong fitness and health components individualizes the learning for her students and makes it more meaningful and valuable. She modeled and participated alongside her students to demonstrate the importance of learning the skills and competencies to maintain a healthy and active lifestyle. Mrs. Thompson also provided opportunities such as the challenger runs (runs at the end of the semester for any student who wants to take on the challenge of running for 30 minutes without walking), for her students to feel challenged, to learn how to face adversity, and learn to persevere. She often talked about being a role model for her students and discussed the need for other teachers to model what they wanted their students to learn. Similarly stated "if we wish for them to become active agents who take responsibility for themselves as learners, then how we talk with them, and how we treat them ought to encourage agency and responsibility" (VanDeweghe, 2005, p. 75). Positive modelling and encouragement was also recognized as a major contributor for the young women's increased engagement in Carter's physical education program. They were encouraged

to participate, given positive feedback on their efforts, were acknowledged as important members of the program, and were consistently reminded of how what they were learning would impact them in their future.

When will I ever use this in the “real world”? This is a common question asked by students and came up in discussion with the young women in Carter’s physical education program. As stated earlier Mrs. Thompson made sure that her students understood the importance of being active and participating in physical education however, she considered the life lessons her students learned as the best answer to this perennial question. The young women also talked at length about the lessons they learned: kindness, commitment, responsibility, passion, determination, and social responsibility to name a few. It was evident that these skills and lessons were also the curriculum being taught and Mrs. Thompson’s goal was to develop competent, caring, citizens, which shifts the role of the educator from teaching children what is ‘right and wrong’ to teaching children how to care (Noddings, 2005). Her lessons along with understanding the benefits associated with being active and engaging in physical education are what made the young women feel the content they were learning was meaningful and could be applied in their lives. Learning is often engaging to the extent that students deem the learning as meaningful and interesting and involves being able to see the value and relevance of the skills and understandings being learned (Haywood, 1993). Mrs. Thompson and the physical education program at Carter clearly had an impact on the young women who participated in the program and their satisfaction and engagement in physical activity and physical education.

Conclusion

Student engagement is vital to learning and has the capacity to sustain students’ motivation to learn. However, in many situations, female students are dissatisfied with their physical education program causing them to disengage from physical education. Young women who disengage often refuse participation or withdraw from enrolling in elective physical education classes. In addition, when given a choice, the majority of young women are not choosing to enroll in physical education when it becomes an elective (Gibbons et al., 1999; Sulz et al., 2010). Research has provided insight on factors that help to increase participation of young women in physical activity and physical education, but little research has been conducted

on observing exemplary high school physical education programs to identify the factors that impact the satisfaction and engagement of young women in physical education.

The overall objective of this study was to explore an exemplary physical education program to identify the factors that impact young women's choice to engage in physical activity and physical education. This study gave me the opportunity to observe an exemplary high school physical education program and gather insight on the participants' experiences in the program. Participants were purposefully selected from one exemplary high school physical education program, located in a small, urban centered, school. The participants involved were all female, had varying degrees of ability and skill level, and had differing experiences in physical education at the elementary level. They were not selected based on engagement level or choice to enroll in elective physical education.

Once data collection commenced it did not take long to see that Carter High School had a culture that valued both academics and athletics and that the physical education program played a key role in establishing that culture. It was increasingly evident as I spent time in the school and talked with the participants that Mrs. Thompson also played a pivotal role in increasing their satisfaction and engagement in the physical education program. Qualitative data gathered in this case study identified the factors of Carter's program and their influence on young women's satisfaction and engagement in physical education. The data collected from this study highlighted the importance of developing a safe and respectful physical education environment that acknowledges, affirms, and is accepting of all students, builds their confidence and competence, and makes learning meaningful. At Carter, most of the young women engaged in Carter's physical education program because they wanted to. The participants described their program as a place where they felt welcomed, valued, and safe. They believed they were not being judged and were treated fairly. The young women also found that "fitting in" meant being involved and active in the program, similar to the actions of their peers. They also expressed that the experiences they were involved in and the information they had learned was meaningful and could be used both today and tomorrow.

Future Recommendations

After a complete study and analysis of Carter's Physical Education Program the following list summarizes my conclusions along with the participants' and my own experiences

in this study and can be used as a basis for future research and practice, or to improve the current state of physical education programs:

1. As a teacher I had a difficult time deciding whether or not I should obtain a Master's degree. I never thought the timing was right and to be honest I loved teaching and did not want to distance myself from the classroom or my students. Eventually I chose to enroll. This process has allowed me to look at research and read literature on and explore a topic I am passionate about, to observe and learn alongside a veteran teacher, and provided me with the chance to develop relationships with a group of young women whom I enjoyed getting to know and hearing about their experiences. From this work I learned a lot of new and valuable skills, but above all else it gave me an opportunity to reflect on my own practice and once again be a scholar. I would recommend that other teachers take the same opportunity to further their learning and enroll in a graduate program.
2. The atmosphere of a school can play a role in respecting and acknowledging the strengths of the people who learn there, including teachers and students. Building a school culture where both academics and athletics are valued is important to increase student attachment and sense of belonging. Recognizing the need to exercise the mind and body may also help students gain an appreciation for physical activity and physical education.
3. Teachers have a huge impact on student learning and are at the core of developing and implementing physical education programs. Teachers need time to learn the skills necessary to implement positive programming in physical education. Pre-service physical education teachers should be given the opportunity to explore, observe, and practice alongside exemplary teachers in exemplary physical education programs to learn pedagogical practices that support and elevate their own practice. Teachers who are offering exemplary programs should be invited to share their wisdom with undergraduate students.
4. Teachers have an overwhelming amount of responsibility and pressures put on them to continually try new things, learn new methods, and implement new curricula. Regardless of the amount of years taught they must be lifelong learners and should be given the opportunities to collaborate with other teachers in subject-alike groups to

- learn and support one another, across schools and divisions. They need additional time to explore curriculum with other teachers to increase their competence and make sense of curricular outcomes, teaching methods and implementation strategies. They also need time to develop the tools and resources needed to make the implementation process a smooth one.
5. Further investigation of fitness and sport-based models in physical education that include individual based assessment and cooperative learning outcomes may further increase our understanding of their impact on young women's engagement in physical education.
 6. Coeducational physical education classes could be further explored and the experiences of young women and men in those classes could provide insight into the facilitators and barriers to their participation in the classes.
 7. Ensuring that a supportive environment is established where young women feel, safe, affirmed, and valued is of the utmost importance and should be considered in the establishment and development of every physical education program.
 8. Further investigation of programs that incorporate an ethics of care component and their impact on student engagement.

Final Thoughts

Initiating and sustaining quality daily physical education programs in our schools can lead to many benefits. Such programs can help establish attachments for students to the school, help build a positive school culture, and provide students the opportunity to be actively engaged in physical activity. Physical education can provide students with the opportunity to learn the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to lead a healthy active lifestyle. Through their engagement in physical education students can gain confidence and competence, build strong relationships, and gain an understanding of the associated benefits of being physically active.

Physical education programs such as the one I researched at Carter high school can impact an entire school and community. This exemplary physical education program provides all students, including young women, with a place where they can be physically active, regardless of their skill level, and try new activities in a safe and secure environment. The young women at Carter feel a sense of pride and success based on their individual or team

accomplishments and are acknowledged for their efforts. Being involved in the physical education program at Carter clearly increased students' sense of worth and improved the young women's self-efficacy as well as increased the chance that they will lead happier and healthier lives. This experience has definitely changed me. It has allowed me to explore and observe first hand a physical education program that can do what many others cannot, satisfy and engage young women. In a few months I will return to my own classroom and I cannot wait to put what I have learned into practice!

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Appendix A
Letter to Participating School Division

December 21st, 2015

Director of Education

To Whom it May Concern:

My name is Shauna Pierce and I am a MEd student in the College of Education. I am currently working with Dr. Louise Humbert, professor in the College of Kinesiology, on a project that involves identifying factors that increase the engagement and satisfaction of young women in physical education. We are interested in working with an exemplary physical education program and I am writing today to request permission to work with Mrs. Thompson and her female physical education students at Carter High School. I would like to conduct research with approximately 40 grade 9-12 female students enrolled in Mrs. Thompson's physical education program to better understand; a) the students' physical education experiences, and b) the factors associated with the program that influence the students' choice to engage in the physical education program.

I would like to work with the chosen participants beginning in January 2016 and extending to approximately March 2016. Based on the knowledge generated from an extensive search of exceptional physical education programs Carter School and Mrs. Thompson have met all four of the following criterion required for the selection of this study; a) it promotes physical literacy and meets the criteria of a QDPE program, b) it follows and implements the outcomes of the Saskatchewan Physical Education Curriculum, c) it maintains a high enrollment of young women in elective physical education, and d) it has been recognized through PHE Canada as an award winning QDPE program and has an award winning teacher running the program.

Informal conversations with Mrs. Thompson have been initiated to determine interest and support for this research project. To date no other contact has been made with anyone else from the identified secondary school.

Thank you once again for considering this request. Please note that ethical approval from the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board for this research project was received on December 16th, 2015. I have also attached a summary of the project. If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please do not hesitate to contact me personally (306-612-2772/pierces@spsd.sk.ca).

Yours Sincerely,

Shauna Pierce

Appendix B Parent Consent Form



CONSENT LETTER (Parent)

Project Title: A Case Study of an Exemplary Physical Education Program

Principal Investigator:

Dr. Louise Humbert
College of Kinesiology,
University of Saskatchewan
(306) 966 -1070
louise.humbert@usask.ca

Student Investigator:

Shauna Pierce, MEd Student
College of Education,
University of Saskatchewan
(306) 651-2772
pierces@spsd.sk.ca

INVITATION

We would like to ask for your assistance with a study that is being carried out by the Colleges of Education and Kinesiology at the University of Saskatchewan. This project is designed to gain an understanding of the factors associated with an exemplary physical education program and the influence they have on female students' experiences in physical education. We anticipate that this student-centred information may provide unique insight into the experiences, and needs of secondary aged female students in physical education. After reading this form if you would like your child to participate in this study, please complete the Consent form on the last page of this document. Your child will also be asked to provide written and verbal consent before they are considered a participant. Your child's participation in this study is completely voluntary and will have no effect on their grade in their physical education class.

WHAT'S INVOLVED

Observations

To understand more about the impact the factors of an exemplary program have on female students' behaviours and choice to engage within their physical education classroom, the student researcher will be present during your child's regularly scheduled physical education class. The class will proceed as normal, with routines, content, and instruction remaining unchanged. The student researcher will record notes about the physical and social environment, interactions among students as peers and between students and the teacher.

Interviews

To better understand your child's perspective on their engagement and satisfaction in their physical education class, your child will be invited to participate in one or more interviews with the student-researcher. If your child consents to participate, they will be included in a focus group interview with 4-6 other students and may also be included in a one-on-one interview following the focus groups. The interviews with your child will be conducted over the course of the data collection period, approximately 2-3 months. These interviews will take approximately 20-30 minutes and a time and location for interviews to occur that ensures privacy and minimizes loss of instructional time and class

disruptions will be determined. If your child, and the peers in their focus group all consent, the interviews and focus groups will be audio and video-recorded and later transcribed verbatim.

During these interviews, your child will be asked about their personal physical education experiences, their likes and dislikes, and future physical education plans. They will also be asked about what factors they think are associated with their physical education class that promote or inhibit their engagement and satisfaction in phys-ed. At any time, your child can request that the interview be terminated, refuse to answer a question, and/or request the audio and video recording device be shut off. After your child's interview, and prior to data being included in the final report, your child will be given the opportunity, if requested, to review the transcript of their interview, and to add, alter, or delete information from the transcripts as they see fit. In all analyses and reporting, students will be assigned a number and a pseudonym to ensure their confidentiality and the removal of any possible identifiers such as your child's name and the school name, will help ensure that your child's identity remains confidential to those outside of the study. An anticipated 1-2 interviews with each focus group and possibly 1 or 2 individual interviews will be conducted with your child if they are purposefully selected.

POTENTIAL RISKS

Observation: There is no risk to your child in being observed by the student researcher. The physical education class will proceed as normal, during your child's regularly scheduled physical education class. The teacher will not change class content or teaching style in any way. Your child's grade will not be affected.

Interviews:

- There is a slight possibility that some of the topics that the student researcher discusses with your child, such as their experiences in physical education may cause some emotional stress or discomfort based on their previous encounters in a physical education setting.
- Your child may also experience discomfort in focus group interviews because they will be speaking in front of their peers.

Risk Management

Every effort will be made to provide a comfortable and safe environment during the focus group and individual interviews. The importance of confidentiality will be discussed prior to the start of the all interviews and consideration will be taken in the formation of focus groups based on the teacher's recommendations. Students will be grouped based on cooperation, comfort levels, communication styles, peer-relationships and ability to respect the opinions of others. If at any time your child feels uncomfortable and does not want to share their experiences they do not have to. They can pass on any question asked and can choose to not participate in the discussion. Any sign of discomfort exhibited by your child will be reported immediately to the teacher to ensure that your child may receive the necessary support they may need at school.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Your child will be assigned a number during all interviews that will be associated with, a) the actions and behaviours that are recorded during observation, and b) their responses during interviews. A pseudonym will be assigned to your child and will be used throughout the analysis and reporting stages of this study. All information will be considered confidential and only the Principal Investigator and the student researcher will have access to data containing identifying information about your child.

If your child participates in a focus group interview, the student researcher will safeguard the confidentiality of the discussion, but cannot guarantee that other members of the group will do so as well. We will be asking all student participants to please respect the confidentiality of their peers by not disclosing the contents of the discussion outside of the meeting.

All data (audio/video/transcriptions) will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the principal researcher's office at The University of Saskatchewan. After analysis of all data, Dr. Louise Humbert, College of Kinesiology, will assume responsibility for data storage for five years upon completion of the study. All data (audio/video) will be destroyed at that time.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Your child's participation in this study is voluntary. If you wish, you may decline to have your child participate in this study. Further, if you do decide to have your child participate in this study you may withdraw your child from this study at any time and may do so without any penalty. If you or your child withdraws data will be withdrawn and deleted. Your child's participation or non-participation in this study will have no effect on their participation in physical education class or their grades.

Your right to withdraw your child from the study will apply until the data has been disseminated. After this it is possible that some form of research dissemination will have already occurred and it may not be possible to withdraw your child's data.

PUBLICATION OF RESULTS

The aggregate results from this project will be made available to the researchers, school administrator, parents, and community members. The aggregate results may also appear in printed or published reports such as journal articles and may also be presented at conferences and used during professional development opportunities. The final report for this project will be given to you after the study is completed.

CONTACT INFORMATION AND ETHICS CLEARANCE

If you have any questions about this study or require further information, please contact the principal investigator or the student researcher.

This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Research Ethics Office ethics.office@usask.ca (306) 966-2975. Out of town participants may call toll free (888) 966-2975.

Thank you for your assistance in this project. Please keep a copy of this form for your records.

Consent to Participate

I have read and understand the description of the research study provided above. I have been provided with an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered satisfactorily. I understand that I may withdraw my consent to have my child participate at any time. A copy of this consent form has been given to me for my records.

I, _____ give permission to allow _____
_____ to participate in the study conducted by the College of Kinesiology.

I agree to the audio recording of my child during interviews. Yes ____ No ____

I agree to the video recording of my child during focus group interviews. Yes ____ No ____

(Signature of Parent/Guardian)

(Date)

(Parent/Guardian Contact Information)

(Signature of Student Researcher)

Appendix C Teacher Consent Form



CONSENT LETTER (Educator)

Project Title: A Case Study of an Exemplary Physical Education Program

Principal Investigator:

Dr. Louise Humbert
College of Kinesiology,
University of Saskatchewan
(306) 966 -1070
louise.humbert@usask.ca

Student Investigator:

Shauna Pierce, MEd Student
College of Education,
University of Saskatchewan
(306) 651-2772
pierces@spsd.sk.ca

INVITATION

We would like to ask for your assistance with a study that is being carried out by the Colleges of Education and Kinesiology at the University of Saskatchewan. This project is designed to gain an understanding of the factors associated with an exemplary physical education program and the influence they have on female students' experiences in physical education. We anticipate that this student-centred information may provide unique insight into the experiences, and needs of secondary aged female students in physical education.

WHAT'S INVOLVED

To understand more about the factors associated with female student engagement in an exemplary physical education program, observations, interviews, and the collection of course materials will be used. One teacher and approximately 40 female students, enrolled in the exemplary physical education program, will be chosen as participants for this study.

Observations

To understand more about the impact the factors of an exemplary physical education program have on female students' behaviours and choice to engage within the physical education classroom, the student researcher will be present during your instructional time with the grade 9-12 classes. During these times, you will teach and facilitate your classes as you normally would. No special pre-planning or considerations will be required. The student researcher will record notes about the physical and social environment, interactions among students as peers and with you as the instructor.

Interviews

To better understand your perspective on female students' satisfaction and engagement in your physical education classes, as well as the factors associated with your class, I will interview you over the course of the data collection period, approximately 2-3 months. These interviews will take about 20-25 minutes and will occur at a time and place that is convenient for you. With your permission, I will audio-record the interviews before transcribing them verbatim. Removing any possible identifiers such as your name, the school name, and all student names to ensure that your identity remains confidential to those

outside of the study. During these interviews, I will ask about your personal physical education teaching experiences and seek your opinion on female student satisfaction and engagement. I will also question you about the factors that you believe are present in your physical education program that facilitate or inhibit female student participation in physical education. You can request that the interview be terminated at any point, refuse to answer a question, and you can also request the audio recording device be shut off at any point. If you select “yes” to the option on the consent form, after your interview, and prior to data being included in the final report, 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. If you select “no” to the option on the consent form, in lieu of reviewing the transcript the student-researcher will clarify themes of the interview and/or discussion with you shortly after the interview occurs. At that time you will also be asked if there is anything you have disclosed that you would not like reported. It is anticipated that 2-5 individual interviews will be conducted.

I will also be interviewing students from your classes in a series of one-on-one interviews and focus groups (8 in total – 2 per grade) of 4-6 students. All students will first be required to obtain consent from a parent/guardian as well as give written and verbal consent themselves before they may participate in the study. Consenting students will be asked first to participate in focus group interviews and then approximately 8-10 purposefully sampled students will be asked to participate in one-on-one interviews. The focus group interviews will take between 25-30 minutes and the individual interviews are anticipated to take 20-25 minutes. After both the focus and individual interviews are completed, all participants will be asked if there is anything that they disclosed during the interviews that they would like removed from their record and will not be reported in the final document. In all analyses and reporting, students will be assigned a number and a pseudonym to ensure their confidentiality. I may ask for your input on appropriate grouping of your students for focus groups. In collaboration with you, appropriate times and locations within the school to speak with students in a way that minimizes loss of instructional time and interruptions will be determined. Students will have the option to request that the interview be terminated at any point, refuse to answer a question, and they can also request the audio recording device be shut off at any point. After their interview, and prior to data being included in the final report, students who answered “yes” to the question “Would you like the opportunity to review your transcripts?” on their consent forms will be given the opportunity to review their personal contributions to the interview transcripts and to add, alter, or delete information from the transcripts as they see fit. An anticipated 1-2 interviews for each focus group and 8-12 individual interviews of the purposefully sampled students will be conducted.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND RISKS

Some of the anticipated risks of this research project are:

- There is a slight possibility that some of the topics that the student researcher discusses with your students, such as their experiences in physical education may cause some emotional stress or anxiety based on their previous encounters. Discussing what makes them feel confident or engaged may also increase stress levels as not all participants may have had good experiences or feel competent in a physical education setting.
- Students may also experience discomfort in focus group interviews because they will be speaking in front of their peers.

Risk Management

Every effort will be made to provide a comfortable and safe environment during the focus group and individual interviews. Students will be made aware that they can pass on any question asked and do not

need to participate in the discussion. The importance of confidentiality will be discussed prior to the start of the interviews and consideration will be taken in the formation of focus groups. If at any time a student feels uncomfortable and does not want to share their experiences they do not have to. Any sign of discomfort or emotional stress exhibited by the student will be reported immediately to the teacher to ensure that the student may receive the necessary support that they may need at school or at home.

The benefits likely to be gained through this research project are:

- A greater understanding of the factors associated with your physical education program.
- A greater understanding of the impact the factors associated with your program has on female student engagement and satisfaction in physical education.
- An awareness of the levels of influence within your program and the impact they have on female students' choice to engage in physical education.

PUBLICATION OF RESULTS

The aggregate results from this project will be made available to the researchers, school administrator, parents, and community members. The aggregate results may also appear in printed or published reports such as journal articles and may also be presented at conferences and used during professional development opportunities. The final report for this project will be given to you after the study is completed.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The interviews will be recorded and transcribed. No names will be associated with your interview including yours, the school or the names of any student-participants. All information you provide will be considered confidential. If we choose to use a quote you have provided when we disseminate the results we will use a pseudonym and we will not use quotes that make you easily identifiable to those who do not already know about your participation in the study. However, as you are the only teacher involved in the study, your peers, principal and anyone else with whom you have shared information about your participation in the study may be able to link quotations to you.

Access to interview data will be restricted to the Principal Researcher, Dr. Louise Humbert, and the student researcher, Shauna Pierce. Your name will not appear in any thesis or report resulting from this study unless your consent has been given. All data will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at the University of Saskatchewan in the office of the Principle Investigator's office. After analysis of all data, Dr. Louise Humbert, College of Kinesiology, will assume responsibility for data storage for five years upon completion of the study.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you wish, you may decline to answer any questions or participate in any component of the study. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time and may do so without any penalty. If you decide to withdraw, the information you have shared with us will be withdrawn and deleted. Your right to withdraw from the study will apply until the data has been disseminated. After this it is possible that some form of research dissemination will have already occurred and it may not be possible to withdraw your data.

CONTACT INFORMATION AND ETHICS CLEARANCE

If you have any questions about this study or require further information, please contact the principal investigator or the student researcher.

This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Research Ethics Office ethics.office@usask.ca (306) 966-2975. Out of town participants may call toll free (888) 966-2975.

Thank you for your assistance in this project. Please keep a copy of this form for your records.

Consent to Participate

I have read and understand the description of the research study provided above. I have been provided with an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered satisfactorily. I agree to participate in the study described above, understanding that I may withdraw my consent prior to the dissemination of the results. A copy of this consent form has been given to me for my records.

Please check the following based on your preference in this study:

You may quote me and use my name: Yes _____ No _____

I wish to remain anonymous, but you may refer to me by a pseudonym: Yes _____ No _____

Would you like to have an opportunity to review your transcripts? Yes ____ No ____

(Signature of Teacher Participant)

(Date)

Appendix D Student Assent Form



Assent for Participants (Students)

Principal Investigator:

Dr. Louise Humbert
College of Kinesiology
University of Saskatchewan
(306) 966-1070
louise.humbert@usask.ca

Student Investigator:

Shauna Pierce (MEd Student)
College of Education
University of Saskatchewan
(306) 651-2772
pierces@spsd.sk.ca

All student participants in this study will be Secondary School Students. Verbal assent will be acquired from each participating student with the use of the following verbal statements below. Prior to seeking verbal assent from the individuals, the project will be introduced to the entire class. This will ensure the students hear about the study twice and have time to think about questions they might have.

Assent Script to be verbally presented to each student in the class in which the research is taking place:**Why are we doing this project?**

This study is going to help me understand what it's like to be you in your physical education program. I want to find out what you like and dislike about physical education, what happens in your physical education program that makes you want to participate and the things you would change to make it better. I also want to know what your plans are for taking phys-ed in the future. I want to ask you if you want to participate in the study.

What will happen during the study?

For the first little while, I am going to be looking at your gymnasium and observing the surroundings where you participate in physical education. I will also be joining your physical education class to observe and take notes on what activities your class is doing and to see what methods your teacher is using to teach you. I will not be observing all of your physical education classes but will be dropping in periodically to gather information. The notes I jot down during my observations will not have any effect on your overall grade. You don't have to change anything about the way you usually participate.

After I have been in your class for a few weeks, I might ask you to talk to me about your experiences in your physical education program. I will ask you about what you like and dislike, whether you think the class is engaging or not, what engages you the most and the least in class, if there are other things outside of the class that keep you satisfied and engaged in the class, if your engagement has anything to do with how you act in the class, and about your future plans to take physical education. Your teacher will not be in the interview and she will never hear what you have said.

If you agree to talk to me about these things, you can do it in what we call a focus group. A focus group would be you and 4 or 5 of your classmates, having a discussion with me at the same time. These interviews will be audio and video recorded and might take about 25-30 minutes. After the focus group interviews you may also have a chance to answer more questions, in greater detail in a one-on-one interview. The individual interview may take 20-25 minutes to complete. If you select “yes” to the option on the consent form, after your interview, and prior to data being included in the final report, 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. If you select “no” to the option below, instead of reviewing the transcript the student-researcher will ask you if there is anything you have said during the interview that you want to alter or leave out from the final report.

Who will know what I did in the study?

All of the information about what you do in class and what you tell me in the focus group will be kept private. The only people who will see and hear what you said in your interview and did in the gym will be myself and one other person at the University that I go to. No other students at the school or your teacher will see your information. Your name will never be on any papers that I share with other people. All of the information I get in the study will be kept on a computer with a password that only I know.

The things that I see you doing in the gym and the information you tell me in the interviews will be put together and written in a paper. It may also be presented at a conference, but no one will know that it was you who participated.

Do you have to be in the study?

You do not have to be in the study. I will not be upset with you if you don't want to participate. This study doesn't have anything to do with your usual schoolwork and you can still do all of the things you usually do in the class if you aren't in this study. Whether you participate or not will not have an effect on your grades. Later on I will ask you by yourself if you want to participate. If you don't want to be in this study, just say no when I ask you. I will also ask your parents if they would like you to be in the study. Even if your parents want you to be in the study you can still say no. Also if you say yes now you can change your mind at any time and no longer take part in the study. If that happens I will delete all of the information that you told me as long as it's before we publish work. If any new information about the study happens, I will let you know as soon as possible.

What if you have any questions?

You can ask questions any time, now or later. When I ask you later if you want to be in the study I will ask you again if you have questions. Please ask as many questions as you like-questions are a good thing!

Are there good things and bad things about the study?

Good things (benefits): The information that you give us about how you feel in physical education class might help other teachers and researchers like me make phys-ed class more enjoyable for other kids.

Bad things (harms): You may feel some discomfort in the focus group interviews because you will be speaking in front of your peers. Some of the questions asked during the interviews may upset you based on your current or previous experiences in physical education. If at any time you feel uncomfortable and do not want to share your experiences you do not have to, you can skip any question at any time, or you can choose not to participate in the discussion at all. You can also discontinue your participation in the interviews or focus group at any time and all the information you have provided will not be included in

the findings of the study. If you do feel uncomfortable or upset I can set you up with one of your school counsellor's to get some support.

CONTACT INFORMATION AND ETHICS CLEARANCE

If you have any questions about this study or want more information, please contact the principal investigator or the student researcher using the contact information provided above. This study has been reviewed and received ethics approval on [insert date] through the **Research Ethics Office at the University of Saskatchewan (306-966-2975)**. If you have any comments or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Research Ethics Office.

Thank you for your assistance in this project. Please keep a copy of this form for your records.

Consent to Participate

I have been verbally presented with the study and understand the description of the research study provided above. I have been provided with an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered satisfactorily. I agree to participate in the study described above, understanding that I may withdraw my consent prior to the dissemination of the results. A copy of this consent form has been given to me for my records.

Would you like to have an opportunity to review your transcripts? Yes ___ No ___

I agree to be audio recorded during interviews. Yes ___ No ___

I agree to be video recorded during focus group interviews. Yes ___ No ___

(Signature of Student Participant)

(Date)

(Signature of Student Researcher)

Appendix E Audit Trail

November 24 th , 2015	Submitted ethics application.
December 7 th , 2015	Minor changes to REB application.
December 11 th , 2015	Contacted the Director of Education for the participating school division to inquire about approval.
December 16 th , 2015	Ethics approval granted
December 21 st , 2015	Letter of Permission sent to participating school division.
January 4 th , 2016	Permission granted from participating school division to proceed and conduct research in the school division.
January 7 th , 2016	Letter to principal and participating teacher asking permission to conduct research in the school and the physical education program. A copy of the letter to the school division was sent at the same time to briefly outline the purpose of the research.
January 8 th , 2016	Permission granted from the participating principal and teacher.
January 11 th , 2016	First face to face meeting with the participating teacher. Discussed the study and set up times and dates for future visits. Discussed the consent forms, met the principal and other physical education teachers. Met the students and was formally introduced.
January 14 th , 2016	Visited the school again for observations and went over the consent letters with participating teachers for her second semester classes. Decision was made to send home at the same time as the course outline but not as an attachment.
January 19 th , 2016	Observations of first semester classes continued. Interviewing the first semester students was discussed and a decision was made to interview them. Students were made aware of the purpose of the study and asked to take consent forms home for parents' signatures.
January 20 th , 2016	Observations continued. Students brought back consent forms and a discussion was had with the participating teacher on how to form focus groups. Formal grouping was not required so all students were chosen randomly to form a group.

January 22 nd , 2016	<p>First focus group interviews were conducted with four groups. Assent forms were discussed and signed.</p> <p>Focus group one: coeducational elective physical education group, eight participants.</p> <p>Focus group two: coeducational Wellness 10, three participants.</p> <p>Focus group three: coeducational Wellness 10, seven participants.</p> <p>Focus group four: grade nine Physical Education, five participants.</p>
January 23 rd -28 th , 2016	<p>Transcription of all four interviews</p>
February 1 st -2 nd , 2016	<p>Returned for more observations of the second semester start-up. Introduced to the students and participated in the classes. Discussed the study and asked for participants. Consent forms were sent home to be signed. Brought transcripts back for member checking with the participants requesting them. Verification and transcript release forms signed by two of the five participants (other participants were not at school).</p>
February 4 th , 2016	<p>Participants returned consent forms and focus group interviews of three groups. Assent forms signed prior to interview. Focus group five: grade 11/12 all girls class, seven participants. Focus group six: grade 11/12 all girls class, six participants. Focus group seven: grade nine, seven participants</p>
February 5 th -8 th , 2016	<p>Transcribed interviews. Started to see some similarities in responses. Reread proposal, continued reading literature in the field of this research.</p>
February 9 th , 2016	<p>Met with co-supervisor to discuss progress, talk about data collection and analysis. Identified more literature to read to increase knowledge in question areas.</p>
February 11 th -12 th , 2016	<p>Observations continued. Participation in small sided games, circuits, and badminton. Three more focus group interviews conducted with remaining participants. Assent forms signed prior to interview. Focus group eight: grade nine, eight participants. Focus group nine: grade nine, seven participants. Focus group 10: Wellness 10, eight participants. Transcript release forms signed by participants requesting to see the transcripts.</p>
February 22 nd , 2016	<p>Met with co-supervisor to discuss data collection and analysis.</p>

February 23 rd -25 th , 2016	Reread transcripts looking for similarities. Selection of students for individual interviews is underway based on information provided in previous focus group interviews.
February 26 th , 2016	Transcripts returned for member checking. Three additional focus groups conducted with grade nine classes (FG 7, 8, 9) for additional information.
February 27 th -30 th , 2016	Transcribing of interviews and data analysis.
March 1 st , 2016	Met with co-supervisor discussed data analysis and initial categories. Cutting up and highlighting of similar pieces of data to form a category.
March 2 nd , 2016	Individual students are chosen for interviews and asked again for assent. Interviews conducted with 4 individuals, two grade 11 young women from the “all girls” class and two young women in grade 10 Wellness class.
March 7 th , 2016	Individual interviews continue. One grade nine student and one grade 10 student were interviewed. Interviews ceased as no new information was being gathered from the individual interviews. Teacher interview conducted.
March 9 th -21 st , 2016	Email contact with the participating teacher. All interviews transcribed and data analysis continues.
March 23 rd , 2016	Initial categories discussed with critical friend and outliers are discussed and placed in best fit category.
March 30 th -10 th , 2016	Ongoing analysis and rereading of proposal. Rewriting of initial proposal based on actions taken throughout research. Themes emerging
April 15 th , 2016	Critical friend meeting with data and initial themes. Discussion on what each theme was and how it emerged from the data.
April 19 th , 2016	Meeting with co-supervisor to discuss initial theming. Picture think together to explore the themes and the pieces that fit in each of them.
April 20 th -30 th , 2016	Continued communication with participating teacher about progress. Three students were still required to sign transcript release form for member checking but previous visits they were

absent. Transcripts were to be sent in the mail and participating teacher agreed to touch base with those students (confidentiality and ethics for the transcript delivery was discussed and only the students would be allowed to review the transcripts). Writing of emerging themes begins. Continued conversations with critical friend and co-supervisor about data.

May 1 st -25 th , 2016	Writing, discussion, revamping and revision.
May 26 th , 2016	First draft of three themes sent to co-supervisor.
May 28 th -June 3 rd , 2016	Continued writing and revision. Face to face meeting with co-supervisor.
May 31 st , 2016	Met with participating teacher to collect all final transcript release forms and documentation required for the study.
June 8 th , 2016	Draft number two sent by chapter to co-supervisor.
June 9 th - 20 th , 2016	Final additions and changes to the paper. One face to face meeting with co-supervisor to discuss final progress and changes.
June 20 th , 2016	Draft to second co-supervisor.

Appendix F
Transcript Release Form



TRANSCRIPT RELEASE FORM

Project Title: A Case Study of An Exemplary Physical Education Program

Principal Investigator:

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Student Investigator:

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I, _____, have reviewed the complete transcript of my interview in this study, and have been provided with the opportunity to add, alter, and delete information from the transcript as appropriate. I acknowledge that the transcript accurately reflects what I said in the focus group/individual interview with Shauna Pierce. I hereby authorize the release of this transcript to Shauna Pierce to be used in the manner described in the Consent Form. I have received a copy of this Data/Transcript Release Form for my own records.

Name of Participant

Date

Signature of Participant

Signature of Researcher

Appendix G Focus Group Questions

Interview Questions for Focus Group Based on Ecological Model

Introduction

I appreciate you participating in this focus group. I will only take a short amount of time to discuss what your experiences are in your physical education program. Please remember that everything discussed in this group should remain confidential and should not be repeated outside of this room. You can choose not to answer a question or discontinue your participation at any time during this interview.

A few things about what will happen:

- ✓ I will be asking you some questions; there are no right or wrong answers.
- ✓ The tape recorder can be shut off at any time.
- ✓ The principal investigator and myself will be the only one listening to the tape
- ✓ You will be given a number to associate your comments so that anonymity will be maintained.
- ✓ Some questions may seem repetitive, they are stated that way to make sure that I understand what you are saying.
- ✓ Do you have any questions/concerns before we start?
- ✓ Please feel free to ask any questions as we go along if something is unclear.

Social-Ecological Level	Question Focus
Intrapersonal	<p>What does engagement mean to you?</p> <p>What does engagement look like in physical education?</p> <p>What are some things you think you are good at in physical education?</p> <p>What makes you feel confident in physical education?</p> <p>What about you makes you want to engage in the physical education program at your school?</p> <p>What about you makes you satisfied with the physical education program at your school?</p> <p>What about you makes you dissatisfied with the physical education program at your school?</p>
Interpersonal	<p>What have people (family, friends, etc.) said or done that encourage you to engage in the physical education program at your school?</p> <p>Did anyone do or say anything that made you satisfied with the physical education program at your school?</p> <p>Has anyone said anything that inhibits your engagement, satisfaction, or participation in physical education?</p>

Institutional

What happens at your school that makes you engage or disengage in the physical education program?
What happens at your school that makes you satisfied or unsatisfied in the physical education program?

Community

What things in and around your community (area around the school and your home) make you engage or disengage in physical education?
What things in your community make you satisfied or unsatisfied with your physical education program?

Policy

What policies at your school or elsewhere make you engage or disengage in the physical education program?
What policies at your school or elsewhere make you satisfied or unsatisfied with the physical education program?

-
1. Would you recommend your current physical education class to your friends? Would you tell them to join your current class? Why or Why not?
 2. What do you think would make your current physical education class better?
 3. Is there anything else that you would like to add or offer that I did not specifically ask about?

Appendix H Individual Student Interview Questions

Interview Questions for Individual Student Interviews

I appreciate you participating in this individual interview. I will only take a short amount of time to discuss what your experiences are in your physical education program. Please remember that you can choose not to answer a question or discontinue your participation at any time during this interview.

A few things about what will happen:

- ✓ I will be asking you some questions; there are no right or wrong answers.
- ✓ The tape recorder can be shut off at any time.
- ✓ The principal investigator and myself will be the only one listening to the tape
- ✓ You will be given a number to associate your comments so that anonymity will be maintained.
- ✓ Some questions may seem repetitive, they are stated that way to make sure that I understand what you are saying.
- ✓ Do you have any questions/concerns before we start?
- ✓ Please feel free to ask any questions as we go along if something is unclear.

Social-Ecological Level	Open-ended question
Intrapersonal	What do you think engagement is? How and why do you engage in your physical education (PE) class? Is there anything stopping you from participating in PE? What do you think you are good at and not good at in PE? Are you satisfied in your PE class? Why or Why not? Think of a recent time when you felt really engaged in your PE class? Now tell me about it from the beginning until the end. What do the people you know think about PE?
Interpersonal	Who do you usually socialize with in your PE class? What relationships do you have in PE class? What do you think about the other students' attitudes toward PE in your class? Tell me about your teachers' attitude toward PE? Think of a recent time that someone else influenced you in physical education. Now tell me about it from the beginning to the end. What do you know about your schools' PE curriculum?
Institution	How do you think your school feels about PE? Can you tell me about your school's intramural program? Do you like the time that your PE class is scheduled?

Think of a recent time that your school has influenced you to be active? Now tell me about it from the beginning to the end
What types of PE activities are available in your community?

Community

Can you tell me the places you are active at in the community?
What do you think about the facilities that you can be active at in the community?
Can you think of a recent time that you have been active in your community? What were you doing? Now tell me about it from the beginning to the end?

Policy

Are there any policies or rules in your current physical education program that promote or inhibit your participation and enjoyment in physical education?
Can you tell me about the extracurricular activities offered at your school?
Can you think of a recent time that you have not been able to be active. What prevented it? Now tell me about it from the beginning to the end.

1. Would you change anything about your current physical education program? What do you think would make it better?
2. Is there anything else that you would like to add or offer that I did not specifically ask about?

Appendix I Teacher Interview Questions

Interview Questions for Individual Teacher Interviews

I appreciate you participating in this individual interview. I will only take a short amount of time to discuss what your experiences are in your physical education program. Please remember that you can choose not to answer a question or discontinue your participation at any time during this interview.

A few things about what will happen:

- ✓ I will be asking you some questions; there are no right or wrong answers.
- ✓ The tape recorder can be shut off at any time.
- ✓ The principal investigator and myself will be the only one listening to the tape
- ✓ You will be given a number to associate your comments so that anonymity will be maintained.
- ✓ Some questions may seem repetitive, they are stated that way to make sure that I understand what you are saying.
- ✓ Do you have any questions/concerns before we start?
- ✓ Please feel free to ask any questions as we go along if something is unclear.

Social-Ecological Level	Open – ended question
Intrapersonal	<p>What do you think engagement is?</p> <p>What does engagement from your students look like to you?</p> <p>Can you tell me about your personal experiences with physical education?</p> <p>Can you tell me about how you engage your students in physical education (PE) class?</p> <p>What about you do you think helps to engage your students?</p> <p>Can you think of a recent time when you felt your students were really engaged in your PE class? Now tell me about it from the beginning until the end.</p>
Interpersonal	<p>Can you tell me about the people you know and their thoughts on PE?</p> <p>Can you tell me about your social networks and their impact on your physical education program?</p> <p>Can you tell me about the relationships you have with your students?</p> <p>Can you tell me about your colleagues and your administrators' attitudes toward PE and your program?</p> <p>Think of a recent time that someone else influenced what you teach in physical education. Now tell me about it from the beginning to the end.</p>
Institution	<p>Can you tell me about your school PE curriculum?</p>

Who develops the PE curriculum you use?
Can you tell me about your school's beliefs about PE?
Can you tell me about your school's intramural program?
Can you tell me about your school's class scheduling for PE?
Can you think of a recent time that your school has influenced your physical education program? Now tell me about it from the beginning to the end

Community

What PE activities are available in your community?
Do you use any facilities in the community for your physical education program?
Can you tell me your thoughts about the facilities that you can be active at in the community?
Can you tell me how the community influences your physical education program?

Policy

Are there any policies or rules in your current physical education program that promote or inhibit the participation and enjoyment of young women in physical education?
What extracurricular activities are offered at your school?
Can you recall a time when policies have impacted your PE program? How?

1. Would you change anything about your current physical education program? What do you think would make it better?
2. Is there anything else that you would like to add or offer that I did not specifically ask about?